

Title: **“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”**

Text: Malachi 4:1-6

Subject: *The Day of the LORD*

Date: Sunday Evening — February 7, 2010

Tape: Malachi #18

Readings: *Larry Criss and Bobbie Estes*

Introduction:

We come tonight to the last chapter of the Old Testament. The prophet of God, it appears, stands before us upon the very tiptoe of faith and expectation, looking for the Lord Jesus to appear for the salvation of his elect.

- Malachi has assured the Lord’s people that the Lord **God has A Book of Remembrance** in which he has recorded the names of all who fear him, speak often to one another of him and think often upon his name (Malachi 3:16).
- These, God’s chosen sons and daughters, his elect shall be his in that day when the Lord Jesus comes to make up his jewels. **“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.”** — In the Day of Redemption — In the Day of Grace in Regeneration and Conversion — In the Day of Death — In the Day of the Resurrection — **“And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him”** (Malachi 3:17).
- Then, in Malachi 3:18, the prophet assures us that there is a day coming in which all men, both the

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

righteous and the wicked shall know and clearly discern the everlasting distinction of grace by which the Triune God separates the human race. — **“Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”**

Now, let me show you how God the Holy Spirit inspired his servant Malachi to describe that day. You will see my subject in the opening words of Malachi chapter 4. — **“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”**

Let me begin by directing your attention to the opening word of our text, — “*For.*” That little word is very important. It tells us that there should be no division or separation of this verse from the last three verses of the previous chapter. The day Malachi is describing in chapter 4 and the day he has been describing in the previous chapters is the same day. It is “*The Day of the Lord,*” “*The Last Day.*” The day the prophet is describing is not a literal twenty-four hour day, but a specific time frame.

We often speak like this, with regard to previous days, referring to specific eras of history. We often refer to...

- Washington’s Day
- Lincoln’s Day
- Luther’s Day

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

- Calvin’s Day, etc.

No one ever imagines that we are talking about a literal twenty-four hour day. Luther’s Day was the whole era of Luther’s life and work. So, too, the Day of the Lord refers to the whole of this Gospel Day, which began with our Savior’s first coming and shall end in the great consummation of all things “*at the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

As we look at these six verses together, by which the Lord God closes the Old Testament Scriptures, it will be apparent to you that the Day the prophet here describes speaks of both the second coming of our Lord Jesus at the end of time and his coming in grace.

Proposition: Looking forward to the end of days, the Lord God declares by his servant Malachi, “Behold, the Day Cometh when I will make up my jewels and spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him, the day when I will distinctly separate the wheat from the chaff and the sheep from the goats.”

TERRIBLE BURNING

First, in verse 1, the prophet tells us about the climatic end of this great day, the end of time, commonly

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

referred to as the Day of Judgment; and tells us that it shall be a day of terrible burning.

(Malachi 4:1) “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

The Day of Judgment is said to be a day that “*shall burn as an oven*” (2 Peter 3:7-12. Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8).

(2 Peter 3:7-12) “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 ¶ But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 ¶ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which 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. 11 ¶ *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

persons ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”

(Revelation 20:11-15) “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

(Revelation 21:7-8) “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone:
which is the second death.”

In that great and terrible day everyone shall be judged according to his own works, and shall be justly rewarded accordingly. Is that what we read in Revelation 20:13 and throughout the Word of God? — **“They were judged every man according to their works!”**

- The reprobate and unbelieving shall be judged according to their own personal works, which are all wickedness.
- The believer, God’s elect shall be judged according to their own personal works, too, the works we have performed in Christ our Substitute, Surety and Representative, which are all righteousness and perfect holiness.

BLESSED SUNRISE

Now, look at verses 2 and 3. Here’s the second thing the Lord God tells us by his prophet. — **Before the end comes, before the Sun of Righteousness sets to rise no more, the Day of the Lord, this Day of Grace shall be for many a blessed Sunrise.**

(Malachi 4:2-3) “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (3) And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the LORD of hosts.”

What a blessed prophecy this is of our dear Savior, the Lord Jesus! Christ Jesus our Lord is “*the Sun of Righteousness*.” He is the sole fountain of light, and life, and heat. He is the life giving, life sustaining, life reviving Light of the World. In how many ways, and by what a vast variety of means, the Lord Jesus appears as “*the Sun of Righteousness*” to his people, I cannot imagine, let alone declare. He is all this, and infinitely more, from the first moment of conversion, through all the intermediate stages of grace, until grace is consummated in glory. — “So that”, as Hawker wrote, “they all go forth under his blessed influence, and advance in the divine life with strength, and an assurance of firmness, as calves of the stall fattened and fed with constant attendance.”

