

A Bridge to the Future
Malachi 4:1-6
September 18th, 2022

1. The day of the Lord will come like a blazing _____
and a healing _____. (4:1-3)

2. Look _____ and look _____. (4:4-6)
 - a. Look back to the law of _____. (4:4)

 - b. Look ahead to the coming _____. (4:5-6)

3. Applying the Word
 - a. View present _____ in light of future
_____.

 - b. _____ the Lord.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on Malachi 4:1-6

1. How does Malachi 4 answer the complaint of the people in Malachi 3:14-16?
2. What will be revealed on the “day that is coming” (4:1), and how are God’s people to wait for it?
3. How does Psalm 84:11-12 use a similar metaphor of the sun as Malachi 4:2?
4. Why might the language of treading down the wicked in v. 3 make people uneasy? How does the description of “the wicked” in the following verses provide Biblical context? Jer. 5:26; Ezek. 7:11; Mic. 6:11-12
5. Re-examine the following passages related to the fulfillment of the Elijah predictions in Malachi. How were they fulfilled in John the Baptist? What, if any, fulfillment is still remaining?
 - a. Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6
 - b. Luke 1:16-17
 - c. Matthew 17:10-13
 - d. Mark 8:27-29
 - e. Matthew 11:13-14
6. Why does Malachi end with a surprising reference to fathers and children? What is the point of that reference? How should it affect our understanding of spiritual renewal and revival today?

Note: Some questions adapted from *Knowing the Bible: Malachi* by Crossway

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Big idea: The coming day of the Lord will be preceded by an extension of mercy.

Intro:

In 1939, Hitler began the construction of a transeuropean corridor as a modern highway infrastructure. Many of the bridges were built ahead of the roads when construction was halted by WWII. Obviously, Hitler's administration was not in existence to complete the corridor after the war and some parts of it were abandoned. Some bridges span rivers with nothing on either side of the bridge to connect to because the planned highway was never built. One bridge reaches out over a reservoir but doesn't quite touch the other side. It's been "under construction" for 80 years.

See pic

The Old Testament ends like a bridge under construction. It is tethered to one shore but reaches out awaiting completion.

As we come to the last verses of the last chapter of the last book of the Old Testament, we see the end of the bridge jutting out, and it hangs for 400 years. If you've followed the construction of the bridge from the beginning of the Old Testament to this point, you won't be surprised by how it ends, with the exception of one phrase.

Malachi ends by addressing the complaint of the people in ch 3. But it does more than that. Inspired by God under the divine authorship of the Spirit, the chapter closes the Old Testament and leaves the audience waiting for God to complete what He began.

1. The day of the Lord will come like a blazing ***furnace*** and a healing ***sun***. (4:1-3)
 - a. Chapter 3 ended with a promise that God will distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve Him and those who don't.
 - i. Chapter 4 describes when and how He will distinguish.
 - ii. Repeats this group from ch 3.
 1. The three groups
 - a. The openly wicked
 - b. Those jealous of the openly wicked
 - c. Those who fear God and are noticed by Him
 2. This group that some are jealous of will face judgment. They will not get away with it forever.
 - b. They day of the Lord will be a time of judgment and deliverance.
 - i. Mentioned 3 times in these 6 verses.
 1. Twice in v. 1 and then in v. 5 as the "great and terrible day of the Lord.
 - ii. 17 explicit mentions of "Day of the Lord" in the OT, 4 in the NT
 1. It's a time for God to judge and deliver
 2. Sometimes they are near and "small" – Like being taken away in exile (Amos 5:18ff, 27). Other times it is clearly cataclysmic and looking to the eschatological events associated with the return of Christ.
 - iii. Joel refers to it 5 times

1. **Joel 1:15** Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.
 2. **Joel 2:11** The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?
- iv. Still future in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 and 2 Pet 3:10
1. **Thessalonians 2:1** Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.
 2. **2 Peter 3:10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.
- c. Notice that it is described as a furnace and a healing sun.
- i. Both bring heat but to different effects.
 - ii. Is the heat of the sun something to be appreciated or fear? Depends.
 1. On a cool day, the appearance of the sun could be a warm and welcome blessing. (example of river trip where it rained for 2 days straight. We were so glad to see the sun).
 2. But in August, when you're exposed in the high mountain desert and the sun is beating down and the air is 104 degrees, the sun is something to be feared and hidden from.
 - iii. So it is with the coming Day of the Lord, the coming return of Jesus. That Day will come blazing like a furnace and it will come with as the sun of righteousness with healing in its wings.
 - iv. For one group – the arrogant and evil doer – it will be a time of judgment.
 1. Leaving neither root nor branch refers to complete destruction, none in this category spared.
 2. Like an intense forest fire that not only torches the grass, undergrowth, or even just the trees but torches the very soil, eliminating roots and microbes, making recovery a longer and more difficult process.
 - v. But for another group – those who Fear God's name – the result will be different.
 1. John Piper describes what the sun of righteousness will mean, each of which describes what it will be like to move from this present broken time to the reign of Jesus.
 - a. Warmth where there was cold
 - b. Growth where there was atrophy
 - c. Light where there was darkness
 - d. Security where there was danger
 - vi. The analogy changes from the sun to calves playing in the sun.

