

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## MALACHI 3-4

I recently ran across a list of famous last words. Final pronouncements before departing this world!

Let me read you a few... "You can make it easy, that train isn't coming so fast... Gimme a match. I think my gas tank is empty... Let's see if it's loaded... Step on it, we're only going 75... If you knew anything, you wouldn't be a traffic cop... Just watch me dive from that bridge... What? Your mother is going to stay another month?" *Just a few last words from foolish people...*

Tonight we're going to be looking at some famous last words from a wise and loving Heavenly Father.

Scholars call the 400 years between the Old Testament and New testament, "[The 400 Silent Years.](#)"

Prior to Malachi every Hebrew generation had been given its own prophets. From the **conquest** through the **captivity** to the **comeback** - from the early days of Joshua to the latter days of Nehemiah - from Moses to Malachi - God supplied the Jewish people a long line of prophets who heralded His Word. For a thousand years there was *a messenger and a message!*

But around 400 BC that succession of prophets ceased. God became silent. He stopped speaking to His people. The Babylonian Talmud, a Jewish commentary, states, "[Malachi was last written and the Spirit departed.](#)" In a sense the Holy Spirit went dark.

Malachi was the Old Testament's farewell address. It was the last word God would speak for 400 years.

Malachi was especially important because it was the message God wanted ringing in the people's ears for four centuries. Tonight, we'll study the OT's farewell.

Chapter 3, “Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts.”

This verse reminds me of the story of the young pastor fresh out of seminary. He was preaching his debut sermon and had never been more nervous.

In one of his courses a professor had said if he ever lost his place, and his mind went blank, to have a phrase he could use to sustain the flow of the sermon and jar his mind into gear. This young pastor chose this phrase from Malachi, “*Behold, He is coming.*”

Well, several times that morning the nervous preacher lost his place. Each time it happened, he slammed his fist on the pulpit and shouted, “*Behold, He is coming.*” It gave him time to re-boot his sermon.

About the third time he did this, he slammed his fist so hard that the pulpit toppled over and the pastor fell into the front row of the congregation. He ended up in the lap of one of the little old ladies of the church.

The young pastor was so embarrassed. He climbed to his feet apologizing profusely. That's when the woman told him,

“Sonny, don’t worry about it. You warned me three times you were coming.”

Here’s Malachi's message in these last two chapters, **the Lord is coming!** The prophet simultaneously speaks of both the first and second comings of Christ.

At times Malachi is difficult to interpret because his prophecies of Messiah’s Incarnation and Second Coming - *events we know to be separated by thousands of years* - appear in the same verse - even in the same breath. Here is where we need to compare Scripture with Scripture to get the text’s true meaning.

The line in verse 1, *“Behold, I send My messenger, and He will prepare the way before Me...”* is quoted by Jesus, Matthew 11:10, in reference to the ministry of John the Baptist. Isaiah 40:3 called John *“the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord.”* John was the predicted forerunner who would precede Messiah, and prepare the people’s hearts.

John was a wild man - a wilderness man - a man schooled among the snakes and scorpions. As Moses was, John was trained on the backside of a desert. He was salted and seasoned by the rigors of desert life.

John was a tell-it-like-it-is kind of a man. He was removed from the Jerusalem establishment and the corruption of the priesthood. The prophets predicted John would appear on the scene, preach God’s truth, and pave the way with a message of repentance. Then suddenly Messiah Himself would come to His Temple.

After He was baptized, Jesus went to Galilee, where He spent much of His next few years. But He made an early trip to Jerusalem. *And guess where He went?* To fulfill Malachi 3:1, *He came suddenly to the Temple.*

And notice, Malachi calls it *“His Temple.”* The Temple didn’t belong to Israel’s priesthood, or the nation. It was Messiah’s Temple. He called it, *“His Father’s house.”*

And Jesus acted as if it were *“His Temple.”* He threw out the moneychangers and cleansed the Temple of its polluted practices. Jesus made an instant impression!

The astute Jew aware of Malachi 3:1 would've recognized what was happening and seen the signs. This was as God’s Word predicted 400 years earlier.

