

The Manner of the Day of the Lord (Part 2)

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[0:00] Good evening, welcome once again to our study in the prophecy of Malachi.

! We're about to wind this up for this particular study. And so we'll be doing that, actually finishing the study in the scriptures of Malachi today, but then next week we'll kind of conclude it all, and so be looking forward to that as well.

Last week, as we opened chapter 4, we saw again the contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous, those that will undergo the severe judgment of God and those that will be delivered from that.

And that judgment of God was pictured as being a very harsh judgment, you recall, in that it was pictured by Malachi as the chaff, the weeds that have been burned up that left no root underground. So thus there was no hope for any life to spring back up from roots, because there are none, none left under the ground. That in contrast now with God's blessings upon the righteous.

[1:25] He said the sun of righteousness, S-U-N, sun of righteousness, will shine upon those that trusted God, believed God throughout those times.

It will be a time of refreshing, a time of restoration to the soul of the righteous among the people of Israel. Quite similar to what David wrote when he wrote the familiar 23rd Psalm, when he said, God lays me, lays me down in green pastures, makes me lie in the still, beside the still waters.

And then as a result of that, he then restores or refresh, brings back to life the soul to bring it back to itself, if you will, again.

So that's what we pick up today. As God spoke then of what he was going to do and provide for the righteous, he begins now to show what their responsibility is, what the duty of the righteous actually are.

In verse number four, he begins to show that by simply saying, remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel with the statutes and judgments.

[2:43] The key phrase there is the one that begins the verse, remember the law, remember ye the law of Moses, my servant. The chief sin of the nation of Israel at the time was, of course, their departure from God.

It was God who by his sovereign will and grace established Israel as his covenant nation. And now they have rebelled against him, if you will.

They've departed from him. Now there's something that accompanied that departure. And that was simply the fact that they have rejected the word of God.

A rejection of God's word. In reality, the two go hand in hand. You reject God's word, you're then going to reject the person of God as well.

Recall last week that Isaiah spoke of that same thing in Isaiah chapter five, verse 24, when he said, Therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness and their blossom shall go up as dust because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

[4:03] I like the way Isaiah pictures that the word of God here. Not only is it just the word of God, but he says they've cast away the Lord of the law of the Lord of hosts.

And they have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Israel, speaking of the deity of God himself and the fact that it was his word then that they have rejected.

Israel reduced the holiness and integrity of God's word, God's law, to simple words that they felt they could either accept or reject.

Now, it's imperative that we in this generation as God's people be sure that we don't fall into the same trap. It's easy to do when there are portions of life that don't seem quite so serious, as serious as sins that possibly God might, you know, overlook on our behalf.

But we've got to be careful because those simple things lead to greater things as far as rejection of the word of God. God's word is God's word.

[5:15] And we must adhere to everything that he says, because every time we reject any portion of the word of God, we fall into the danger of departing from God himself.

Now, the scripture speaks to us about the word of God and how it pertains to us. And Psalm 18, verse 30, the psalmist says, as for God, his way is perfect.

The word of the Lord is tried. He is a buckler to all those that trust in him. Then Psalm 33, verse 4 says, for the word of the Lord is right and all his works are done in truth.

In that familiar Psalm, Psalm 119, that is entirely given over to descriptions and characteristics of the word of God. Verse 9 says, how shall a young man cleanse his way?

By taking heed and keeping watch on himself, according to your word, confirming his life or excuse me, conforming his life to it.

[6:21] That's out of the Amplified version. Proverbs 13, verse 13 in the Amplified says, Then the apostle Paul writes to us in his letter to the church of Philippi.

In Philippians chapter 2, verses 14 through 16, he writes, Do all things without murmuring and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. That phrase, holding forth the word of life, is actually the idea of holding it out, putting it on display.

In other words, speaking it and also living it, that it might be seen by those that watch our lives.

Then Colossians chapter 3, verse 16 says to us, Interesting passage for us.

Let the word of God dwell in your heart richly in all wisdom. The idea of dwelling there is the idea of making it feel at home. Literally, the word comes from a word that means to live in a home.

[8:25] It's the idea of the Christian yielding himself to the word of God in such a way that the word of God feels at home within our heart.

