

MALACHI: CALL TO OVERCOME SPIRITUAL APATHY
VIII: Winning And Not Losing In God's End Time Judgment
(Malachi 4:1-4)

I. Introduction

- A. About 100 years after the Hebrew exiles had returned from Babylon and rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple, their "initial enthusiasm had worn off," with life and worship becoming mere routines. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the Book of Malachi: The Times," p. 1325)
- B. God sent Malachi to call His people to repent from spiritual apathy, and Malachi 4:1-4 records God's call that they might win and not lose in His end time judgment. We view this passage for our insight and application:

II. Winning And Not Losing In God's End Time Judgment, Malachi 4:1-4.

- A. The "Day of the Lord" judgment that is predicted in Malachi 4:1-3 refers to God's end time judgment that will occur for individuals just before the installation of Christ's Messianic Kingdom. (cf. Matthew 24:29-44)
- B. That judgment will have a two-fold outcome, with the ungodly losing and the godly winning, Malachi 4:1-3:
 - 1. God's judgment on the ungodly will be a time of catastrophic loss, Malachi 4:1:
 - a. The judgment of the ungodly to occur is likened to that of a destructive fire, where the proud and all who do wickedly will be like stubble that is utterly consumed, leaving neither root nor branch, Malachi 4:1.
 - b. "This does not mean annihilation in the sense of cessation of being (the wicked will be resurrected, Dan. 12:2), but rather the complete exclusion of the wicked from God's kingdom (cf. Matt. 25:46)" as the unsaved are executed and their souls sent to hell. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1587)
 - 2. However, in great contrast, God's judgment for the godly will be a time of great reward, Malachi 4:2-3:
 - a. Opposite the experience of the wicked who will see God's judgment destroy all they have, God's end time judgment will be "like sunshine to God's people" in that in Christ's kingdom, "righteousness will pervade like the sun" producing "health or restoration" (*marpe*) in its "wings," a figurative reference to the sun's rays, Ibid.; Malachi 4:2a. "(T)he restorative powers of righteousness" will be "like the healthful rays of the sun," and "God's people will be spiritually restored and renewed," Ibid.
 - b. Those who revere the name of the Lord will also experience the vast compassion of God much like calves that have been closed up in a barn are released into the open pasture where they "skip about . . . set free from their stalls," Malachi 4:2b; Ibid.; Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Malachi 4:2.
 - c. The righteous will also trample down the wicked who have wronged and oppressed them, the wicked being like ashes under one's feet that easily crumple into fine powder when treaded, Malachi 4:3.
 - d. This activity "not only indicates the finality of the judgment on the wicked, but it also brings to a sharp conclusion the answer in this oracle to the cynical question asked by the unfaithful Israelites, 'What do we gain by carrying out His requirements?' (3:14)." (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T.)
- C. In view of these realities, God called the people of Israel to prepare for that end time judgment, Malachi 4:4:
 - 1. Since the prophecy of Malachi was given while Israel was under the dispensation of the Mosaic Law and subject to its Mosaic Covenant, the Lord closed His prediction of His coming end time judgment with a call that Israel remember the entire Law of Moses His servant which He had commanded at Horeb, the ancient name for Mount Sinai, Malachi 4:4; Ibid.
 - 2. The call to "remember" in this context refers to "mental acts combined with appropriate external actions (in other words, recalling and obeying)," Ibid. The people of Israel in Malachi's day were still responsible before the Lord like their forefathers under Moses were to "repent and be faithful to God's covenant. Such repentance would cause them to benefit from rather than suffer in their coming day of the Lord," Ibid.

Lesson: *Contrary to the criticism many in Israel expressed of the seeming futility of living righteously due to the lack of immediate divine judgment, God's end time judgment was truly coming, and it would be catastrophic for unbelievers and greatly rewarding for believers and the godly. God still held everyone in Israel accountable to the Mosaic Covenant established at Mount Sinai, so it was in their best interests diligently to heed that Law!*

Application: *(1) Though we believers in Christ today are not under the Mosaic Law, OUR end time judgment will occur at Christ's Judgment Seat for the Church (2 Corinthians 5:10-11; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). We must recall our accountability to the Lord to live righteously by the Spirit's power and to fulfill His assignments for us that we might not lose reward, but gain it for God's glory, 1 Corinthians 3:13-15. (2) May we recall that our God is the God of Mount Sinai, a Consuming Fire (Hebrews 12:29), that we revere Him like ancient Israel was to do.*