Keep in mind, 3:1 is in response to the question asked in 2:17, *“where is the God of justice?”* Because God had not judged the wickedness of the people in Malachi's day they were scoffing at His righteousness.

They were mocking God, *“He's nothing but a “paper tiger.”* God is all bark and no bite. Since God does nothing to judge our sin, He must be OK with our evil.”

Of course, their logic was ludicrous. Their thinking *neglected their history and ignored God’s prophecy.* Their past and future taught them that God punishes sin! Here is Malachi's answer to their question, *“where is the God of justice?” - 3:1, “Behold, He is coming.”*

For now God is patient, hoping we’ll repent - but He is coming, and when He does the wicked will be judge!

Verse 2, “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap.”

Fire separates slag from metal - soap separates dirt from cloth - and Jesus separates sin from human hearts! Jesus is a refiner's fire and a fuller's soap. Put your faith in Jesus and He cleans up a person’s life.

The fuller was an ancient launderer. It was his job to take a raw garment and free it from the oils and gummy substances that cling to its fibers. He used a pasty white clay made from ashes, resins, and putrid urine. He'd wash the fiber over and over in running water. Workers would tread the cloth as it was rinsed.

Then the garment was hung out to dry and bleached by the sun... All this was done in the fuller's house, and because of the odors the procedure produced it meant the fuller's house was usually located outside the city.

And let's not miss the parallels. Jesus is like an ancient launderer. The cleansing He offers is not a one time purification. It’s like the procedure of a fuller.

When we give our lives to Christ we become a new creation, but the Christian is still plagued by the oily, gummy sins of the past that stick to the fibers of the flesh. When we're saved Christ, the fuller, begins the cleansing process. He rinses us - then treads us down and beats out our pride and self-sufficiency. He hangs us out to dry in the heat of persecution and trials.

And often, this is done outside the gate, where we're shaped by the discipline of loneliness. If you're in Christ you've been taken to *the divine dry-cleaners*.

And the imagery of the refiner is also illustrative.

The refiner turns up the fire under the metal. The heat causes impurities to rise, where they're skimmed off the top. The process is repeated... *And how does the refiner know when the purification is complete?*

When he's able to see his reflection in the metal!

Likewise, Jesus is our refiner. He keeps us in the fire and turns up the heat. Trials and difficulties bring the slag to the surface in our lives, where He skims it off. This is repeated until He sees His reflection in us!

Verse 3, **“He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.”** Malachi predicts purification will occur among the Jewish priests, or sons of Levi.

In a limited sense this work began at Jesus' first coming. Acts 6:7 tells us, **“The Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”** Some of the priests were saved.

Today, Jews, even of the priestly line, continue to be saved when the Gospel is preached. Yet the ultimate fulfillment of this promise refers to the Second Coming of Jesus when the Jews will believe on Him in mass.

In Zechariah 12:10 promises, “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced.” When the Jews see Jesus again all the Jews will repent and believe. Romans 11:26 tells us, in that day, “All Israel will be saved.”

Verse 4, “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien - because they do not fear Me,” says the Lord of hosts.” Again, remember Malachi’s question, “where is the God of justice?”

He's coming and He'll judge the wicked!

“For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.” Theologians speak of *God’s immutability - He changes not*. He’s never boring, but forever the same. He’s trustworthy.

God’s character is changeless. He is solid as a rock!

For a world in a state of flux... where the only thing certain is that things are never certain... what a comfort to have a God who says, “*I do not change.*”

God is the anchor in a sea of continual flux.

Realize God doesn't play to the spirit of the age. He doesn't change His mind about what's right and wrong.

God doesn't read the latest surveys that show where 65% of Americans now say that living with a person before marriage is a good idea - and then draw the conclusion, "Let's see, if 65% of Americans are doing it, I should update My rules on sex and marriage."

God doesn't care if 100% of Americans *just do it*.

God's truth is eternal and not dependent on recent polls. God could care less about being *politically correct*. God is *eternally correct*. He's immutable!

**But don't mistake *immutable* for *immobile*.**

God's standards and principles never change, but He's quick to make fresh application of those principles to current situations. **God is timeless, but timely.**

His motives are forever changeless, but His methods are forever changing. God is rigid in His attributes and in His actions, yet He is responsive in His approach.

