



Malachi 4:1

The Sun of Righteousness

In our journey through Christ in the Old Testament we have discovered that we can look to Christ as God, and as such trust in and worship Him. Thomas Moore summarizes:

There is one being called the Angel of the Lord, Angel of the Presence, Angel of the Covenant, etc, who appeared to Abraham in Mamre (Gen. 18:1, 2, 16; 19:1), and who is there called Jehovah; who appeared to Jacob in Bethel (Gen. 31:11; 48:15) to Moses in the bush (Ex. 3:2, 4, 6) who went before the camp in the Shekinah (Ex. 14:19), who delivered the Law at Sinai (Acts 7:28), who led the people through the desert (Isa. 63:7, 9), who was promised as the one who was to make the new covenant (Jer. 31:31), and who is predicted by Malachi (3:1) as to appear in the temple then existing. This Messenger, we are thus clearly taught was Divine, for He is called Jehovah. This Divine Messenger (Mark 1:1, 2) assures us, was Jesus Christ. Hence, Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, "God over all, blessed forever (*Haggai and Malachi*, pp. 155-56).

The Angel of the Covenant is the same one who led the people out of Egypt. He appears and reappears through out Hebrew history. We encounter Him again in Malachi four.

The break between chapters three and four in Malachi is unfortunate because the opening words of chapter four is a continuation of what has gone before. The Lord will discern between the righteous and the unrighteous. When will that take place? It will happen when all the wrongs of the ages is righted at the Millennium (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12). It will usher in the never-ending day of the LORD, the eternal state of Revelation 21-22. Chapter four opens with the manifested glory of the Lord Jesus who will visit judgment on those who have rejected the invitation of grace. That day which Malachi announces will burn like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff (4:1). All the proud and wicked will be as stubble. It will be the day of the wrath of the Lamb.

The exact opposite between the righteous and the wicked will be the consequence of the Lord's Day. No one will be able to endure that day " which is characterized as the great and terrible day (4:5). Calvin referred it to the first coming of Christ, while many other scholars think of His second coming and the Day of Judgment. The central fulfillment is to be related to the first coming of Christ, just as the final fulfillment must be seen in connection with His coming again, the day of final judgment. "

THE DAY IS COMING

"For behold, the day is coming" (v. 1). That day arrived in Christ and He will come again. The "sun of righteousness will rise with healing in His wings." The Sun of Righteousness will burn away the chaff, or He will heal depending on the situation. If He finds righteousness He will bring healing. If He finds unrighteousness it will be a day of "burning like a furnace." Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Isa. 2:12.

It is apparent the coming day will be a day of judgment. For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. All the ungodly in Israel that day will burn like a furnace. In this hot oven nobody and nothing that is unrighteous will be spared. For the wicked it will not be a refining and purifying, but judgment. The Day of Judgment is a serious day.

Verse one is not teaching annihilation of the soul with the idea that every unbeliever will be blotted out of God's universe. That is only wishful thinking that there will not be eternal judgment for those who reject Christ. Malachi is speaking of a temporal judgment like Sodom and Gomorrah. Fire from heaven will consume the bodies of the wicked on the earth before the Millennial kingdom is set up, and become ashes under the feet of the righteous. This passage is not speaking of the soul and the spirit. Other passages of Scripture make abundantly clear there will be a judgment after death and eternal punishment.

In a day of thick darkness and gloom there will be for the preserved remnant a light breaking forth in overwhelming glory. But to you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will shine with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall (4:2).

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Here Malachi calls the promised Messiah the Sun, the greater light to rule the day of the New Testament. Balaam called Him the Star out of Jacob (Num. 24:17); Isaiah called Him the Great Light (9:2) and the Light of the Gentiles (42:6; 49:6).

Righteousness is to be regarded as the key word in the phrase sun of righteousness. The "Sun of Righteousness" is called the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6). In Him righteousness is personified. On the Day of the Lord righteousness will be in full view just like the shining sun in all its brightness and blessedness. Cf. Psalm 37:6; Isaiah 58:8. Righteousness here represents the Messiah, either as Christ incarnate or in His function as Judge of the world, or both. Cf. Luke 1:78; John 1:4, 9; 8:12; Isa. 9:2; John 5:21; Rev. 21:23; 11:1-5; 1 John 5:11, 12.

"Sun of Righteousness" (v. 2). The sun of righteousness is the Son of righteousness. He brings healing in His wings. Is that not what He did upon His first coming to the temple? And when He comes again the second time He will come in a blaze of glory and reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness will bring healing for His own, but judgment for the wicked. His very radiant glory will consume the unrighteous. There will be no Millennium until Christ appears, purging the scene for

glory will consume the unrighteous. There will be no Millennium until Christ appears, purging the scene for the establishment of His kingdom.

For those whose righteousness depends alone in the Sun of Righteousness it will be a day of salvation in all of its full significance. The light of the sun represents the fullness of God's salvation for the believer. The day will not bring eternal darkness for them, but the eternal day of His presence. This healing will ultimately be the consequence of the vicarious sacrificial atonement of the Suffering Servant of the LORD. Under His wings we find healing, redemption, everlasting life and peace with God. Again the final and complete fulfillment of this passage will occur at the first and second comings of Christ. At the first coming He purchased our righteousness. At the second coming we will behold His glory. "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). This is true only because Jesus is our righteousness. "He [God] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Branch of David is righteousness incarnate because the righteous one has procured our righteousness as the vicarious Substitute. He took upon Himself our penalty for sin (Isaiah 53:5-7; Romans 6:23) and paid it in full. The Lord Our Righteousness has come with healing in His wings for our sin sickness, and not only for ours but for the whole world (1 John 2:2). He is our propitiation.

