

# THE DAY FORETOLD

CORE PASSAGE: MALACHI 3:1-6; 4:1-6

## CONTEXT

The prophet Malachi ministered to the returned people of Israel around the same time as Ezra and Nehemiah (somewhere between 460 and 425 BC). Malachi's main message, made up of six disputations (arguments) from God, was directed at the spiritual apathy of the people. He warned that although God would destroy their enemies, He would also purify His people. Though the Jews weren't guilty of blatant idolatry like their ancestors, their faith had become joyless and mechanical. Through Malachi, the Lord called them to return truly to Him.

## KEY CONCEPT

**A day is coming when God will purify His people and destroy evil.**

As you examine Malachi 3:1-6; 4:1-6:

- Recognize that God's unchanging qualities include His faithfulness to His promises and covenants.
- Consider how the fire of purification for God's people will also bring the destruction of the wicked.



## TIMELINE

**SESSION STUDY:** Malachi Prophesies the Coming Messiah and the Day of the Lord (Malachi 3–4)

Nehemiah Returns and Rebuilds the Wall Around Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1–6)

Nehemiah Is Zealous for the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13)

Ezra the Priest Returns to Judah and Instructs the People in the Law (Ezra 7–10)

Ezra Reads the Book of the Law and the People Confess Their Sin (Nehemiah 8–12)

The Intertestamental Period

## Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Malachi 1:1–5
- Day 2:** Malachi 1:6–2:9
- Day 3:** Malachi 2:10–16

- Day 4:** Malachi 2:17–3:12
- Day 5:** Malachi 3:13–4:6
- Day 6:** Psalm 66



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## A DAY IS COMING WHEN GOD WILL PURIFY HIS PEOPLE.

*Underline all the future-tense verbs (actions beginning with “will”) and note who is performing the actions.*

**1** “See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. Then the LORD you seek will suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the covenant you delight in—see, he is coming,” says the LORD of Armies. **2** But who can endure the day of his coming? And who will be able to stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire and like launderer’s bleach. **3** He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. **4** And the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will please the LORD as in days of old and years gone by. **5** “I will come to you in judgment, and I will be ready to witness against sorcerers and adulterers; against those who swear falsely; against those who oppress the hired worker, the widow, and the fatherless; and against those who deny justice to the resident alien. They do not fear me,” says the LORD of Armies. **6** “Because I, the LORD, have not changed, you descendants of Jacob have not been destroyed.”

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

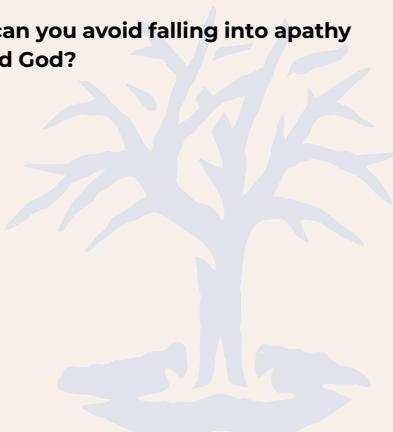
Though those who trust in Jesus are in right standing with God the Father because of Christ and are being sanctified daily by the Holy Spirit, when Christ returns, He will purify us completely, finishing our sanctification process as He finally establishes His kingdom on earth.



In Malachi 2, God rebuked the Israelites and their priests for their skewed view of justice and their complacent behavior toward worship. Chapter 3 begins with the Lord's response to them, showing them what true justice will look like. The Lord rebuked the people for bringing inappropriate sacrifices (ch. 1), but they would be able to offer acceptable sacrifices again when the Messenger purified and reoriented their hearts to obedience.

In fulfillment of Malachi 3:1, John the Baptist would be the lowercase “messenger” who prepares the way for “the LORD,” the uppercase “Messenger,” Jesus Christ. Using metaphors of a refiner’s fire and strong launderer’s soap, the Messenger will purify the people so that they will “present offerings to the LORD in righteousness” (v. 3), not in apathy and corruption as they were doing. The “day of his coming” (v. 2) refers to the Day of the Lord, Christ’s second coming. When He returns, final purification will come for God’s people.