Verse 7, **Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts.** God doesn't need to change. It's people who need to change... Whenever a problem crops up in your life you can make two reasonable assumptions.

First, **the problem is never God.** Rule that out immediately. And second, **the problem is usually me.**

That possibility deserves strong and immediate scrutiny. Usually, the key that unlocks the answer to my problem is me. If I'm willing to change, God will change me. He says, **"return to Me, and I will return to you."**

“But you said, ‘In what way shall we return?’

*And talking about a blind spot...* Jews in Malachi's day were so ignorant of God's truth they had no idea where they'd departed. *“In what way shall we return?”*

In verse 8 God gives them an example of how they'd backslidden, and how they needed to return to Him...

“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’

*In tithes and offerings.”*

Needless to say, robbing God is a serious offense!

In John 12:6 we're told Judas Iscariot was Jesus' treasurer. Yet He'd steal from the money bag. Just how low can you go - to loot from the Lord! It's despicable.

Yet Malachi says you and I can also steal from God.

We're being as despicable as Judas, when we withhold the giving of our tithes and offerings to God.

In the OT the tithe was not the people's to give. The first of the flock, or the first of the crop, belonged to God. He had dibs on the first portion. *It wasn't that they were failing to give.* They were robbing God of what belonged to Him in the first place. They were breaking into God's treasury and making off with His money.

The Jews in Malachi's day were guilty of this crime. *And I have to ask, “Have you been stealing from God?”*

Verse 9 says to them, *“You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.”*

God points out evidence to show the Jews just how far they had backslidden from Him, and exhibit "A" was they'd stopped tithing. *This is still a prime indicator of a backslidden heart.* When a person starts to drift from God, usually the first thing to go is their giving.

Here, the problem God sites is that His people were withholding their tithes. The word *"tithe"* means *"tenth."*

It's first mentioned in Genesis 14 when Abraham gave an offering - a tithe - to the priest Melchizedek.

In the Mosaic Law there was not just one tithe, but four different tithes - three per year and one ever third year. This meant that the annual tithe in the OT, for the Jews, was not just 10%, but 33%. The first one-third of the people's income belonged, not to them, but to God.

So the question arises, *"Are NT believers under the OT laws concerning tithing?"* And here's *my* answer, **"We're free from the Law, but not the principle!"**

We're free from the laws of tithing to the same degree as we're free from the laws concerning diet, or feasts, or sacrifices, or Sabbath. God isn't concerned any longer with whether we do work on Saturday, *but isn't there wisdom in setting aside a day for rest and worship?* Of course there is - the principle still applies!

And the same is true with our tithing. In Luke 6:38 Jesus said, *"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over."* Jesus doesn't stipulate an amount or an interval, but the principle behind our giving is still enforce.

In fact, the NT doesn't mention a tenth (or tithe), because why would God limit us to 10%? In the OT the tithe belonged to the Lord, but in NT times we're taught that all we have (100% of it) belongs to the Lord.

Jesus said in the Sermon On The Mount, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees..." He expects us to give all we have to Him, not just 10%. And it's the Holy Spirit who then guides you as to how much that means, and when it applies.

And yet it's hard for me to think I've really given *all*, if I'm not willing to turn loose of a meager ten percent.

In Medieval times entire armies were converted to Christianity, yet when the soldiers were baptized they kept their sword hand out of the water. That way if they resorted to indiscriminate killing on the battlefield, they justified it by saying, "This hand was never baptized."

I'm afraid, many modern Christians get baptized with their wallet out of the water. They've given themselves to Christ, but they plan to handle their money their way.

If that's your attitude, then you're robbing God.

It's true, we're not under the law of tithing, but don't ignore the principle. Giving a tenth of your income is still a good discipline to adopt. You're trusting that God can do more with 90%, than you can do with 100%.

Verse 10, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house..." Apparently, "the storehouse" referred to the Temple treasury. The priests were supported

from these resources, and God wanted to make sure His priests had ample supply.

Paying the priests was one reason God required a tithe. This is also how pastors are paid - from tithes.