THE COMING OF ELIJAH

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD (v. 5; Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13; cf. Luke 1:16, 17).

Just as in the prophetic passages that refer to the return or resurrection of King David who had been dead for centuries, and who would reign over the nation of God in the mind and spirit of David; so the Elijah to be sent can only be a prophet with the spirit or power of Elijah the Tishbite. The second David was indeed to spring from the family of David, because to the seed of David there had been promised the eternal possession of the throne (Keil and Delitzsch). We don't need to look for a literal descendent of Elijah the Tishbite, but simply a prophet in whom the spirit and power of Elijah are revived. This man of God would bring God's message in the power and energy of old Elijah.

Isaiah 40:3 declares, A voice is calling,

Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God."

The fulfillment of this prophecy of Elijah, whom the Lord would send before His own coming, was sent in the person of John the Baptizer. The angel announced to his father before his birth as the promised Elijah (Luke 1:16, 17). He would go as the forerunner before the Messiah and announce in the spirit and power of Elijah calling the people to repentance. His job would be to make ready a prepared people for the Lord. Matt. 3:1-12; Luke 1:17; 3:2-8; Mark 1:2-8

John announced himself as being the fulfillment of that prophetic role of Elijah and Jesus affirmed it, too (Matthew 17:10-13; Luke 7:18-35; Mark 9:11-28; John 1:21-23).

The majority of ancient and modern Protestant interpreters maintain the two figures, "the messenger" (3:1) and "Elijah" (4:5) are in fact identical.

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Apparently the Jews in the time of Christ expected the historical prophet Elijah would return in person probably because of Elijah's ascension to heaven (2 Kings 2:1-11) and his expected coming as forerunner. In the New Testament this "Elijah" was applied to John the Baptist (Luke 1:16-17). The disciples asked, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus' reply was, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come" (Matthew 17:10-13). He also said, "Now if you are willing to accept it, he [John the Baptist] is Elijah who is to come" (Matt. 11:14).

The New Testament makes it clear that it is not necessary to look forward to the coming again of the historical prophet Elijah. He was representative of all of the Hebrew prophets. He will go before the Lord with the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk. 1:17). This Elijah is the one who paves the way for the coming of the Lord.

Just as Malachi predicted the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ came to His temple. His work began with the first coming of Christ and will ultimately be completed at the second coming.

The Hebrew scholar Keil writes: The day of the Lord, which they announce as the day of judgment, commenced with the appearance on earth of Christ, the incarnate Logos; and Christ Himself declared that He had come into the world for judgment (John 9:39; 3:19; 12:40), viz. for the judgment of separating the believing from the ungodly, to give eternal life to those who believe on His name, and to bring death and condemnation to unbelievers. This judgment burst upon the Jewish nation not long after the ascension of Christ. Israel rejected her Messiah and destruction came upon Jerusalem in the great Roman war of A. D. 70. Universal judgment will come upon the earth at the visible second coming of the Lord at the last day. "

The great and terrible day of the Lord suggests the second coming of Christ. As we have just seen and in our study of Malachi 3:1 the New Testament emphasis is on John the Baptist as the promised Elijah. However, the nature of prophecy is to project separate future events into one eschatological portrait. One fulfillment of a prophecy does not exclude the possibility of further fulfillments in the course of history. This is true when applied to the two comings of Christ. When we apply this to the coming of Elijah and the coming Day of the Lord the first and central fulfillment in the time of Christ's first coming, and the final and ultimate fulfillment will be when Christ comes again.

It is evident that he is to prepare the people for the Second Coming of Christ. The Purifier of His people (3:3) is also the Judge (3:2, 5). The prophet gives us a magnificent bird's-eye view of the coming of Christ in the flesh and His coming again in judgment (cf. 2 Thess. 2:2f; 1 Peter 4:7; James 5:8f; Rev. 3:20; 22:20; 2 Peter 3:8-13).

The early church fathers also saw Elijah fulfilled in Revelation 11:3-12 as one of the witnesses.

The Old Testament comes to its grand climax with this prophecy and waits 400 years before the coming of the last of the great Hebrew prophets who prepares the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus into His temple.

The Law and the prophets bore witness to Christ, and Christ came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them. The greatest testimony of that grand fact is seen at the Mount of Transfiguration with their representatives before the transfigured Jesus discussing His coming exodus (Matthew 17:1ff; Mark 9:1ff; Luke 9:28ff).

Messianic elements in the prophets

- Kingdom of God shall be established in all the earth. ”
- King is God-Man
- Servant of God will redeem men through suffering.
- God's purpose of Grace is centered in the Messiah.

That day arrived in Christ and He will come again. The Sun of Righteousness will burn away the chaff, or He will bring healing depending upon the situation.

It is my prayer that you will let Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah become the desire of your heart. If you need help in knowing Him in an intimate personal relationship here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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