

# Future Certainty – The Future Certainty of his Ultimate Reign

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Date: 29 December 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] So we turn now to God's Word, so please do, if you have a Bible, do turn to the last book of the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi. Malachi chapter 2, and we're going to read it from verse 17.

We've got two readings this morning, actually, and later in our service, Willie will be preaching to us, continuing in this Old Testament prophet. And we've been looking at the ways in which the coming of the Lord Jesus and His kingdom have been foretold centuries before and promised.

So let's have our first reading then, Malachi chapter 2, and we begin reading at verse 17. Hear the word of the Lord.

You have wearied the Lord with your words. But you say, how have we wearied Him?

By saying, everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them. Or by asking, where is the God of justice?

[ 1 : 14 ] 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.

And the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts. 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 fuller's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

And He will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them like gold and silver. And they will bring offerings and righteousness to the Lord.

Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years. Then I will draw near to you for judgment.

[ 2 : 20 ] I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely. Against those who oppress the hard worker and his wages, the widow and the fatherless.

Against those who thrust aside the sojourner. And do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. And then please do turn on a few pages to the New Testament and to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 3.

Matthew chapter 3. And we will read from Matthew 3, verse 1. In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, when he said, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.

Make his path straight. Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt round his waist. And his food was locusts and wild honey.

[ 3 : 48 ] Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him. And they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Now do not presume to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

I baptize you with water for repentance. But he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.

[ 4 : 59 ] He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand.

And he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

Well, amen. And may God bless to us this, his words. Well, here we are on the 29th of December. We've all eaten far too much. Perhaps we feel we've spent enough time with relatives to do this till this time next year. And no doubt for many of us, the festive feel-good factor is fading quite fast. Christmas has come and Christmas has gone. But although we might feel that that is so, I do want to challenge that idea this morning. Because according to the Bible, yes, Christmas has indeed come.

[ 6 : 03 ] But it hasn't gone. Indeed, quite the reverse. Christmas in the sense of the long promised day of Christ's coming. The sunrise of that great new day for the world.

It did begin with the birth of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago. But the full zenith of that bright day is something that still lies in the future.

Christmas has come, but Christ is coming again. And that, friends, is a future certainty. And unless we understand that, we really haven't grasped the real meaning of Christmas at all.

As the great day of the coming of the Lord himself to reign over his world. So I want to return this morning to the prophet Malachi.

Just to make sure we really are absolutely clear about what he means when he speaks about the day of his coming. Let's be clear. Jesus himself tells us very plainly that Malachi was talking about him.

[ 7 : 12 ] And that the Elijah, who Malachi said would be sent to announce the great and awesome day of the Lord. That that person was indeed John the Baptist. Jesus tells us that explicitly.

He was a messenger. And he was sent to prepare the way for the Son of God. Now we focused in our carol services this year. On the wonderful picture that Malachi gives in chapter 4, verse 2 of his prophecy.

Of what the coming of the Messiah will mean for those who long for it. Who fear his name. Who are longing for his coming. And they're beautiful pictures. But I want to look back this morning to the verses that we read there in chapter 2, verse 17 and following.

Verses which certainly promise a great coming of the Lord. But actually when we read them seem to be rather out of keeping with what we think of as the Christmas spirit.

And we need to ask the question, don't we? What kind of event in history did Jesus himself describe his birth and indeed his life and his death and his resurrection as being all about?

[ 8 : 25 ] If it's fulfilling what Malachi promises here about the coming of the Lord to his temple. His coming to his own people Israel.

Indeed his coming for all the people of this whole world. We need to be very clear what he was meaning. Well Malachi's message is indeed the message of that carol.

Christ the Lord is coming. But what kind of coming does Malachi promise? And does Jesus himself actually affirm?

We'll do turn to that passage Malachi 2 verse 17. Following on into chapter 3. Well I think we have to say that what Malachi foretells.

Is first of all a shaking coming. A shaking coming that reveals God's absolute justice. His righteousness.

[ 9 : 28 ] Why is he coming? Go verse 17. Because God is weary of the inadequacy and the massive disappointment he finds in humanity.

You have wearied the Lord with your words. That's quite a turnaround isn't it? Because many people today think it's the other way around.

Many people in our world and our culture certainly feel they're very weary of God. And any thoughts that they do have of God is that he is rather inadequate. He must be rather feeble.

And actually what people were saying in Malachi's time is exactly what many people are saying in our time. Look at verse 17. Where is the God of justice? This head. How can there be a God who allows so much suffering?

So much injustice. So much evil in the world. Well that's what many people are saying isn't it?

There's so much of that. Look at Syria. Look at Israel and Palestine.

[ 10 : 33 ] Look at the Yemen. Look at Iran and so on. How can there be a God at all? If the world is as it is. Or if there is a God. Well he must be evil mustn't he?

