

Are you ready? (Malachi 4:1-6 & Luke 1:1-25)

1-Dec-19

It would be good to have your **Bibles** in **front of you** - open at **Malachi** chapter **4** and **Luke** chapter **1**

There's an **outline** for you to **take notes** - if that helps you **concentrate**.

Let me ask **God** for His **help** and **guidance** first - let's **pray**...

Intro

Are you **ready** for **Christmas**?

[PowerPoint 1-Christmas?]

You may hear **people saying** they're **almost ready** for Christmas

- They've bought all the **presents**
- The **tree** and **lights** are up
- The **food** and **drink** are in the **fridge** and **freezer**
- They've even bought their **doctor** and the **vet** a present
- Even the **cat** and the **dog** have a **present** under the tree
- All the **cards** are sent - and the Christmas family **newsletter** to all the **relis** is posted
- And they'll squeeze in the **Christmas Carol service** - if there's time - **after all** - it is **Christmas** - and there's so **much to do**
- And they'll try and **squeeze** in **church** on Christmas Day before they shoot off to Sydney to the family
- After all **Christmas** is **all about family** isn't it?

(pause)

- You see - the problem is - it's so **easy** to have a "good" heart - but have our "heart" towards **people** and **things** - and have **no time** or **no heart** towards **God** and His Son - **Jesus**

(pause)

- You might be **ready** for **Christmas**
- But are you **ready** for **Jesus**?
 - Jesus - the **baby** born **2000** or so **years** ago?
 - Jesus - **God's son**?
 - Jesus - the One sent by God to be the **Saviour** of the World
 - Jesus - the **only one** - the Bible says - who can **get you to Heaven** - the only one who can **fix the 2 problems we can't fix ourselves** - our **Sin** and our **Death**?

(pause)

- **And** are you **ready** for Jesus' **return**? He's coming back one day - you know
- **And** are the **people you know** **ready** for Jesus' **return**?

You see in our OT passage from the prophet **Malachi**

The people of **Israel** were a bit like lots of **people today**

Their **hearts** are **set** on other **things** - and **not** towards **God** - and **God** is **not** a **priority** in their lives - they are **lost** - and **away** from God.

So, **God** says through His **Prophet** - **Malachi** -

There's a **Day coming** - like **no other** day

A **Day** coming - that **no one** wants to **face** - if they're not right with God

Let's see what God says about this Day - through His prophet Malachi

[Please turn to Malachi chapter 4]

1. The Day is coming? (Malachi 4:1-6)

- The Prophet **Malachi** is speaking about **400** years before Jesus - 400BC
- **God warns Israel** - there's a **Day** coming
- It's a day of **judgment** - not D-Day - but **J-Day**

[PowerPoint 2-Dreadful Day]

- Judgment is pictured - as being like a **fiery furnace**
 - All those who are **arrogant** enough to think they can **do without God** and - all **evildoers** - those who take **no notice of God** or what His commands say - and those who **ignore** the **offer** of God's Son - **Jesus**.
 - They will **not escape forever**
 - The Day is coming when the **wicked** will be like **chaff** - the **combustible** dry **straw** that remains after the grain has been harvested (Psalm 1)
 - Putting chaff in a **furnace** would inevitably set it **ablaze**
 - And it would be ultimately **consumed** - **not a root or branch** left
 - **Not a pretty picture** - is it?
 - People might say **God is being harsh** here
 - But we have to understand - **God is perfect and holy** - and He **can't accept sin** and rebellion against Him - He **can't look at it** (Habakkuk 1:13)

- But He's giving **warning** of what **will happen** - and there is a **way** to **avoid** this dreadful **Day** - **see v2**

[PowerPoint 3-Sun of Righteousness]

- Those who **revere the Lord's name** - those who aren't arrogant and realize they need a relationship with the Lord and **believe** in Him - they experience a **different** sort of **heat** - they will receive the **sun of righteousness**
- This **sun [S-U-N] of righteousness** should remind us of another **Son (S-O-N) of righteousness** - our Lord Jesus - who describes Himself as the **light of the world (John 8:12)** - and the Apostle John says in John 3:19 - **This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil**
- There's **no need** for **people** to be walking in the **darkness** of their **sin** anymore - **Jesus turns that darkness into light**
- As Malachi says at the end of v2 - this **sun of righteousness** - brings **healing rays** - the darkness of our sin - can be replaced with the healing light of Jesus - all because Jesus died on a cruel cross for the punishment our sins to be put on Him - instead of us
- So, people in a **relationship with this sun - son - Jesus** - will be **restored** to God and made right with God- so they act like well-fed calves - **leaping and frolicking**
- It's a **picture** of the **joy** of being right with God - because of Jesus - the sun of righteousness - so I **expect** us to be **leaping around** this morning/evening

