

What Are We to Do?

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[0:00] Good evening once again and welcome to now the conclusion of our study in the book of Malachi.

! It's been a good while since we started this. In fact, counted up it's been five months even though we've had some delays in the midst of this. So we've covered a lot of territory, a lot of ground in that study. So I think we began that back in December, I believe.

So we're about to round that up here today. And so I trust it's been a help to you as well as a blessing to you and encouragement to you. And that today's session will be as well. And so since we started a good while back, let's review some things here.

Just to refresh our mind as to what we have seen in the book of Malachi. God began by speaking to Israel, of course, of his manifest love.

He said, I have loved you. And then their response seems to have been, wherein have you loved us? How have you demonstrated that love? How has that love been manifest to us?

[1:24] And then God's response to that was quite unique, but for them would be the most appropriate thing for them to hear. And that is the fact that when he established that nation, when the groundwork was set for the establishment of the covenant nation, God said, I chose Jacob instead of Esau.

I chose the second born instead of the firstborn. So it's not a natural succession as far as the establishment of the country of the nation.

It was by God's sovereign grace and by his will. And through those times then, after their establishment, he has done numerous things to establish and manifest his love to them.

So he refutes their contention quite clearly. And then God deals with the sin of the priesthood. You recall, they then despised the name of Jehovah.

And they did that by offering polluted sacrifices upon the altar, not the pure sacrifices that the law of God required, but by offering those tainted, polluted sacrifices that then by that they despised the name of Jehovah.

[2:42] They also considered then the service to God that they were performing as a weariness. They considered that a mundane, useless waste of time.

And then the Lord turns to the sin of the people, in particular, the men that were dealing treacherously with what he called the wife of their youth.

The idea there, remember, was that the Jewish men, the men of the nation, were divorcing their wives for the purpose of being able to marry the heathen woman of the land.

And so they did that under the guise and justification of Abraham, you remember, going into Hagar, Sarah, his wife's handmaid, and by her had a child.

Well, Malachi refutes that by showing the difference in the motivation that was given there. Not giving Abraham a pass here, but the fact that he did that with the idea of preserving the seed through which Messiah would come.

[3:53] And the Jewish men of Malachi's day were simply doing that out of the lust of their heart and their minds. And so God dealt with that.

And then the attitude of the people. The people against God, the people that were wearying God with their words. And this most recently that we saw.

And that was the occasion where the people of the nation were saying that God was more pleased with the unrighteous than he was with the righteous. And the reason being is that the unrighteous, the ungodly people of the country, of the land, were prospering.

And that seemed to be the fact that God was blessing them more than he was the covenant people of God. And so God, and along with that, remember, came the idea that the promised glory and

judgment of God that had been promised has not yet come.

So they were irritated. They were angry. They were frustrated at God. And so called God to task on that. And so God responds, as we've seen in the last few studies.

[5:09] He responds by saying that day is going to come. And that day is going to come. And when it comes, it will begin by the fact that I will send my messenger.

He will come swiftly. He will come quickly. He will come unexpectedly to the covenant nation of Israel. And so God said that day is going to come.

And I will bring my judgment with that. So that will be what we've seen to be the day of the Lord. It's going to be a great day of God's judgment and great day of his wrath upon the ungodly and upon the earth.

So it will also then bring a day of refreshing and restoration to those who have been genuinely following God, trusting him in the midst of the ungodliness that they were living with and living in as far as the other ungodly people were concerned.

So they will be refreshed. It's, remember, reminiscent of David's psalm in Psalm 23, when God said, he restores my soul. And so that will come as well.

[6:23] And so God then gives the obligation and the duty of the righteous in the days that would be approaching. Now, unknowing to the Jewish nation, there's going to come a 400 year period of silence from God.

After Malachi finishes his prophecy, God will not speak to the nation by anyone or through anyone for 400 years. And so God reminds the righteous among the nation to remember the law, remember the law of God and be obedient to him.

Has to be a reminder to them because in that 400 years of silence, it's going to be hard for many to remember, especially the new generations that come along that need to be taught the law of God.

So as a result, God then pronounces judgment upon all the sins of the nation of Israel, of the covenant nation. But he also offers restoration for those that demonstrate genuine repentance as well.

Now, as we have seen, the day of God, that day is yet future. The completion of that day, the fulfillment of it is going to be realized at the end of the tribulation period and the consequent millennial reign of Christ on the earth.

[7:55] So what shall we do? How are we to live? How are we to conduct our lives knowing that these events one day will certainly come?

So we're glad then that God gives us the answer to that question. The apostle Peter addresses that same thought and addresses that same time in 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 10 through 18.

Read with me if you will.

He says, We are presently living in the closing of the church age.