**How can you avoid falling into apathy toward God?**



God calls His people to heart change, not just passive obedience (Ezekiel 20:40; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:5), and by His Spirit, He enables that heart change. Our good intentions aren’t enough; our lives must reflect God’s character.

How often we forget the power and might of the Lord! The Israelites forgot this as well, continuing to sin even after returning from exile, recognizing the Lord’s faithfulness, and renewing their covenant with Him. Sadly, this is the human condition; despite our best intentions, we still sin.

One day, Jesus will return and bring judgment to those who did not believe in His name and did not fear Him. But those who trust in the Lord will be saved. God allowed the Israelites to continue living in the land because of His character (Exodus 34:5-6). It had nothing to do with them and everything to do with His covenant promises. In the same way, God’s new covenant promises assure us of salvation because God never changes. His love, grace, and mercy are always available to His people.

**Knowing that judgment is coming, how does that inspire you to share the gospel with those who don’t know Christ?**

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

MALACHI 4:1-6

### A DAY IS COMING LIKE FIRE THAT WILL DESTROY THE WICKED.

*Circle all the imagery words that symbolize something else.*

1 “For look, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and everyone who commits wickedness will become stubble. The coming day will consume them,” says the LORD of Armies, “not leaving them root or branches. 2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall. 3 You will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day I am preparing,” says the LORD of Armies. 4 “Remember the instruction of Moses my servant, the statutes and ordinances I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. 5 Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. 6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**CHRIST'S RETURN:** God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in heaven with the Lord.

**Key Concept:** A day is coming when God will purify His people and destroy evil.



Malachi concluded his book with a summary of his main points. On the Day of the Lord, the faithful will be purified and saved, while the wicked will be destroyed (4:1-3). The arrogant and wicked are those who don't trust in or fear the Lord, even among those who claim God's name (3:16)! The Lord will remain faithful to His covenant promises, both in blessing and cursing (4:4-6).

The "day" referred to here is again the day of Jesus's second coming, although the Israelites didn't realize that yet. On this coming day, two things will happen: A burning fire, like the one referenced in the previous passage (3:2-3), will (1) destroy the wicked, burning them to ashes, leaving no root or branches to regrow or produce fruit, and (2) purify and heal those who fear God's name, those who trust in Jesus as Lord.

The wicked will already be ashes when they're trampled by God's people. This is the Lord's doing, not ours (4:3). God is always the Judge, not us. By His grace, then, we will one day trample those ashes if we fear Him.

**Why do you think God is justified in destroying all the arrogant and the wicked?**

The people were then commanded to remember "the instruction of Moses" (v. 4), God's law, for that would show whether they feared His name or not. And in the future, God would send "the prophet Elijah" to call them to repentance (v. 5). Ultimately this meant God would send someone, His "messenger" (3:1), in the spirit of Elijah—John the Baptist, who would warn the people and call them to repent and believe in Jesus.

The final verse in Malachi emphasizes the restoration and revival that will take place as people turn to the Lord because of this messenger. Fathers will care for their children and children will care for their fathers, representing a lack of selfishness among humanity. But a stark warning ends the book for those who continue to live in wickedness: God will come and punish them, and curses will ensue (cf. Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

**What would a spiritual revival look like for you today?**



## THE DAY OF THE LORD

*Read Malachi 3:1-6 and 4:1-6. Write down what will happen on the Day of the Lord for the people listed.*

THE WICKED

THE RIGHTEOUS

How should believers today respond to Malachi 3:1-6 and 4:1-6?

**Key Concept:** A day is coming when God will purify His people and destroy evil.



## HEAD

Why is it important that we study the prophets, even the passages that are difficult to understand?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 66. Reflect on God's wonders and all He has done for your soul. Praise Him as you pray through these verses.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HEART

How has loyalty to human beings clouded your worship of God and obedience to His Word?



## HANDS

What steps can you take this week to identify areas of sin in your life and move toward humble obedience in those areas?