- In contrast - v3 - the wicked and arrogant who were burnt earlier in the furnace and are ashes - and will be even **further trampled on by the happy hooves of the righteous**
- **On that Day** - there will **no longer** be any **doubt** - as to the fact that there is a **distinction between those right with God** and those who have **turned their back on God**

- **Not a day to face** - if you're not believing in the Lord

Application - Maybe you're someone here this morning/evening - **who hasn't thought about** that Day of Judgment. Today is a good day - to think about what you will face on that Day

(pause)

In the **meantime** - in verses 4 to 6 - God -through His prophet Malachi - **points people back** to the 2 OT characters - **Moses and Elijah**

[PowerPoint 4a-Law]

- **Moses** represents **God's Law** - God's rules - given to Moses - for the people to know how to **live lives that please God**
- The problem in Malachi's day (2:6) was that the **priests weren't teaching** the people **God's Law**
- God gives the reminder of the Law - because **God doesn't want anyone to perish** on that Day of Judgment (2 Peter 3:9)
- Application - **God's rules** are like our **road rules** - just like the **speed sign** and the stop sign shows us how we should drive - **God's Law shows us where we're going wrong** - it identifies our sin. **God's Law** may not make us stop sinning - no more than a speed limit stops us speeding- but **God's Law shows us where we fall short of God's perfect standards** - and shows

us **why we need a Jesus** - the sun of Righteousness - to **fix our broken relationship** with God

The question for all of us though - is **how serious are we about God's rules** - do we just see them as **nice guidelines**. Do we understand that following **God's law would make**: our **lives** and our **community** and our **world** much more **Godly** and **better** place to live in?

When was the last time - you **took time out to read and study and follow the Bible**? It's **God's Word** that brings us back to Him - and **God's Word** that tells us the only way to be right with Him - is to **confess our sins** and **believe in His Son**

(pause)

- Back to our passage from Malachi 4 and v5 -
- Before that great and dreadful day of Judgment - God promises to send the prophet Elijah

[PowerPoint 4b-Elijah]

- Elijah represents the **Prophets of the OT** - and their general **message** was for people to **repent and turn back to God** - or face the consequences
- So, God promises to send Elijah before that dreadful day of judgment
- The **problem** with that is - **Elijah the Prophet lived and died way before Malachi** writes his prophecy
- So, who is this **Elijah** that Malachi is talking about?
- We'll **answer** that in a **moment**
- But first **what will this Elijah figure do?**

- See V6 - He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents;
- The picture we have here - is not just a **reconciliation of families but reconciliation with God**
- When Elijah - through God - turns the hearts of children to their parents - a better translation is fathers rather than parents - the picture is of the hearts of God's children turning to **God as their Father** - and a picture of a return to glorious time of Israel's history - **when hearts were towards God** - like in the time of the **patriarch fathers** - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- If there is **no turning back of hearts** - that is - no repentance - then Malachi ends His prophecy with the promise of **destruction**
- The **same** sort of destruction that **Sodom and Gomorrah** received back in Genesis 19

[PowerPoint 5-Elijah identified as John]

In our NT passage from Luke chapter - [which we can turn to now]

The **Elijah figure** that Malachi promised is **identified as John the Baptist**

See Luke 1:17 - And he [John] will go on before the Lord, **in the spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

So, **John the Baptist** will be a **prophet like Elijah** in the OT - with the **same job** as the prophets

And **John the Baptist** will come before that dreadful day.

Let's look at our Luke 1 passage now...

2. Before that Day (Luke 1:1-25)

- We fast forward 400 years after Malachi
- Looking at verses 1 to 4 of Luke 1
- Luke writes a **reliable account** of the time that Jesus is on this Earth
- He gets his information from **eye witnesses** - so we know its reliable
- He writes to **Theophilus** - whose name means "**Friend of God**"
- And it's like Luke is writing to each one of us - as "**friends of God**"

- Then verse 5 - it's the time when **King Herod** is King of Judea
- And there's a priest called **Zechariah** - he's part of one of **24 priestly divisions** who serve in the temple [division set in 1 Chronicles 24) -
Zechariah belongs to the **division** called **Abijah**
- Both **Zechariah** and **Elizabeth** are **descendants** of the first High Priest - **Aaron** - and they are **Godly** people - and they're **very old** and **haven't been able** to have a **baby** - v7
- V9 - When Zechariah is in the Holy Place of the temple - taking his turn by lot - to burn incense - a sweet smelling aroma for the Lord - an angel appears
- Finally, God speaks again after 400 years or so of silence
- Zechariah is gripped with fear - V12