Peter speaks of this rising of the Sun of Righteousness in 2 Peter 1:19, a “a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

And what is “*the day-dawn, and day-star*,” arising in the hearts of God’s elect, but Christ Jesus the Lord, “*the dayspring from on high, visiting us*”? Is not the Lord Jesus “*the bright and morning star, the light and the life of men*”?

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

Of course he is. He is “*the Sun of righteousness arising with healing in his wings!*” And when he arises on our dark, benighted souls, he arises as “*the day-dawn, and the day-star, as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings!*”

- All was darkness **in the creation of God**, until Christ arose. His coming was as the breaking forth of the morning, the Sunrise of Grace, sure herald of a bright and blessed day.
- **He was “the day-dawn, and the day-star,” in the light of redemption, before the world was formed.** In the council of peace, as man’s light and salvation, he arose, at the call of the triune God, in the beginning, before ever the earth was made.
- **In due time, Christ arose in the earth** and throughout all the days of his eventful life and ministry upon earth, the Lord Jesus was “*a light to lighten the gentiles and the glory of his people Israel.*”
- **And, today, our blessed Savior still arises as the Sun of Righteousness,** “*the day-dawn, and day-star*” of all the promises, with healing power and virtue beneath his omnipotent wings of grace!

Until we see Christ in the promises of God they are nothing. It is he who makes them all “*yea and amen.*” He is “*the day-dawn, and day-star*” of all ages. His word, his

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

providence, his grace, his ordinances; all are dark, until **“The Sun of Righteousness”** arises to give us light. — Blessed Sunrise! — When he shines in upon them, all is clear and bright!

When he withdraws his light, nothing can be seen, nothing can be read, nothing can be understood.

And what is this blessed Sunrise the Lord promised by Malachi, if not that which takes place in the hearts of chosen, redeemed sinners, converting them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the living God? — The Sunrise is the Lord Jesus shining by his Holy Spirit in our hearts, bringing us to the knowledge, love and enjoyment of himself.

O my soul, what a blessed Sunrise, what a blessed day that was! It is a day forever to be remembered, when God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in upon my heart. On that day of grace the Lord Jesus, *“the Sun of Righteousness,”* arose in my soul to give me *“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ!”* O glorious Light and Life of my soul, ever continue the sweet influences of your grace, morning by morning and evening by evening, until, after many dark dispensations, and wintry days of my blindness, ignorance, and senselessness, in which will renew me, in the precious

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

discoveries of your love, I am carried through all the twilight of this poor dying state of things below. Then I shall awake to the full enjoyment of your fulness in glory, to see you, my blessed Savior, in one full open day, and to be made like you in the kingdom of light, and life, and happiness, forever and ever. — “*Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness!*” (Psalm 17:15)

Look at verse 3 and rejoice in the blessed conquest that is ours in and with the Lord Jesus, who has made us more than conquerors with himself! — “**And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.**” Who are the wicked that we shall tread down as worthless and harmless and despicable as ashes beneath our feet? — (Relate this to both conversion and the end of time.)

- Satan (Romans 16:20)!
- The Wicked of this World!
- Babylon, the Great Whore!
- Our Own Sins and Sinful Natures!

THE LAW REMEMBERED

(Malachi 4:4) “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments.”

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

When the Sun of Righteousness arises in the soul of a man, he arises to make ransomed sinners free from the oppressive yoke of the law. — It is written, “*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth*” (Romans 10:4). So why does the Lord here tell us to remember the law? The law was a ministration of death? Why does the Lord God tell us who live by his grace to remember the law?

1. **The law was our school master, to bring us to Christ** (Galatians 3:24; Romans 7:7-13). — The sinner upon whom the Sun of Righteousness has arisen, has been slain by the law.

(Galatians 3:24) “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

(Romans 7:7-13) “What shall we say then? *Is the law sin?* God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. 8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10 And

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*. 12 Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”

2. **We remember the law, with joy, because Christ has fulfilled the law for us**, we have fulfilled the law in him; and the law of God, fully satisfied, demands the everlasting salvation of our souls!

3. And we are commanded of God our Savior to remember the law, **that we might rest in Christ and call the Sabbath of Faith a delight** (Isaiah 58:13-14).

(Isaiah 58:13-14) “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words: 14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.”

Here the prophet of God, with the inspired vision of prophecy, looks beyond the carnal, Jewish sabbath and sees in it a picture of Christ, who is the true Sabbath, and the blessed rest of faith in him¹.