So the Christian, the believer, ought to give and needs to give, must give the word of God unrestricted liberty within his life and within his heart, so that God can do the things that need to be done in order for us to be used of him to the degree he wants to use us.

Now, to dwell, let the word of God dwell in our hearts richly, that is abundantly. So not only are we to yield the word of God, we need to know what the word of God says.

We have to have a good working knowledge of God's word. Realize that the Holy Spirit uses the word of God to speak to our hearts, to direct us to lead our lives into the will of God.

He speaks to us or speaks to our hearts in and through the word, but can only do that to the degree that we know the word of God. So if we're going to need, if we're going to want the spirit of God, then to speak to our hearts, to direct us in the will of God, for us to know what the will of God is, we're going to need to know what the word of God says.

[9:49] So that's why it's so imperative for us to know what God is saying through his word. 2 Timothy 2, verse 15 says, Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved, thus tested by trial, a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing, that is rightly handling and skillfully teaching the word of truth.

That idea of studying to show ourselves to prove, that word study is simply a word that means to make haste, to exert oneself, endeavor and give diligence.

The idea there is to exert yourself with labor to be sure that you can show yourself rightly dividing the truth and being presented to the Lord as someone that God approves.

Then I think a passage that to me, when it concerns the word of God, is an intriguing passage. And that's in Psalm 138 and verse 2.

God says in there, I will, or David the psalmist writes in there, I will worship toward your holy temple and praise your name for your loving kindness and for your truth and faithfulness.

[11:12] For you have exalted above all else your name and your word, and you have magnified your word above all your name.

Interesting here. David gives praise to the Lord for his mercy, for his goodness, his love, his truth, that is his truthfulness, his faithfulness and so on.

But more so, he gets the picture here, that God has magnified the promises he's made, in other words, his word, above his name.

Now you realize the name that he speaks of here are those names given in accordance to the characteristics that God possesses. So interesting here, that in David's heart, God has magnified the promises that he's made to the people above those characteristics he possesses.

That's interesting to me. And the idea here is, to this point, the promises that he has given has far surpassed anything else that he has done to that point in magnifying himself, establishing a name for himself, if you will, as the God of Israel.

[12:28] We can hold that truth as well. We can see the things that God has said, not just the promises of our blessings and benefits, but everything he has said to us in commanding us to do the things he's commanded us to do and to be as God's people.

He's magnified that far above his name. Likewise, we need to magnify that in our life as well. Now, the apostle Paul, once again, writes to us in Galatians chapter three, in verse 24, in speaking about the difference in the law and grace, of course, that's what the book of Galatians speaks of.

But he talks about where the law fits in the scheme of God. He said in verse 24 of Galatians three, wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith. The promises given directly by God to Abraham is what he's looking at here and speaking of here. Those promises made by God were made directly to Abraham himself by the Lord.

They are thus superior to the law of God that was given by God to the nation of Israel, but given through the agency of a mediator.

[13:55] That was Moses, of course. So thus, the promises of God given directly to Abraham are superior to the law of God given through that mediator.

So he asked the question, is the law then against the promises of God? He said, of course, no, in no way. The law and the promises are not in conflict one with another.

They each have a distinct function in the scheme of God here. The law is a revelation of the sinner's legal standing and as such condemns him.

Therefore, that law cannot justify the sinner. So he said, the law was our schoolmaster or our teacher. The schoolmaster here is designated in that word as a slave usually that was employed either by a Greek or Roman family for the idea of overseeing the son or the sons in the family. Sons that are in age from the age of six years old to about 16. He watched over their outward behavior and he took charge of them whenever they were away from the house and went places like going to school.

[15:11] They were in charge over him and watched out for him. So he was in charge, not just with their physical well-being, but for the moral supervision of the child and helping form that moral character within the child.

So it's kind of like, and more so, I think, more like a guardian, if you will, of the child when that child is a minor. So the law did that same thing, Paul says, for Israel as it was given to Moses.

It did not teach the nation of Israel the living and saving knowledge of God. It was simply a tool by which it led people to the saving knowledge of Christ.

It did that by the rites, the ceremonies, the offerings, and more so the sacrifices that were given to Israel under the law. That together directed them to Christ so that they might then be justified by faith.

Faith in the coming of Messiah and the coming Messiah himself that had been promised. Now all the law and the prophets were to be enforced until John, according to Matthew chapter 11, verse 13.