- The angel - V13 - tells Zechariah not to be afraid and says that Zechariah's prayers have been answered and his wife, **Elizabeth**, will **have a son**
- Notice God **answers prayers** in His own **perfect timing**
- This **son** to be born will be **special** - v14 and v15
 - He will be **great** in the sight of the Lord
 - He **won't drink wine** or fermented drink - as a way of being **specially marked** for God's work
 - He will most importantly be **filled with the HS** - that will equip him for his job
 - And his job - will be to bring back many people back to the Lord
 - He will have the same spirit and power as Elijah the prophet - hence the prophecy from Malachi
 - And he will **make people ready - prepared for the Lord**
 - How do people get ready?
 - **Repent and believe** - his catch cry will be like the prophets of old:
[Repent for the Kingdom of God is near \(Matt 3:2\)](#)
 - V18 - Zechariah doesn't believe the angel - so he is made so he can't speak - v20
 - The name of this **son** is to be **John** - v13 - which means [God is the giver of grace](#)
 - **John** will grow up to **tell people to turn back to God** and get ready to **receive grace** from God
 - God is the giver of **grace** - A **second chance before** that great and terrible day comes

- That **grace** is our Lord **Jesus** - John's cousin - born 6 months after John - Jesus - the **Son of God** - **King of Heaven**
- **God with skin on** - to come to this earth out of God's grace - to live to **teach people** God's way - **born to die** for our sins and rise again - so people can have **forgiveness** of their sins and **eternal life**

Application - God is giving us all a **chance to turn back** to Him and to believe in His son - **before that Dreadful Day**. We need to make sure we've done that **BEFORE** that Dreadful Judgment Day - or it will be **too late...**

You - Being ready...

Back to where we started

[PowerPoint 6-Ready?]

Are you ready for Christmas?

Are you ready to meet **Jesus for 1st time?**

- Jesus - the baby?
- Jesus - God's son?
- Jesus - the Saviour of the World?
- Jesus - the only one who can get you to Heaven?

[PowerPoint 7a-Repent]

If you haven't already turned back to God and repented - and said sorry to God for disobeying His rules - then you need to do that - before this dreadful day of judgment comes - there are **only 2 options** available to you:

[PowerPoint 7b-Reject]

A. Either - **Reject God** and be **burnt up** in **judgment** when Jesus' returns and then you will be **away from** the presence of **God forever**

[PowerPoint 7b-Return]

B. Or **turn back to God** and **believe in** His grace in sending **Jesus** - and **live with God forever**

If you don't believe in Jesus already

I invite you to say this prayer with me now - and give your heart to Him - before it's too late

In fact - let us all say this prayer together:

Dear God I have sinned

I know I have offended you in many ways

I am so sorry

I believe that Jesus suffered and died for my sins

He paid my debt in full and rose again

Jesus, I believe in you

And I thank you for what you've done for me

Please save me from the penalty of my sins

And give me a new birth

And the power to live for you

Thank you for this offer to spend eternity with you

Amen

For those who already believe in Jesus

Are you **ready for Jesus'** return - is your **focus on Him** or on the **trappings of this time of year** - remember you **don't know when Jesus will return** - Jesus says **no one knows the hour** of His return (Mark 10:30-32) - and He will **return like a thief in the night** (Matt 24:43 and 1 Thes 5:2)

[PowerPoint 8-1 Peter 3:15]

And have you **made ready others to meet Jesus** - before He returns?

As Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15: **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.**

But do this with gentleness and respect,

Or maybe you're silent - and lost your voice like Zechariah -

(pause)

In a sense we're **all - Moses' and Elijah's - reminding ourselves to look at God's Word and His Law** - and **reminding ourselves and others to repent and turn back to God - before it's too late**

So, as we approach **Christmas** - it's a **great opportunity to make people ready to meet Jesus** for the 1st time - and a great opportunity to **remind ourselves and others** that Jesus' will come a 2nd time - to take His people home -

[PowerPoint 9-Heb 9:27-28]

But let's ponder on these verses from Hebrews 9:27-28 as we finish up

27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, **28** so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many;

and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

So, we're all going to **die** and face **judgment**

Jesus dies for our **sins** to be **taken away** - if we care to **believe** that

But when **Jesus** comes the **2nd time** - he **won't be dying for sins** - He'll be **taking those** who **believe** in Him **with Him**

But you **must believe** in Him to be taken with Him - **no more chances** available

The question is - **are you ready?**

Let's pray...