I think we all recognize that. So the next prophetic event to take place, if you will, will be the rapture of the church. Jesus coming to take the redeemed to be with him.

[10:29] And that, of course, is known as the day of Christ. Following that event then will come the period of great tribulation divided into three halves. Three and a half years of peace and then three and a half years of what the Bible describes as great tribulation.

So we have that seven year period together of tribulation. This is then followed by the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth.

Now, at its conclusion, the great white throne of judgment will occur.

And that will be the time when the wicked dead will be judged. And that's what Peter refers to here in the passage that we just read.

Let me remind you that that passage we began, I believe, in verse number 10. But just previous to that, Peter writes of the fact that there are scoffers that are coming and saying, where is the promise of his coming?

[11:41] Quite like in the day of Malachi, where is the judgment and holiness of God that's been promised? And Peter just reminds them that that day will come.

The day of the Lord will come. So his statements that he makes in the verses that we just read apply to those things. The day of the Lord is not just one single event of judgment.

The day of the Lord comprises the great tribulation and the millennial reign of Christ, and then the following judgment of God upon the earth. And that is the time when, as Peter says, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. That's verse 10 of 2 Peter 3. That aspect of the day of the Lord, he says, will come suddenly as a thief in the night, just as the millennial reign will come suddenly and expectedly, as Malachi said in Malachi chapter 3 verse 1. So with that certainty of those events on the horizon, Peter then raises the question, what manner of people are we to be?

[13:01] What manner of people are the true believers to be with the fact that those events are one day going to transpire? We live in that same prospect because we know that those days are yet future.

They will be coming. We live much closer than Peter did to the day of those events. So what kind of life are we to live?

We need to take heed then to the answer that God gives to that question that Peter raises. The word ought, when he said, what manner of persons ought ye to be?

The word ought that is used there is a word that means it is a necessity in the nature of the case. While the word to be gives us a sense that the saints are obligated to maintain that type of life that Peter speaks of here.

So in light of the coming judgments of God, it's not only necessary in light of the case, but we are obligated as well to live that holy life of separation.

[14:10] That life that we began when we trusted Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior and surrendered our lives to him. So that life, Peter says, is to be of holy conversation and godliness, or in consecrated and holy behavior and devout and godly qualities, according to the Amplified Version.

Holy conversation there is literally a holy manner of life or living. The Greek word holy is a word that means basically to be set apart, in this particular case, to be set apart for service to God.

So a holy life is a separated life, a life that's separated from the world and the things of the world and separated unto God then.

That's the life of holiness. The word godliness here is the idea of piety, and that is our piety toward God. So the word conversation and godliness literally are in the plural case in the original.

So it's not just the idea that there are certain things we do, but the continual things, all of the things that we do, all of the things that characterize our life are to be holy behaviors and pieties in the plural sense.

[15:38] So we should walk, he says, we should walk in our lives as a holy, blameless people dedicated to the Lord in our service to him.

That should be the character then of our living. So our lives are to be characterized by also looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.

That word hastening is an interesting word. It has the meaning of being excited or earnestly desiring for that day to come.

And that, of course, with the idea of we know what follows for the believer in that. But that word also has a transitive meaning, literally meaning to hasten on, to help bring it to pass more quickly, if you will.

And we do that by fulfilling the conditions that are necessary for that day to come. Now, the timing of the day of the Lord is unknown to us.

[16:46] Only God himself knows when that day will be. But from what Peter is showing us here and other places as well, it seems that the church can hasten on, bring more quickly that day.

And doing that then by faithful witnessing, by prayer, and by our faithfulness to the Lord. Matthew chapter 24, verse 14 says to us, And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.

And then shall the end come. Now, let me remind you, Matthew 24 is a tribulation passage. Everything in that chapter relates to the tribulation period.

And so he says here that gospel of the kingdom must be preached to everyone, as opposed to the gospel of grace, if you will. So the idea there, the gospel of the kingdom is the fact that in the tribulation period, the gospel that will be preached will be more about the idea of the gospel of the fact that the kingdom of God is soon coming.

That millennial reign of Christ is on the horizon, whereas we today preach the gospel of grace, if you will. So that has to be preached, and then the end shall come.

[18:06] Acts chapter 3, verse 19 says, Repent and be converted, so that there may come seasons of refreshing. There's also a rabbinical saying that says, If thou keepest this precept, thou hastenest the day of Messiah.

So, Peter seems to be teaching here that the church can hasten the coming of the day of God by living a holy, separated life, one that is characteristic, if you will, of spreading the gospel to the lost. Now, notice up to this point, everything that we've seen has been part of the question that he asked, What manner of persons ought you to be? The implication is that those things ought to have already been a characteristic of our life, as if to say that is the natural estate of those that are genuinely born again.

