

JUDGEMENT DAY, MAL.3:13-4:6

A love that won't let God #6

♦**Intro:** Can you guess this story? A young woman, an unmarried mother of a son, is informed by a time-traveling messenger that her son will one day be the savior of the world... Eh? Eh? Know the story? Wrong, it's not the Christmas story. There's more. Her son is being stalked by a devil of a being that wants to kill him before he can fulfill his destiny. (I know! Sounds like Revelation 12, right?) But a computer system known as Skynet is taking over the world of humanity and somehow her son, in the future, will overcome the darkness. The movie? Terminator: Judgment Day.

♦Can you guess this story. A city named Zion (that's the Jewish name for Jerusalem), is in danger but the people are waiting for "The One" to come and save them. "Trinity" (a theological title for the Biblical God: Father/Son/Holy Spirit) is a woman who loved "The One". And The One must fight a devil of a being that wants to kill him before he can fulfill his destiny. (I know! I'm with ya!) Several space ships are involved including the Nebuchadnezzar (cf Book of Daniel) and the Logos (what the Book of John calls Jesus: it means "the Word".) Eh? Eh? The Movie? Wrong again it's not the Christmas story, it's the Matrix.

♦It's interesting to me how so many of our stories mirror God's real story of the world. Malachi tells the same one. Here are some of the themes: something has gone desperately wrong. We need redemption. Someday there will be a showdown where things are

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put to rights by a Savior of mankind. What does it all mean for us? Lets dig into Malachi's last statements.

♦**1. The Day of the Lord is coming.** The Bible is clear that Judgment Day is coming. It's captured in the prophetic image of "The Day of the Lord." What does "The Day of the Lord" mean? Is it a threat or a promise? Well that all depends on who you are.
♦A. For some, Judgement day means joy and release, and hope! For others Judgement day means disaster and death.

♦"“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch (bottom to top) will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.” Malachi 4:1, 2, NIV.

♦The Day of the Lord is a day of devastation for the unbeliever, and a day of deliverance for the believer. Now while in the Old Testament the Day of the Lord is predominantly threatening...

♦“See, the day of the LORD is coming--a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger--to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.” Isaiah 13:9-11, NIV.

♦... in the New Testament The Day of the Lord is predominantly a day of hope and often also called “the day of Christ”.

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♦“He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:8

♦“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety”, destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.” 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5, NIV.

♦So the Day of the Lord means both destruction and deliverance: destruction of all that is wrong and evil. Deliverance for all that is good and holy. This my friends is the real story of the human race and the universe.

♦B. Now then, if judgment is coming then it matters what we do and what we think and how we behave because it will be judged. If judgement is coming then some things are futile and some thing are not. Some things will last into eternity and some things will not. If there is in fact a real Judgment Day, it means that everyone's opinion is not as valid as everyone else's. Everyone's perceived orientation in the world is not equally valid either. If Judgment Day is coming, it means I can live rightly, and I can live wrongly. It is not a matter of what “feels right”, or “works for you” is good for you and what works for me is good for me; instead it is a matter of truth. If there is a Judgment, then there is a something that works and is good for me, and for you, and

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for everybody else as well. So enough of this foolishness of "each to his own.", or "this is how I was raised". What if you were raised by wolves? It doesn't make eating people right! Our laws may fight for your freedom to chose your own way. That does not make what you choose a good, legitimate, or even true choice. There will be a Judgment Day. That means there is truth, there is a standard to which everything and everyone on earth WILL conform!

♦Some people say "only God can judge me" in order to feel better about their choices. And they are right, it doesn't matter really what any of us think. However, it matters immensely what the Judge thinks. It would be better for them to say, "God is going to judge me." At least then they might think about what they are doing. This is what Malachi is trying to remind us. There is truth in this world, absolute truth despite the fact that the majority of American's today do not believe so. There is a distinction between right and wrong.

♦""They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not." Malachi 3:17, 18, NIV.

♦C. Now remember that Israel was tired out and giving up on God in Malachi's day. To them it didn't look like it did any good to follow God. They were beginning to think that it makes no

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difference how you chose to live or what you believe. They were on the edge of thinking just like Americans today: that there is no different value between being married or not married; that there is no distinction between being a boy or a girl -be what you want; that there is no religion that is right -believe whatever you like.

Look...

♦"“You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.’”

Malachi 3:14, 15, NIV.

