

Subject: *The Coming of the Lord*

Scripture: *Malachi 3:1-6*

Three major themes are found in the Book of Malachi: the Lord's complaints against His people; the Lord's covenant with His people; and the Lord's coming for His people. In Malachi's day the people were tired of waiting for the Lord to appear in Jerusalem to bring a better quality of life. They thought the Lord's coming would set things right, even if their hearts were not right with God. They didn't doubt the coming of the Lord, but they were wrong about the purpose and results of His coming. Chapter 3 deals with the coming of the Lord, what to expect when He comes, and the need to be ready for His coming.

1. A promise from the Lord (vs. 1)

We have learned that the name "Malachi" means my messenger. Two times in verse 3:1, we read that the Lord is coming, and there is a mention of two messengers: "my messenger" and "the messenger of the covenant." Both of these refer to someone other than Malachi.

"My messenger" (vs. 1) refers to John the Baptist. He is the one who will prepare the way of the Lord. Isaiah prophesied about this messenger and the NT confirms his coming:

Isaiah 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

*Matthew 11:10*⁷ For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

"The messenger of the covenant" refers to Christ who will come. Malachi describes His coming:

- A. The Lord will come certainly – There is no question or doubt about His coming.
- B. The Lord will come suddenly – There will be no time for last minute preparation.
- C. The Lord will come to his temple – He is coming to the holy place in Jerusalem.
- D. The Lord will come as the messenger of the covenant – He will come to establish the New Covenant with His people. He will come to teach the terms of the covenant and to seal the covenant with His own blood. On the night of His arrest He instituted the Lord's Supper and said:

*Matthew 26:26-28*²⁶ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.²⁷ And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;²⁸ For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

- E. The Lord will come differently than expected

The people were seeking Him and delighting in Him because they thought He would bring glory to their temple and blessing to their nation. But He came to purify and to judge. The people of Malachi's day believed the Lord would bless them because of their covenant relationship in spite of their moral condition.

2. A warning from the Lord (vs. 2-5)

This section begins with two questions (vs. 2): Who may abide (endure) the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appears? His coming is going to be overwhelming, revealing, and shocking. The people will not be ready for His coming.

- A. It will be a time of purification for some (vs. 3) – the refiner’s fire and fuller’s soap (lye soap) describe the severity and completeness of His cleansing, especially for the sons of Levi (the priests). The result of this purifying and purging will be righteous worship that is pleasing to the Lord, just as God had designed for it to be. God will accept the offerings because the ones bringing the offerings are clean.
- B. It will be a time of judgment for others – The Jews in Malachi’s time were looking for the Lord to come and judge the nations, but instead the Lord is coming to judge them. The people had asked (2:17), “Where is the God of justice?” Here is the answer: He’s coming. Some of their sins are listed in verse 5, but the reason for all their sin was that they did not fear God.

3. A reminder from the Lord (vs. 6-7)

- A. God’s unchanging character (vs. 6) – God cannot change. He is immutable. Any change in God would be for the better or the worse. He is perfect, so He needs no change. God’s faithfulness is their only hope and security. If God was changeable, then He would have destroyed the Jewish people. He calls them “sons of Jacob” to remind them of their sinful ways. They had been just like their forefather Jacob, whose name means “deceiver, crook.”
- B. The people’s ungodly ways (vs. 7) – The people were just like their forefathers. They had gone away from God’s ordinances and not obeyed them. God commanded them to return (in humility and obedience), and He promised to return to them (with His presence and blessing). The people knew what God meant, but they asked, “How shall we return?” They raised the question to avoid dealing with their sins. They had no interest in repenting of their sins and returning to God.

God never changes in His character, but He does change in His actions. God acts differently when people turn to Him in obedience and repentance. God makes the same kind of promise to us today.

Jeremiah 29:13 *And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

James 4:8-10 ⁸ *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. ⁹ Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

Do you need to return to God? Will you do like the Jews in Malachi’s time and ask, “How shall we return?” and act as if everything is alright?

Here’s the application we should take away from this text: God cannot and need not change, but like the Jews, we can and we must change. Instead of resisting God and rebelling in pride, we can return to Him in humility, love, and obedience. The Lord is coming. Are you ready?