1. If you have only seen cows as full-grown animals in a field or as steaks in the meat section of the grocery store, this might not make as much sense to you. But if you have seen young calves jumping and playing in a field, you get this.
 2. It's a picture of lighthearted, profound joy.
 - a. We have moments of lighthearted joy but I think we all know periods of heaviness in our broken world. We more often feel like the old cow, plodding through the field. But, one day the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in it's wings.
 - d. There will be a great reversal where those who had abused, oppressed, killed, and destroyed will be tread down.
 - e. He will return to the theme of the day of the Lord, but first he looks back.
2. Look ***back*** and look ***ahead***. (4:4-6)
- a. Look back to the law of ***Moses***. (4:4)
 - i. How has the law of Moses provided a background to the charges leveled against the people by Malachi?
 1. 1:8-10, 12-13; 2:12; 3:4 – sacrifice and worship
 2. 2:1-9 – Priesthood
 3. 3:8 – Tithe
 - ii. What happened at Horeb?
 1. Another name for Mt Sinai where they were given the law
 2. **Deuteronomy 4:10** "Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'
 3. **Deuteronomy 5:2** "The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb.
 4. Although about 1,000 later, they are still commanded to remember these commands and follow them.
 - b. Look ahead to the coming ***Elijah***. (4:5-6)
 - i. Two of the great figures of the OT – Moses, whom God used to give the law, and Elijah, perhaps the greatest prophet
 - ii. Who is this talking about?
 1. John the Baptist
 - a. **Luke 1:16-17** "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ "It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
 - i. Spirit and power of Elijah, but not Elijah himself.
 - b. **Matthew 17:10-13** And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹¹ And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; ¹² but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man

is going to suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

- i. The scribes were basing their teaching on Malachi that Elijah must come first before the Messiah. Jesus affirms that they are correct and "Elijah" came but they didn't recognize him, just like they aren't recognizing Jesus as the Messiah.
- ii. He says both that Elijah "already came" and Elijah "is coming" – how could it be both?
- iii. Did Jesus the Messiah come to earth or is He still coming? Both! What was combined in the understanding of the OT, that somehow the Messiah would come, suffer, and reign has been shown to be a divided fulfillment. He came the first time to suffer and die as a substitute but He will come again to reign.

2. Someone still to come before Jesus' second coming

- a. **Matthew 11:13-14** "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ "And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who was to come.
 - i. "If you are willing to accept it" could be a rhetorical device, like if I introduce myself on a Sunday morning by saying, "If you're new here, my name is Dan, I'm one of the pastors." Well, my name is Dan whether you're new here or not, it's just a way of talking. It could be that John is the fulfillment of this whether they accept it or not, or it could be that had they accepted John as the forerunner AND accepted Him as the Messiah, all of this would have been fulfilled. But because they rejected Him, some of the fulfillment awaits the second coming.
 - b. Likely fulfilled in the 2 witnesses in Revelation 11:3 during the tribulation period before the second coming of Jesus.
 - i. Just as Elijah prayed and stopped the rain as a sign of God's power, so these witnesses will be able to do the same.
 - ii. This will be a final, powerful appeal to repent before coming judgment.

iii. Hearts of fathers and hearts of children will turn.

1. This is the surprise in this passage.
2. Of all that could be said about true repentance and change, why does it place the emphasis on fathers and sons with their hearts turned towards one another?
 - a. E.C. - Malachi probably places the fundamental relationship between father and son as a synecdoche for the healing of God's people. Just as the whole law is summarized in the commandment to love one another ([Gal. 5:14](#)), so Malachi summarizes the breaches in the covenant relationship by referring to this basic relationship between father and son.
 - b. The relationships between parents and children are at the heart of the home. Homes are at the heart of society. When there is repentance in a society, there's repentance in a home.
 - c. What does it mean for a father's heart to be toward his children?
 - i. Toward rather than turned away

1. Turned away in ignoring your child – caught up in hobbies, phone, work. Your attention always elsewhere.
2. Turned away in harshness and even abuse – instead of a tender, safe place for your kids.
3. Men say they would die for their families, if there was an intruder they would step between the intruder and their families. How many of you men have actually had that opportunity? Very few, if any. It's an easy claim when it won't be tested or if it is tested it's a moment. But far more often, dad is the threat. He's harsh. He's the one they are afraid of. Will you protect your family from yourself by turning in tenderness and service?

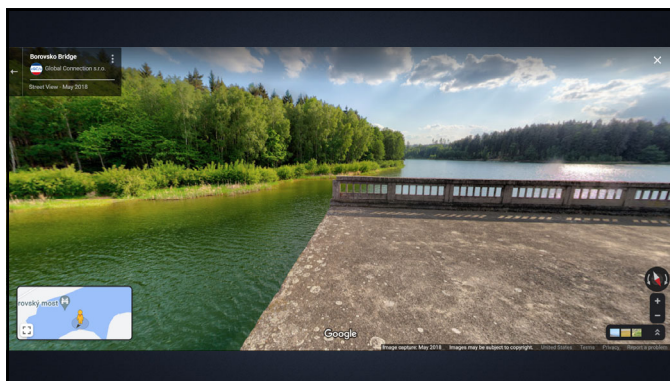
- d. What does it mean for a child's heart to be turned toward his or her father?
 - i. Not turned away in bitterness or rebellion.
 - ii. Not turned away in personal, self-centered pursuits.
- e. Turning toward one another might be complicated – emotional distance built up over years, abuse, maybe not in the faith.
 - i. We cannot control whether the other person turns, but we can ask the Lord to help us wisely turn toward our parents or children.
- f. If this is a description of future repentance for the people, why wait? Shouldn't it characterize our lives now?
 - i. True revival begins in the homes, in the churches, and then in the community.

iv. So that he does not smite the land with a curse

1. Fits with a pre-millennial understanding of the return of Jesus.
 - a. Elijah figure comes with a final warning, many repent as evidenced within their own homes
 - b. Then Jesus returns and sets up His kingdom rather than the land being destroyed.

3. Applying the Word

- a. View present **pain** in light of future **promise**.
- b. **Fear** the Lord.



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