Now he then begins to show us what we, in that characteristic, are to be. In 2 Peter 3.13, he says then, Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

That word dwelleth is a word that means to be permanently at home. So, we look anxiously toward that day when the fulfillment of the promise of God, of our eternal destiny, if you will, the new heavens, the new earth, the new Jerusalem, which I believe is going to be the dwelling place of the bride of Christ, we look for those things to come.

[19:58] Now, and along with that, and in all of that, will be our life in the sphere of complete and perfect righteousness, and that permanently, forever.

No more sin, no more ungodliness, but righteousness will reign completely. We look forward to that day. So, in verse 14, Peter says, Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Be diligent, or do your best, make haste, take care, hurry on. So, the idea here, speaking of intense longing, or intense effort, if you will, to do these things he's speaking of.

Be diligent, then, that you may be found of him. The idea being, do your best to be found with respect in him, or in relation to him.

And that, in peace. Referring to the saints living at peace, one with another. You recall, Jesus had said in John 15, A new command I give unto you, that you love, or he just said, I command you, that you love one another.

[21:24] In another place, he said, that's how people are going to know that you're my disciples. Because you have that unusual, extraordinary type of love, one for another.

So, here Peter said, our life is to be a life that's got intense effort of finding ourselves to be in him. To be in relationship with him.

And that being demonstrated by a life of peace with our fellow believers. And then we're to be without spot.

Literally spotless. Free from censure or irreproachable. And then we're to be blameless. That word blameless, then, is that which cannot be blamed or found fault with.

Our life is to be an upright life before the world. So, they can see, then, a life of Christ. A life of someone that is literally in Christ.

[22:25] Now, 2 Peter, chapter 3, verses 15 and 16 say, And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. Now, remember in that, again, just prior to verses 10 and following, was the idea that some were saying, where is the promise of his coming?

Everything remains the same. And Peter says, God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. But he's long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

And so, here, he goes on in verses 15 and following, And account that that long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. Even as our beloved brother Paul, also according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you.

As also in all of his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable rest, or distort from their proper meaning, as they do also the other scriptures unto their own destruction.

So, the long-suffering of God gives opportunity for repentance and salvation to the unsaved, prior to the coming of the Lord in that day.

[23:48] Now, in 2 Peter 3, verse 17, I think Peter here gives us probably the strongest admonition of this whole passage. Ye therefore, again, put it in the context of the idea here, that Malachi has warned the righteous to remember the law of God, because of that silence of God that's to come.

Now, Peter says to the believer, Now, the word beware there, literally, it's a military term that says, Be on guard.

Be on your guard. Constantly watching. If you put that in the context of the military term, you think about a soldier that's out there in the battlefield, and he can't keep his eye off things.

He's got to be constantly aware and on the lookout for the enemy to come, or else he could be in dire straits, dire trouble. So the idea there is the same, that we are to be on guard constantly, always on guard, to keep ourselves from being led away by the error of the wicked.

The idea of being led away is literally to be carried away with, so that we experience with those that have already been carried away, the force of that which carried it away.

[25 : 27] So we don't want to be a part of that. We don't want to be influenced by that to pull away from our steadfastness, to be led away with the error of the wicked, or literally by the error of the wicked.

The word error there is a wandering, a straying about, whereby one led astray from the right way. Roams, I like this, hither and thither.

All right? Don't want to roam hither and thither. We want to be steadfast and following the Lord.

From the steadfastness being led away by the error of the wicked, that is the lawless, of one who breaks through the restraints of law and gratifies his lusts.

Fall there is literally to fall out of, falling out of our own steadfastness. Now our steadfastness is this. It's our firm adherence to the truths of God.

The danger is not falling away from grace or from salvation, but the danger here is falling away from that firm, settled principles of Christian living, of what the word of God tells us and shows us, shows us as being a part of the family of God, as being God's people, to be pulled away from that.

[26 : 49] And you and I recognize how easily that is done and can be done in this day and time. I think one thing we have to be cognizant of is that the closer we get to the day that Christ comes for the church, the more ungodliness we're going to experience from the outside.

All that ungodliness is coming, attempting to cause us then to lose our steadfastness, to fall away from the truths of God that we so adherently cling to.

And so Peter warns us here, be careful that you don't allow that to happen in our lives. And then in verse 18 of 2 Peter 3, he says, instead of being pulled away from the error and by the error of the wicked, he said, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. Stephen Alford said, not only do not fall from your own steadfastness, but be so firmly rooted as to throw out branches and yield increase.

In other words, put on fruit, if you will. Now, the spiritual growth here is in the sphere of our knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[28 : 16] It's that grace that Christ has applied and bestowed upon the believer. Grace in particular for daily living. The ability to be able to do that.