[16:35] No prophet, realized, intervened after Malachi. So therefore they are told to remember the law in verse 4 of Malachi 4.

Nobody prophesied. No prophet was given for over 400 years. So the people of God were going to need to be reminded to keep the law of God, to remember it, to be obedient to that, lest they forget and become rebellious against God.

Now in verses 5 and 6, God continues on. After Malachi's prophecy, something else is going to happen. That 400 years of silence, yes, but that something else is going to take place here.

In verses 5 and 6. Now remember, as you look at this, that Israel was always looking for Messiah to come. And I think one of the reasons for that 400 years of silence from God was to stir within the heart of the covenant nation, the people of the covenant nation, a desire, a longing, if you will, for Messiah to come.

So they were to be looking for that. So in verses 5 and 6 of Malachi 4, the prophet says, Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

[18:01] And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Now the office of Christ's forerunner was to bring the people back to the law that they had forgotten. After that 400 years of silence, no doubt, they would have forgotten the law.

So the forerunner of Christ was to bring them back to the law and to make them ready for the Lord to come, to prepare and make ready a people prepared for the Lord at his coming, according to Luke 1:17.

Again, God remained silent for 400 years, no prophetic revelation, and that to create within their hearts a longing for Messiah to come.

Now, the time came in the fullness of the time that that forerunner did come, or in type that forerunner came. You recall in Luke chapter 1, when Zacharias the priest was in the holy place, making offering at the altar of incense, offering that incense that represented the prayers of the people of God, the covenant nation, that office that if a man was lucky, he was able to offer or to serve in one time in his lifetime.

[19:27] The most coveted office of the priesthood, if you will. And now Zacharias came to that point. A lot fell upon him to serve in that capacity.

And now he goes in to do that. And while he's there, you recall, the angel of God speaks to Zacharias concerning a son that will be born to him through his wife.

And here's what the angel says concerning that son in verses 15 through 17 of Luke 1. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb.

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias or Elijah, to turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Now, the angel spoke of John the Baptist as having that spirit of Elijah, but not the literal Elijah. You recall in John chapter 1 verse 21, when John the Baptist was asked whether or not he was Elijah, his answer was, I am not.

[20:53] Then they asked, are you that prophet? He said, no. The implication here is this, that even though he knew that the angel Gabriel had spoken of his being that Elijah to his father Zacharias, he knew by inspiration that he was not the one to completely fulfill all that is included in that prophecy concerning Elijah.

There's got to be another one, a further fulfillment to come, as we saw in Malachi chapter 3 verse 1. Now, always remember, Moses always resembles or represents, rather, the law.

And likewise, then, Elijah represents the prophets. The Jews were always of understanding that a literal Elijah must come to anoint, if you would, the Messiah, because they would say, Messiah must be anointed by Elijah.

So, as there's another final advent to come of Messiah Jesus, so likewise, there has to be a final advent of his forerunner in the person of Elijah.

Remember the scene, if you will, on the Mount of Transfiguration, in Matthew chapter 17, verse 3 through 13. Behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

[22:25] And then Peter answered and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If thou wilt, let us make there three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias or Elijah.

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only.

And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must come first?

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall come first, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him

whatsoever they listed.

[23:42] Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

But again, realize here that the complete fulfillment of that prophecy had not come. He had not, John the Baptist had not fully drawn the heart to the people of Israel, and the people then were not ready for Messiah literally to come.

In fact, he was there, but they rejected him, you realize. So there's got to be a fuller fulfillment of that prophecy. Now, Revelation 11, verse 3 and verse 6, we see, I will give the two witnesses that are there in the midst of the tribulation period.

I will give power unto my two witnesses. They shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days clothed in sackcloth. These have power to shut up heaven that it not rain in the days of their prophecy, quote, as they did, as did Elijah, and then have power over waters to turn them to blood and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will.

So the idea is there is that we see Elijah and Moses during that tribulation as the two witnesses that will be slain. Now, the reason why the prophet Elijah is named as the one to come.

[25:07] First of all, Elijah was called to his work as a reformer of Israel at a period of time when the people were destitute of faith and of true fear and trust in Jehovah.

