

## **MALACHI 4:4-6 STUDY NOTES (11/28/21)**

**Malachi's Big Theme:** At the very end of the Old Testament story, God calls Israel to return to Him once more through a series of 6 disputations (accusations and responses) between Him and Israel. What we ultimately see is *God's crunchy faithfulness in the midst of Israel's ongoing unfaithfulness.*

**Today's Context:** We come to the end of the book of Malachi and the whole Old Testament. As the Israelites wait for the coming of "Elijah" and the Messiah that they need, God calls them to Remember, Behold, and Return.

### **Additional Study Notes:**

- Here, God calls Israel to "remember" Him. Remember means more than just mentally recalling something, it means to *act* upon your knowledge. It means to be faithful to your commitments. We see different Israelites call God to the same type of remembrance in passages like Exodus 32:13, 2 Kings 20:3, Jeremiah 14:21, and more.
- "Elijah" is an interesting character in today's passage. In Matthew 11:13-14, Jesus makes clear that the people should see John the Baptist as the fulfillment of this Elijah prophecy. John comes as a new type of Elijah, drawing the hearts of people to God and changing their hearts by pointing them to Christ. However, we should acknowledge that John doesn't *perfectly* fulfill this prophecy, in that he himself doesn't change hearts. In a way, Jesus Himself is the perfect Elijah in that He's the perfect prophet. When He speaks to people's hearts, His word cannot and will not go ignored. He, and He alone, turns the hearts of people to God and to one another.
- The last chapter of Malachi is primarily rooted in future hope. A "great and dreadful day of the Lord" is coming, where God will hand out justice and healing on the earth. When Jesus comes, this process begins immediately, but it doesn't happen all at once. Jesus begins the process and promises to finish it at His second coming (Acts 1:10-11, Rev 22:12,20). This is what is known as the "Already but Not Yet" Kingdom.

Hearts are *currently* being changed, and yet, when Christ comes again, our hearts will be perfectly transformed and we will be perfectly freed from sin. We as Christians are justified, and yet we're awaiting perfect sanctification. We are - *currently* - new creations, and yet we are waiting to be perfected.

- The 400 years of "silence" between the OT and NT simply means that while things were written pertaining to God, and people still followed God, there was no new revelation directly from God.
- This passage references "Mount Horeb" which is an alternate name for Mount Sinai, where Moses and Israel received the law. Oftentimes, Horeb is used to emphasize God's covenant (Deut 5:2).

**For Additional Study (most are available to borrow from CFC):**

- NIV Study Bible
- ESV Study Bible
- *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi: A 12-Week Study* by Stephen Coleman
- *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi (NIV Application Commentary)* by David Baker
- "Malachi" in *The Message of the Prophets* by J. Daniel Hays
- *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* by D.A. Carson

## Sermon Notes

**Title:** Malachi: Advent Begins

**Text:** Malachi 4:4-6

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# **Discussion Questions**

## **CATCHING UP ON LAST WEEK**

- (1) What was most significant from Malachi 3:13-4:3? What's stuck with you as meaningful or impactful?

## **TODAY'S TEXT**

### ***KNOWING God***

- (2) What questions do you (or members of your group) have about this passage? Discuss.
- (3) What does this passage tell us about God?
- (4) What does this passage tell us about humanity?
- (5) The arrival of Jesus Christ (introduced by this new "Elijah") institutes the beginning of the end, which is often referred to as the "Already but Not Yet" (see Study Notes). How are we currently living in the Already but not Yet? What does that mean? How should that influence our daily lives?

### ***GROWING Together***

- (6) What is the significance of remembering God's laws and teachings, especially in times of challenge or apathy? How would you like to grow in this area?
- (7) What are we called to behold - or look forward to - as believers? How does it strengthen us today? How would you like to grow in this area?
- (8) In what ways do we need to (re)turn? Why is this good and necessary? How would you like to grow in this area?
- (9) What has been one major takeaway for you from the book of Malachi? How has it shaped your view of God?
- (10) What questions, ideas, or themes would you want to study further?

### ***SHOWING God to Others***

- (11) What in this passage serves as good news for the world around us?

## **PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK**

- (12) For next week, spend some time reading Luke 1:5-25. What's interesting? What questions do you have?

## **QUESTIONS FOR CHILDREN (from Children's Director Emily Reiser)**

- (13) What do you think about this passage? What is interesting and what is confusing?

- (14) This is the end of the book of Malachi, what do you think is the big takeaway? Who are they waiting for? Elijah the prophet is John the Baptist and after him, which special person comes?
- (15) It will be 400 years before this happens. Israel is promised a great Messiah and then there is a lot of waiting and anticipation. Can you imagine waiting your whole life for something and not even seeing it? But, God does fulfill His promise and Jesus does come, how does that make you feel? How does it make you want to share God's greatness with others?