



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. 2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his 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. 4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. 5 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. (Mal 4:1-6)

Today's text (Chapter Four of Malachi) is one of the most important chapters of the Old Testament - for it is the last before an interregnum silence of the Voice of God to His people for a period exceeding 400 years. It is the seal and benediction on the efforts of man to gain favor with God through the agency of the Law, but it also is an opening of the Veil of Grace on the forthcoming and long-awaited Messiah. The curtain will fall at the close of Malachi and the manmade darkness of man will reign during the intervening years. It is a time of anticipation and preparation of hearts to the coming Light of Christ - of eyes that have grown too blind by perpetual darkness to see but whose scales will fall away if the heart responds to the Good News that is coming. God overlooks no detail in His Message. The very last Word of Malachi is a fitting conclusion to the Old Testament Law and Prophets - CURSE - which I shall discuss later in this devotion.

God issues His "Stand at the Ready" command in the very first verse of Chapter 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.*" Ours is not a God of vain words. He commands that we prepare our hearts - BEHOLD. What is published by General Order that we must watch out for? ". . . *the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven.*" This is not a tentative prophecy, but one of certainty. There is DEFINITELY such a day coming. It is not simply coming at the destruction of Jerusalem when the city is trodden underfoot by the Gentiles in 70 A.D. (as the Preterists aver), but a Day far in advance of time that shall destroy 'with fervent heat' all that is not considered Holy - including man. This is the Last Day, but it also portends the coming of Christ to begin that Judgment that shall follow and offer the Ark of Salvation (Himself) to all who believe. "*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." (2 Peter 3:10) This is far more than a mere spiritual purification - it describes a literal destruction of the physical elements.

ALL proud of ALL time that have done wickedly shall be consumed with the All-Consuming Fire of God. "*For our God is a consuming fire.*" (Heb 12:29) There will remain no hidden root or branch to sprout beneath the ground that was cursed at the Fall of Adam. ". . . *cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.*" (Gen 3:17) There will, at some point as well, be a purification of fiery nature that is also related in Malachi 3:2. "*But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap.*" The coming fury of fire and flames will not mar the true metal, or the elect of God. For more scriptural evidence of that day that will burn as an oven, see Isaiah 24:6, Joel 1:19, Rev 8:7; and Rev 16:8-9.

Here follows one of the most wondrously glorious verses in all of Scripture: 2 "*But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.*" I have heard all of those shallow arguments that attempt to deter the meaning of this "Sun of Righteousness" away from the Lord Jesus Christ. I conclude they are in gross error, for this is fully descriptive of Christ! Just as the sun is the light of the physical world, so is Christ the Sun and Light of the World of faith. "*I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*" (John 8:12) Jesus is forever that Great Light which came to the "*people who walked in darkness.*" (Isa 9:2). This is the central hope held out by Malachi in this last revelation prior to the Coming of Christ. Christ is not only the Bright Sun of Righteousness that shall arise in the Eastern sky, shedding its brilliant beams abroad, dispersing the darkness of sin; but He is the Lily of Hope of the Valleys (not singular but all valleys). (SS 2:1) He is that Bright Star of Hope that follows at the onset of evening shadows and follows us all the night long to the rising of the sun, or, as the scriptures tell us, "*I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*" (Rev 22:16) He is above us shedding His gleaming rays across our forlorn spirits as we traverse the dark night of our soul. As that Bright, Morning Star leads us to the eastern horizon, He is transformed into the Day-Star - or the Sun of Righteousness for which we have long waited in hope and faith. "*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*" (2 Peter 1:19) His effulgent beams of truth will vanquish every dark sin, and heal the New Creation which He heralds.

The wicked people who have abused the people of God shall become far less than footstools - they shall become ashes under the feet of the righteous. The "easy-believism of a watered-down gospel" being taught in modern churches will be the incubators whereby many are lost. The Coming of Christ at the last shall be a day of horror for those who have taught false doctrine. Instead of coming as a Savior, the Lord will return as a Judge in that day. 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.*"

4 "*Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.* 5 *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*" God does not overlook a single hair of the head when He sends out His Word. Please observe the

peculiar nature of the two witnesses mentioned in these two verses - **Moses and Elijah!** Remember the Mount of Transfiguration at which Christ was transformed into His glorious manifestation? (Matthew 17, Mark 9, & Luke 9:30) Of what significance is this to the Last Day? You will recall that Elijah was taken by a fiery chariot into Heaven. He did not die. Moses, on the other hand, died on Mt. Nebal by and was BURIED by God. Do you see the significance of this scenario? When Christ shall return, the graves shall be opened and the dead in Christ will arise first (those who are dead as was Moses) and those who are alive at His coming shall be caught up to Him (those who are alive as is Elijah). Both living and dead in Christ shall be kept for the Master's Table! Moreover, we are commanded to remember the Commandments given to Old (and New) Israel. The Commandments of God are immutable. They are more stringent upon the believer today than even in the days of Moses. In Moses' day, they were Laws graven in stone to be kept to perfection. In our day, they are written in the soft sinews of our hearts and to be obeyed out of love and not constraint. Christ did not nullify the Law of God, but confirmed and fulfilled it. You will recall the Great Commandment? Remember the lawyer's question to our Lord? "*Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*" (Matthew 22:36) Please examine carefully the Lord's response: "*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*" (Matt 22:37-40) If you barely passed the course in English on literary analysis, you will recognize that Jesus is not nullifying the Ten Commandments, but hanging them upon LOVE for God in the first five, and LOVE for man in the last six. But, you say, there were only TEN. True, but Commandment Five is directed to our earthly fathers and mothers and also to our Heavenly Father. The Fifth Commandment is a transition between our duty to God and our duty to our fellow men. It has a double application since God, too, is our Heavenly Father. "*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*" (Ex 20:12)

Now comes a crushing finale to the Book of the Law and Prophets (Old Testament). 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.*" John the Baptist was a unifying force for the truth of the Coming Christ. He prepared the ground and sowed many seeds, but the Master of the Vineyard (/Christ) would be the culmination of all the Law and the Prophets from Abel to Malachi. He would be the One of whom John spoke. His Gospel is one of that unifying love which constrains our obedience to God and love of our fellows. The love of the fathers would be turned to the children, and the children to the fathers. Absent this response of love, the only recourse is judgment. It is quite fitting that the Book of the Old Testament should conclude with the word CURSE since all under the Law are cursed. No one can live righteously apart from the imputed righteousness of Christ. "*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*" (Gal 3:10) There is no division in purpose between the Old and New Testament for it is One Book from Genesis to Revelation. Had God not known that Adam would sin, He would have had no need to prepare for us a Savior from the Foundation of the World. The greatest lesson we learn from the Old Testament is two-fold: 1) we can never be righteous in obeying the Law of God on our own merits. We will fail just as did Old Israel (with exception of those such as Abraham who look forward in faith to the coming of a Redeemer). 2) The Law was our school teacher to show us that we cannot be righteous, but the New Testament of Jesus Christ offers us an imputed righteousness through the grace and shed blood of Jesus Christ. Have you, dear Reader, availed yourself of that

great salvation?