So we simply know it as the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God. Now, we've got to understand again that for the Spirit of God to do His work of sanctification in our heart and minds and in our life, we've got to be yielded to Him.

We've got to allow Him, got to give Him liberty and freedom to do that work within us that needs to be done in order for us to grow in those graces of Christ so that we become like Christ, which, of course, is one of the main objectives of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer.

So to grow in that grace, but also in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's experiential knowledge. And the idea here is that as we live our life following God, in relationship with God, with Christ, yielded to Him, walking with Him, then the more we understand Him, the more we get to know who He is and what He is.

There's such an integral mechanism here that works in our coming to a further knowledge of the Lord Jesus. God takes His Word, illuminates our heart, and then does things within our lives and through our lives daily in accordance with His Word by the work of the Spirit of God to enable us to see more of who Christ is, in particular, more of what He becomes to us and what He wants to become to us personally in our daily life and daily living.

[30 : 16] The more we know of Him by that experience, the more we love Him then, the more we love Him, the more desire we have to not allow the things of the world to be a part of our life.

So seeing that those things are going to come to pass in the day of the Lord, that's the type of people we are to be then. In walking with God, letting the Spirit of God illuminate our heart and

mind, that's to the person of Christ, coming to know Him personally by experience with Him in our daily walk.

Now, I like that Peter ends that by saying to Him, Christ Jesus, be glory both now and forever. Amen.

Where's the glory of God? That's not yet come. It's been promised to be manifest to us, Malachi says, or the people say, in Malachi's day.

But now, Peter closes it out and says, to Him, Christ Jesus, be all glory forever and ever. Amen.

[31 : 26] Now, let me throw one other thing out here. We're living in that day where we know that the coming of the day of the Lord will come, but that will be after we're translated to heaven in the rapture.

But what about now? What about this present generation and day in which we live? The ungodliness that we see, the wickedness that seems to just multiply day after day after day.

How are we to live? The psalmist addresses that for us. In Psalm 11, and in verse 3 in particular, he makes this statement, if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

And the intimation in that is simply, they can do nothing. There's nothing we can do. But that's not a defeatist attitude. He goes on.

And in reality, he starts that psalm by saying how much he trusts God and leans upon Him and follows Him. But then, he says in verse 7 of that chapter, the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.

[32 : 39] I get that. The righteous Lord, God who is righteous, loves righteousness. So, He loves that which resembles Himself.

We're to be like Christ. Spirit of God wants to develop that Christ-likeness within us, producing the graces of Christ within our life. God loves to see Himself in our life.

Or more specific, God loves to see the person of Christ in our lives, literally in us, when He sees us. He loves that which resembles Himself.

And so, He says then, the upright shall behold His countenance. So, what can the righteous do in the day when those pillars fall?

those pillars that held firmly the country, the nation, those pillars are the things upon which that nation was founded and formed and maintained in its strength the precepts of God's Word just as our country was.

[33 : 48] But what happens when they begin to crumble, when they begin to fall? We are to live righteously. God's people are to live that life of righteousness.

Reestablish that which is crumbled. Reestablish those pillars, those foundations. Strengthen also what already still remains.

Live with the standards that God has established for our life and for our living no matter what the response from anybody else is. Doesn't matter. Doesn't matter what anybody else thinks, what anybody else says, we're to establish those standards within our life.

And then live with such faith in God that your trust in Him supersedes anything else. In particular, supersedes worry, supersedes doubts, but gives confidence and gives peace within the life of the believer.

So live in such faith in Him. Now, let it also be known that you love God, that you know God, that you live for God, and that you trust Him as you follow Him.

[35 : 08] Trust Him with the consequence of your obedience to Him. God blesses that. God honors that. And one day when we are translated in the rapture to be in His presence, then He will then glorify the believer in the life that we've lived in faithfulness to Him now.

I trust and I hope that this study has been a help to you and a blessing to you as God has directed us to do this. And so, next Wednesday, praise the Lord, we'll be back together and Pastor Mike will be teaching that session and so be looking forward to that time.

I'll be so happy and so glad to see each one of you. Before that comes Sunday morning in which once again we will have those divided sessions but here in person at the sanctuary.

So be looking forward to that as well. Let's pray together. Father, again we are grateful. We thank you for your loving kindness. Father, thank you for the time you've allowed us together even though it's been through video that we've been able to go through and walk through the prophecy of Malachi to see more of your character, more of your expectation in our life and our living but in reality through all of it as you started the passage more of how you love us and the things you've done to provide for us in that love for us.

So I thank you for that and I pray that as we anticipate and wait for your coming for us and also recognizing the coming day of the Lord that you will encourage us, strengthen us, enable us to live that sanctified, separated, righteous life that will honor your Son and thus honor you.
[37 : 05] And we'll thank you for it and praise you for it now in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.