Verse 10 continues, “**And try Me now in this** (in your tithing),” **says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”** To my knowledge *this is the only place in the Bible where God dares us to put Him to the test!*

We're often cautioned not to be presume upon God. Avoid projecting your expectations on Him. We're to leave the outcome to His sovereignty. Yet not here!

When it comes to tithing we're commanded *to test Him, to try Him, to prove the faithfulness of His Word!*

Earlier I read the first half of Luke 6:38, but let me read it in its entirety, “**Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over... for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.**” As NT believers we should give, but how much should we give?

***The answer is how much do you want to receive?***

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, “**He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he proposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.**” We should see our giving to God as an investment. If we make wise investments we'll reap tremendous dividends.

How much we reap depends on how much we sow.

I once heard of a man who came to his pastor for help.

He confessed that since he'd gotten a new job he was having problems tithing. When he was making \$200 a week, tithing was no big deal, but now that he made \$1000 a week he was having a hard time writing out his check. The pastor prayed for him, "Lord, please return this man to his \$200 a week job so he will remain in your will and enjoy the blessings of giving."

That's not quite the prayer the man had in mind. It's been said, "Give according to your income, lest God make your income according to your giving."

I read of a well known philanthropist who was asked, "*How is it that you give away so much, and yet have so much left?*" The man replied, "I shovel out, and God shovels in, and God has a bigger shovel than I do."

John Bunyan once said, "A man there was, and they called him mad; the more he gave, the more he had."

God is challenging us, "*Put Me to the test. I dare you to try and out-give Me. You'll discover it can't be done.*"

Here's one more thought on tithing before we move on. Realize, the practice predated the Law of Moses.

Tithing was practiced by Abraham, and the Bible calls Abraham "*the father of our faith.*" Since Abe is an example of NT, saving faith, how appropriate it is then to follow His example when it comes to our finances.

Tithing is not a Law, but a principle.

It's a good guideline, and shouldn't be ignored. Tithing is a baseline. It's a starting point for our giving.

Verse 11, “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” says the Lord of hosts; “and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,” says the Lord of hosts.” God will protect their prosperity from the devourer - *invading armies, disease, plague, drought.*

For us it might be *inflation, taxation, hidden costs.*

God is faithful to protect the person who tithes.

“Your words have been harsh against Me,” says the Lord, “Yet you say, ‘what have we spoken against You?’ Again, this is the structure of Malachi’s prophecy.

God makes a statement. The people plead their ignorance or innocence. Then God proves His case.

And here’s why their words had been harsh. For “You have said, ‘It is useless to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts?’

The Hebrew word translated “*profit*” was the part of the cloth the weaver cut from the loom that he could keep for himself. Here God’s people are crying out for their “*cut.*” They’d served and suffered for God, but all they cared about was what they would get out of it.

The Jews had said it doesn’t pay to serve God.

Malachi continues, “So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; they even tempt God and go free.” Serve God and there’s no reward - rebel and there’s no punishment. This is what the Jews in Malachi’s day had concluded.

Have you ever thought, “Does it really pay to serve the Lord?” At times faithfulness in ministry and obedience to God can be tough. Try to help hurting people, and often hurting people hurt you. There have been times when I was so dejected and discouraged I started to question, “Is serving the Lord really worth it?”

Malachi answers this question in verse 16...

“Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name.”

Remember, God has different books in heaven...

There is the Lamb's Book of Life which has recorded all those who are covered by the blood of Jesus.

There are open books at the Great White Throne of Judgment that record the deeds of unbelievers.

But then there’s the Book of Remembrance mentioned here by Malachi. It’s a precious book. It’s a book in heaven that records every secret deed, or unrewarded kindness, done by every servant of God.

Every time you've served the Lord your act of love and sacrifice has been recorded in heaven, and it'll one day be rewarded. Perhaps, no one else saw the kindness or good

deed you did, but God was a witness to it, and He's recorded it for future recognition.

This is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Verse 17, "They shall be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." What a beautiful thought, God thinks of His servants as His "jewels." We're God's treasure!

"Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him." God assures us that in the end there'll be no ambiguity - or blurring of the outcomes - there'll be a clear, undeniable delineation between the plight of the righteous and of the wicked.