And that time was immediately preceded by a terrible judgment of God. And then secondly, because the power and energy with which Elijah rose up to lead the people back into his own time or back into God was there and quite evident.

So, the greater the apostasy realized, the greater must be the power which is to stem that apostasy. So Malachi says, he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers.

The meaning here is not that he will settle family disputes or restore peace between parents and children. Realize that was not the issue here.

The leading sin of the nation was not family quarrels or disputes. The leading sin of the people was estrangement from God. The fathers that he speaks of here turn back the heart to the fathers are the patriarchs, those generally pious forefathers that the nation of Israel had in their past, those people such as David and the godly men of his time.

[26:41] The sons, then, are the children of the degenerate descendants in Malachi's own time and the succeeding ages to come. The hearts of the godly fathers and ungodly sons are estranged from one another.

The fathers are ashamed of their children, the children ashamed of their fathers. So Elijah, then, is to bridge that division between the two, doing that by turning the heart of the fathers to the sons and so forth.

Now, that doesn't mean that he will direct the love of the fathers to the sons again. The idea is this, looking back at the forefathers and the character of their heart and mind, in particular toward God, is that Elijah, when he comes, will restore the heart of those forefathers in the sons so that the sons, then, now, will once again have that heart for God that their forefathers once had.

So, in doing so, then, Elijah will prepare the way of the Lord to his people. Their hearts and minds will be prepared. They'll be ready for their Christ, their Messiah, to come.

That at his coming, then, he won't smite the land with that curse, or the Hebrew word ban. The ban involves extermination completely.

[28:09] So, the precedent for that lies in the fate of the Canaanites who were smitten by that ban, if you will.

In Deuteronomy, chapter 20, verses 16 through 18, we read, But of the cities of these people which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, that they teach you not to do after all their abominations which they have done unto their gods, should you sin against the Lord your God.

If Israel resembles the Canaanites in character, it's then also going to share in its fate as we see in Deuteronomy 12, 29.

Now, Malachi says that Elijah will come, turn the heart of the children to the Father, the Father to the children, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

That word curse in the Hebrew is shurim, which means a ban, and it's a fearful term applied by the Jews to the extermination of the guilty Canaanites as we just saw.

[29 : 36] whoever and whatever was laid under the ban was totally destroyed. Deuteronomy chapter 13, verses 14 through 18 say, Then shalt thou inquire and make search and ask diligently, and behold, if it be truth and the thing certain that such abomination is wrought among you, thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof with the edge of the sword.

Thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shall burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit.

For the Lord thy God, and it shall be in heap forever, it shall not be built again. There shall cleave not of the cursed thing to thine hand, that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee as he hath sworn unto thy fathers.

When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God to keep all his commandments, which I have commanded thee this day, to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord thy God.

And so Malachi completes his prophecy. Kind of almost on the sour note here, if we're not realizing that he concludes that with the picture of the coming of Messiah, and the forerunner that will prepare the way for him, for the righteous to be redeemed by the goodness and the grace of God, for which we can be thankful.

[31 : 23] Now, next week, we're going to bring a conclusion to all this, and we're going to look more so at how this fits in for us in this day and time that we are living as the people of God.

And 2 Peter 3, verse 11, is where we're going to pick up next week. And Peter, looking at the day of the Lord that's going to come as Malachi is picturing it here, he said, since and seeing that that day is going to come, what manner of persons ought ye to be?

What kind of folks should you be? How are you to live in light of that reality? Good question for us, is it not? I'm glad God gives the answer to us.

It's an answer that we can take literally and apply to our own lives today in the world of ungodliness in which we live, and we see it every turn.

So be looking forward to that next week as we conclude then this complete study of Malachi's prophecy. Let's pray together. Father, again, we are grateful for your love and grace.

[32 : 37] Lord, again, thank you for your word that you have given us that shows to us not just the severity of judgment and wrath from you because of disobedience, because of rejection of you and your word, but we see your loving kindness in the righteousness you provide those that place faith and trust in you.

And we see as well the blessings and benefits of those of the redeemed. And so, Father, we praise you for that and we thank you for that. Now, we look forward to next week as we look and see what you say to us about how we are to conduct ourselves, what kind of people we're to be in this day as we wait for your coming for us.

And we'll thank you for what you do and say to us in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.