When can we, when do we, “Call the sabbath a delight.”
— We can and do call the sabbath a delight only when we are **brought to the blessed rest of faith in Christ**, who is our Sabbath, — when we keep the sabbath of faith, ceasing from our own works and resting in Christ alone for our entire acceptance with God.

When a person turns from his way, from his sin, from the pleasure of his depraved heart and from this world to the Lord Jesus Christ, finding rest in him, he finds that Christ, in whom he rests, is a delight, a luxury and that faith in him is an honor. **Indeed, all who trust Christ delight themselves in him, triumph over all their foes in him, and shall at last obtain the full heritage of the heavenly Canaan, called here “the heritage of Jacob.”** “*For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*”

¹ This becomes obvious when we observe that Isaiah’s exhortation - “*Call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord,*” should read, “Call the sabbath a delight the Holy One of the Lord.”

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

CHRIST OUR SABBATH

We can and will call the sabbath a delight only when we understand that Christ is our Sabbath. We do not observe a literal, legal sabbath day, because Christ is our Sabbath, and we rest in him. I know many who pretend to keep a literal sabbath day. Many try their best to delight in legal sabbath work. But **I do not know a sabbatarian in the world who really delights in his attempts at sabbath keeping, not a single one.** Every sabbatarian I know finds the yoke of their legal observance oppressive and galling. It is a spiritual flagellation they feel they must perform in order to be holy.

Sabbath keeping, like animal sacrifices, was a part of the Old Testament law. It has nothing to do with New Testament worship. I know that the sabbath day is frequently mentioned in the four gospels and the Book of Acts, during that transitional period in which the church of God passed from the Old Testament era into the New. However, it is always mentioned in connection with the Jews and Jewish worship in the temple, or in their synagogues. But it is mentioned only two times in all the Epistles (Romans through Revelation).

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

In **Colossians 2:16-17** we read, “*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*” Here the apostle Paul forbids the observance of legal sabbath days in any form. He does so on the basis of the fact that in Christ God’s elect are entirely free from the law (Rom. 7:4; 10:4).

In **Hebrews 4:3-4, 9-11** the sabbath that remains in this gospel age is called “*rest.*” Here the Apostle shows us that all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ keep the sabbath in a spiritual way. That is to say, they and they only truly keep the sabbath by faith in him, by resting in him.

FINISHED WORK

We can and will call the sabbath a delight when we realize that our all glorious Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Mediator, has entered into his rest, and his rest is glorious, because he has finished his work (Heb. 4:10; Isa. 11:10). Our Savior’s rest in heaven is glorious and it is his glory — “*His rest shall be glory!*” As God rested on the seventh day, because his work of creation was finished, so the God-man our Mediator has entered into his rest in heaven, because he has made all things new for his people, having

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

finished his work of redemption (Rom. 8:34; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Heb. 10:10-14).

Behold our exalted Savior! Do you see him seated upon his throne in heaven? There he sits in undisturbed and undisturbable sovereign serenity! His rest is his glory (John 17:2; Phil. 2:9-11). That exalted God-man, as our divinely appointed Representative, has fulfilled all the legal sabbath requirements for us, even as he did all the other requirements of the law. Now, in heaven, he is keeping an everlasting sabbath rest (Isa. 53:10-12). And his rest, which is his glory, tells us that he has finished his work (John 17:4; 19:30), the salvation of his people is certain (Heb. 9:12), and all his enemies shall soon be made his footstool (Heb. 10:13). There is no more work to be done. Christ did it all! And when all the work was done for us, our blessed Savior entered into his rest. Now, all who find rest in him call that sabbath a delight!

SABBATH REST

All who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ keep the sabbath by faith (Heb. 4:3), because we have entered into his rest; and we call this blessed sabbath rest of faith in Christ a delight, the delight of our souls. We do not yet keep the sabbath perfectly, because we do not yet trust our Savior as we should. We do not yet trust him perfectly. But we do

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

keep the sabbath truly and sincerely by faith. Our sabbath observance is not a carnal, literal thing. We do not keep a sabbath day. God forbids that (Col. 2:16-17). We keep the sabbath spiritually by faith.

Remember, the sabbath day was ordained by God in the ceremonial worship of the Jews in the Old Testament as a symbol of God’s rest after creation and as a reminder of the Jews redemption out of Egypt. **The essence of sabbath observation was self-denial and consecration to God.** Anything personally profitable or pleasurable was expressly forbidden (Isa. 56:2; 58:13; Ezek. 20:12, 21). Sabbath observance was, in its essence, an unconditional, all-encompassing, self-denial. It was a renunciation of self and a dedication of one’s self to God. That is exactly the way we observe the sabbath spiritually by faith in Christ, not one day in seven, but all the days of our lives. The believer’s life is a perpetual keeping of the sabbath!