In eternity, God's servants will get their cut. Everyone will conclude that it was definitely paid to serve the Lord.

Chapter 4, *the final chapter in the OT*, "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the Lord of hosts, "that will leave them neither root nor branch."

Remember, in the original text there are no chapter divisions, so these verses continue to advance the thoughts started in Chapter 3 about Messiah's coming.

The Second Coming of Jesus is clearly in view. And the question was raised, “Does it pay to serve the Lord? God’s answer: “*Yes, and it’ll be clear on payday.*”

When Jesus returns *the wicked will be judged and the righteous will sparkle like jewels.* There’ll be no question as to whether it paid to serve God on *payday.*

Verse 2, “*But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.*”

One day *THE* Sun will arise, Jesus will return! The NT **never** refers to Him as “*the sun of righteousness.*” This is an OT term. In the NT, Revelation 22:16, Jesus is called the “*bright and morning star.*” And there’s a significant reason for this difference of idioms.

The Church looks for *the Morning Star* - the star that appears in the sky just before the day dawns. Jesus raptures the Church before He judges the world. He comes as *the star* before He appears as *the sun.*

But once *the Morning Star* fades from the sky, the red hot *Sun of Righteousness* will appear and shine in His blazing glory. The Sun of Righteousness burns up the wicked as He blesses those who fear Him. The same Sun, the same heat, will both *blister and bless.*

Thus, the outcome of every individual will depend on the character of the person on whom the light falls.

The wicked are like trees in the dessert. They’re parched, and brittle - one flicker of fire scorches them.

While those who fear the Lord are like trees planted by the waters. The Sun's light stimulates their growth.

The remainder of Malachi outlines four blessings that come upon the Jews who fear the Lord at Messiah's return. When the Sun of Righteousness arises He'll **bring healing** - **cause growth** - **triumph over Israel's enemies** - and **restore broken relationships**.

And these blessings don't just belong to Israel. In a spiritual sense they belong to everyone who fears the Lord, including His Church. If you reverence God in your life, and regard Him properly, then Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, will rise up in your heart *and bless...*

First, with *"healing in His wings."*

The Hebrew word *"wings"* is *"kanaph"* - which means *"to project."* On a bird this is a wing, on a garment its a flap, on a building it's an overhang or ornament, for an army it's the flank, for the sun its rays or light-beams.

And when you fear the Lord and bow to His ways, the first thing He **projects** into your life is His **healing**.

Living life on your own takes its toll. Its like dancing through a minefield. But when get on track with God, He heals what hurts and mends what's broken. If you hurt tonight you need Jesus, the Great Physician.

It's been said, *"Virus, is a Latin word used by doctors to mean, "Your guess is as good as mine."*

But healing isn't guesswork with Jesus. He designed us. He knows what makes us tick. It's been said "[Never argue with a doctor; he has inside information.](#)"

And so often God's medicine comes to us in the form of His Word. How many of our ills could be cured instantly by simply applying the Word of God to our lives. One man noted, "[Miracle drugs are nothing new - Moses had two tablets that could solve any sickness.](#)"

Notice in verse 2, the second blessing that comes to those who fear the Lord - **growth**. Jesus will cause us to go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. He'll supply us our every need - and with great abundance.

*Obviously, God has been working in my life!*

Some of you who are on slim fast diets, or weight-watchers, or you've been to the gym this week may have a hard time getting excited over this imagery, but Malachi is thinking spiritually, not physically. If we fear the Lord He'll fatten us up like a stall-fed calves!

And note, Malachi isn't speaking of grazing cattle.

*When will we as Christians learn, it's not up to us to graze?* It's not our responsibility to wander through the fields of life looking for satisfaction and blessing.

God promises to bring the blessing to us. When we make the commitment that we'll only feed from the Lord's trough, He'll fill it with all the feed that we need.

You don't have to comb the bars to find the right babe. You don't have to hop from job to job. You don't have jump onto the latest fad to be fulfilled. Just fear and trust the Lord. *Stay*

*in the stall, abide in Christ, rest in the Lord* and He'll bring blessings right to you. Fear the Lord, wait on Him, and get bloated with blessings.