♦You've noticed it, haven't you? People of different religions also own whole companies. People of different beliefs also drive nice cars. People who care nothing for God's morals also get paychecks. People who are dishonest often seem to get ahead! But if there is a Judgment then everyone is going to find out someday that being wicked, and being godly do not both work. Good and bad of Yin Yang philosophy are not equal opposites. All religions are not the same and do not bring the same spiritual deliverance. The circle of life philosophy has gotten it wrong. We do not just keep going around from being the grass to being an antelope, to being food for a lion, to being a coat for a man who dies and feed the grass. No. Good will win. God, the true God, will win.

♦“Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from

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the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?" Isaiah 10:1-3, NIV.

♦"In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below." Isaiah 24:21, NIV.

♦The Day of the Lord is a call to evaluation, friends. Not to be judgmental, but to make wise judgements about everything in life. Judgmental people look down on those choosing poorly. But making distinctions/judgements are still necessary and common sense. The real question is "Is what I am doing in good judgement or not?" So the Day of the Lord can either bring me joy or it can bring me misery. Is there anything I can do to determine which one it is? I am glad to affirm to you that there is.

♦2. To endure Judgement Day, I need to revere the Lord.

♦"Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name. "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him." Malachi 3:16, 17, NIV.

♦**A.** Do you want to survive Judgment? Do you want to be treasured possession of God himself? Do you want to be spared? Then revere the Lord. This is what it means to believe in God, or

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to have faith. It does not mean to assent to the fact that there is a God. Devils do that to. Or that Jesus saves us from sin. Devils know that too. Now at first glance it would almost seem that Malachi is telling Israel that if they keep the rules, and laws of God, they will survive the Judgment Day.

◆verse 4: ""Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel." Malachi 4:4, NIV.

◆In other words, keep the requirements that Malachi has been preaching about in the book: give God your best, not your leftovers(chapter 1); don't get divorced (chapter 2); don't commit adultery, perjury, fraud, injustice (3:1-5) tithe on your income (3:6-12); -and you will live. However this is a mistake. Revering God is much more than merely following rules even though following God's rules always leads to blessing.

◆1) We should remember that "Moses" is a Hebrew reference to the things Moses wrote. The Old Testament in Hebrew is called "Moses and the Prophets", or "The Laws, Prophets, and Writings". "Moses" and "Law" refers to the first five books of the Bible. That's Genesis through Deuteronomy. Its a whole lot more than ten commandments.

◆2) Next, take Elijah. "Elijah" represents the prophets which is everything else in the OT besides Psalms/Proverbs/Ecclesiastes/Song of Solomon (Writings).

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♦“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers;””

Malachi 4:5, 6, NIV.

♦We know from the NT that John the Baptism fulfills this prophecy. Jesus said that John was the fulfillment of Mal.4:5 (Matt11:10-14). The angel predicted his birth...

♦“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”” Luke 1:17, NIV.

♦So what is it that the Prophets/John preached? Repentance from sin, and faith in the Messiah.

♦“John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.””
Acts 19:4, NIV.

♦So what is Malachi saying in chapter 4? Malachi is saying “Read the Word; Live the Word; Repent of sin, Trust the coming Savior”. Its a whole worldview, a philosophy of life. Its the whole story of God creating people to love and live with, and destroying wickedness, and forming a nation to witness for him. Can we boil it down? Yep.

♦B. To revere the Lord, or to “fear” the Lord is to honor him, love him, and follow his ways.

♦“My covenant was with [Levi], a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth and

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nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin." Malachi 2:5, 6, NIV.

- ♦Where do you need to turn from sin so as to live more in hope?
- ♦**Conclusion:** Someday. Someday, that Day... there will be no more sin, no more pain, no more death, no more lies, no more sorrow, no more divorce, no more selfishness, no more thorns, no more stings, no more foolishness, no more pollution, no more illness, no more viruses,
- ♦To revere Jesus Christ is to make Judgement Day a day of hope instead of a day of horror. His sacrifice for your sins is the payment for your hope! Take for example all the biblical statements of hope that fill Handel's Oratorio The Messiah.
 - ♦Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrow.
 - ♦And the glory of the Lord will be revealed.
 - ♦For he is like a refiners fire.
 - ♦Comfort ye my people, says your God.
 - ♦Every valley shall be exalted.
 - ♦He shall feed his flock.
 - ♦Lift up your heads of ye gates.
 - ♦I know that my redeemer lives.
 - ♦The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, we shall be changed.
 - ♦Worthy is the Lamb who has delivered us to God by his blood.

♦"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a

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second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshippers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll--I have come to do your will, O God.'" First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, ***we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.***" Hebrews 9:27-10:10, NIV.

♦His love is truly the only love that won't let go.