The Lord Jesus Christ gives rest to every sinner who comes to him in faith. He says, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matt. 11:28). Are you laboring and heavy-laden under the load of sin and guilt? Do you long for rest? In your inmost soul do you struggle hard with sin, longing to find peace with God? Will you hear what the Lord Jesus says? *“Come”* — That is: believe, trust, rely upon me. *“Come unto me!”* — Not to

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

the preacher. Not to my church. Not even to my doctrine. But “*Come unto me, and I will give you rest!*” When a sinner comes to Christ, he quits working for God’s favor, because he rests his soul upon the finished work of his Substitute (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

Yet, this sabbath of faith involves more than a ceasing from our works and the remembrance of our redemption by Christ. It also involves, in its very essence, the consecration of our lives to our dear Savior (Matt. 11:29-30). We keep the sabbath of faith and find rest unto our souls as we willfully, deliberately, wholeheartedly surrender to Christ as our Lord. If we would keep the sabbath, truly keep the sabbath, it will take considerably more than going to church on Sunday and reserving one day a week for religious exercises! We keep the sabbath by putting ourselves under the yoke of Christ’s dominion, submitting to his will in all things,, learning of him what to believe, how to live, and how to honor God. As we do, we find that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. When we submit to Christ’s dominion, when we bow to his will, we find rest for our souls and “*call the sabbath a delight!*”

Believing on the Lord Jesus, resting in him as our Savior, we remember and honor the law of our God.

ELIJAH AND HIS WORK

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

Go back to Malachi 4, for just a minute. Here in verses 5-6, the Lord God declares that he will send Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord.

(Malachi 4:5-6) “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: (6) And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

There is no question that this refers to John the Baptist. The Lord Jesus plainly tells us this in Matthew 11:13-14.

(Matthew 11:13-14) “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come.”

When the Day of Grace is about to dawn upon the soul, God always sends one of his prophets to proclaim the Gospel, to prepare the way of the Lord. And that prophet’s work, when made effectual by his grace, is a work that restores dignity, worth and meaning to fallen humanity, turning the hearts of fathers to their children and turning the hearts of children to their fathers, bringing them to be of one mind, judgment and faith, causing them to have a true

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

and sincere love to one another and to the Lord Christ. — That is to say, the preacher’s work is to bring Christ to the sinner and the sinner to Christ, lest the sinner be smitten of God in wrath with the curse he deserves.

I cannot send you home without calling your attention to the fact that this chapter and the whole volume of the Old Testament closes with the word “curse;” but the very first sermon our Lord Jesus preached proclaims “blessed” are those sinners saved by his blood and grace (Matthew 5:1-12). — Out of Christ everything is a curse. — In Christ everything is a blessing!

Application

How very solemn an account is here given of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, so often spoken of in Scripture! It is a day that is certain and rapidly approaching. How terrible shall the judgments of that day be which will then overtake the ungodly. — *“For if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear.”* — Oh, what paleness, horror and everlasting dismay, will then seize every Christless soul, when appearing before the Judge of all the earth without an Advocate to plead his cause! — What torments shall seize you who are void of all righteousness to justify you, you who have no cleansing for your souls!

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

While this Day of Grace continues, it is my prayer that the Sun of Righteousness will arise upon your benighted soul, with healing in his wings.

Blessed Lord Jesus, dearest Savior, our Light, our Life, our Righteousness, arise upon our souls now and forever. Oh! be for our souls the one great source of our peace, confidence, hope and joy! — As you were made a curse for your people, so make chosen redeemed sinners the righteousness of God in yourself. — Arise, O Sun of Righteousness and shine upon our souls, with healing in your wings.

O blessed Sun of Righteousness,
Arise, spread forth Thy wings,
Dispel the darkness of my soul,
The death I feel within!
I try, but cannot lift myself,
Or cheer my troubled heart.
Spirit of God, Jesus reveal,
Fresh grace to me impart!

The bones that You have broken, Lord,
The wounds that You have made,
No hand but Yours can heal again;
Father, behold my need!

“BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH!”

This darkness, that o'erwhelms my soul,
Is caused by my own sin;
The fault is mine! Purge me with blood,
Restore and make me clean!

Helpless, I wait for grace, my God,
In pity look on me;
Your covenant remember, Lord,
Revive and set me free!
O blessed Sun of Righteousness,
Send forth the healing ray,
Arise within my gloomy soul,
Bathe me in light today!

Amen.