Then the third blessing is **triumph**. Verse 3, “**You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,**” says the Lord of hosts.” Jesus will cause those who fear the Lord to trample their enemies. God doesn't want you and I to muddle through life - but to live in victory. He doesn't just want us to merely *survive* but *succeed*.

God wants to break the chains that hold you down.

He wants to help you shake the habits that hinder your progress. As your Lord, His goal is to help you join the over-comers! To live above your circumstances.

Learn to fear the Lord and you'll fear nothing else!

Then in verse 4, “**Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.**” And here's the fourth blessing that comes to those who fear the Lord, **restoration of fractured relationships**. God promises to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and those of the children to their fathers. When you learn to fear the Lord, God begins to rebuild broken relationships.

Nothing causes your kids to respect you more than to see you respect the Lord - to genuinely, practically put Him first in your affairs. When we fear the Lord and come to God with a broken, humble spirit, God begins to turn the hearts of those we love, back to us!

I'll never forget the time I taught on this passage in Malachi, and it resonated in the heart of a father and son in our fellowship who had been estranged for many years. God had worked miraculously to touch them both deeply, and to mend their relationship.

That week they went out and both got tattoos that read **“Malachi 4:6.”** The following Sunday they both rolled up their shirtsleeves to show me their tattoos. It was the only time I thought a tattoo was good idea.

In verses 4-5 Malachi also prophesies that Elijah will come prior to the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

When Jesus came the first time, John the Baptist appeared in **“the spirit and power of Elijah,”** but when Jesus comes the second time Elijah himself will come.

Recall when Jesus was transformed on the Mount of Transfiguration, clothed in glory, Elijah also appeared.

I believe when Jesus returns the second time in all His glory, the Prophet Elijah will go before Him.

In Jewish homes at the feast of Passover an extra chair is always put at the table for Elijah. It represents their hope in his coming to pave the way for Messiah.

In Revelation 11 we're told two witnesses will come prior to the second coming of Christ. They're given miraculous power. One of them is able to shut up the heavens from raining, and call down fire to destroy his enemies. These are the same miracles Elijah worked.

These two witnesses will preach for 1,260 days, and I believe its a good possibility one the two witnesses will be Elijah, in fulfillment of this prophecy in Malachi.

In a nutshell the message of Malachi is to **fear the Lord**. I've heard it said, **"It's more dangerous to trifle with God than to bear your chest to a blizzard, or play with a rattlesnake."**  
*Do we trifle with Almighty God?*

*Do we take Him for granted? Or do we show Him the respect and give Him the allegiance He deserves?*

Malachi was God's last word to the Jewish people before the coming of their Messiah. God meant for this message to ring in His people's ears for 400 years.

As we approach Jesus' Second Coming I believe the same message should be ringing in our ears today.

It's interesting how the OT ends. The final word is **"curse."** The Law of Moses included not only 613 commands, but also a series of blessings and curses.

Under the Law you were required to keep the rules. If you obeyed you were blessed, but if you disobeyed you were cursed. The problem with the Law was it required a standard of righteousness that exceeded man's ability to obtain. Try as they might the Jews couldn't live up to the Law's demands. The outcome of their efforts is summed up in

this final word - the very last word of the OT, "*curse.*" Man left up to his own devices and determination is *cursed* under the Law.

When the Jewish rabbis read the last verse of Malachi they were so upset, and so unwilling to admit their failure they repeated verse 5 after verse 6 so that the OT ended with Elijah and victory, not a curse.

Yet Malachi's ending can't be escaped. The Prophet is warning Israel of a coming curse unless they're able to find a way to be righteous apart from the Law.

Which of course, leads to the message of the NT.

The NT is good news. It revealed the means God provided to escape the Law's curse. Jesus was made a curse for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ, and know His blessing.

It's interesting the OT ends with a curse. Whereas the NT ends with "*grace.*" The last word in the NT is Revelation 22:21, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*" It's a promise of blessing.

Galatians 3:13-14 sums it up this transition from OT to NT, "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.. that the blessing.. might come upon the gentiles in Christ Jesus.*"

The cross of Christ put an end to the curse, and now God pours out His grace to all who believe in His Son.