He must be immoral. And we want nothing to do with a God like that. Isn't that what many people say? That may be what you're thinking this morning. Another thing people still say is there in verse 17 again.

Look everyone who does evil must be good in God's eyes. Because there always seems to be the villains who come out on top in our world. Well we often think that don't we?

Politicians. Bankrupt the country with their idiotic policies. And then they walk out of government into multi-million pound jobs. In industry. In the media. Pharmaceutical industry and so on. Where's the justice? Or the borrowers. Who constantly live beyond their means. Constantly spend more than they earn. And yet when the crunch comes. They're the ones who get bailed out.

[11:38] And who fits the bills? The ordinary people. The prudent savers. And they suffer from the rock bottom interest rates. And more and more taxes on everything they have.

Managed to save. Despite all the things against them. What's the message in public life today? Well morality doesn't pay does it? It just doesn't get you success in this world.

So surely we've got to chuck out all of that old hat stuff. All that Christianity. Forget it. And we'll just say with Frank Sinatra.

I'll live life my way. Because God is obviously powerless. In fact. God would surely have to change his ways. His moral standards.

If he wants me to become a worshipper of him. That's what people were saying two and a half thousand years ago. In Malachi's time. It just shows doesn't it? That the human heart. The human mind doesn't change much.

[12:39] Over the millennia. And that's what many people are still saying today. And even the churches sadly. Are often joining in with the same chorus aren't they?

Because so many churches seem to think. That the same old God of the past. Is just quite inadequate for the 21st century. So God will obviously have to change his ways. If we're going to attract people.

Into his church. Sorry Lord. You'll have to change. Your ways just aren't acceptable anymore. You'll need a makeover. You'll need to change your views. On all these things that people don't like.

Especially these restrictive views. On things like marriage and sexuality. Especially these ideas of the uniqueness. Of one God and one Savior. You probably saw on the news yesterday.

That the army chaplaincies. The forces chaplaincies. Have got to get the cross taken out of their emblem. And their badge. Because it's far too restrictive now. In a multicultural age.

[13:38] But look at verse 17. What does God say to all of this? I am weary. Of all this talk.

So look. Chapter 3 verse 1. Behold. I'm coming to this earth. To have it out. On a day of reckoning. And my messenger.

Verse 1. Is going to prepare the way. But then. Bang. This Lord. Who you say you're so eager to meet. He's going to come.

He's going to answer his critics. But you are going to get the shock of your life. When that day comes. Verse 2. Who can endure.

The day of his coming. What's he going to do when he comes. Well Malachi says. He's going to bring fire. He'll come burning.

[14:38] Like an oven. Setting them ablaze. That's what we read in chapter 4. In these last few weeks. Wasn't it? And those are the very words. That John the Baptist used. Of Jesus of Nazareth.

When he announced his ministry. Some 450 years after this. We read it in Matthew chapter 3. He will baptize you with. Fire. Said John. He will burn.

With unquenchable. Fire. Those are his very words. Look it up. We read it. A little earlier. It's where our expression. Baptism of fire. Comes from by the way. And that's how John.

Described Jesus coming. And. Here's the thing. Jesus. Endorsed him. One hundred percent. That's something of a shock.

Isn't it? It is. A picture of full. And total. Judgment. On the one hand. Malachi talks about. A painfully purifying fire.

[15:34] A fire of refinement. To remove dross. To remove. Impurity. Like out of silver. Or to remove the dirt. From wool. With a filler soap.

But on the other hand. He talks about a. Dreadfully punishing fire. A fire of retribution. Look at verse 5 there. In chapter 3. Then I will draw near to you for.

Judgment. Swift judgment. He says. Against sorcerers. Who are they? Well they are people who pervert. True. Spirituality. Into something that just serves themselves. And not God. And therefore as he says. They cherish. Adultery. And lies. And exploitation. For self gain. But do not fear God. But do not fear God. They ignore God. They refuse to take God seriously. At all. So here's Malachi's message. Christmas is coming. [16:38] The Christ is coming. But when he does. It will be a day of shaking. Shaking. Reality. That will reveal at last.

The absolute justice. The righteousness. Of God. In answer to all the mockery. All the. The disbelief. All the rejection of his ways. And his person. By the people of this world. Look over to chapter 4. Verse 1. We've read this a few times. The day that is coming. He says. Burning. Like an oven. When all the arrogant. And all evil doers. Will be stubble. That day is coming. And it shall set them ablaze. Jesus. That's the Christmas. That Malachi foresaw. And that's what the. Baptist. John the Baptist. Announced. About Jesus coming. And that's what Jesus himself. Repeatedly said. His coming. Was all about.

[17:34] Listen to what he said here. From. From Luke's gospel. Chapter 12. I came. To cast fire on the earth. Said Jesus. Do you think I came to give peace on earth?

Well of course we did Jesus. That's what the Christmas cards say. No. He says. I tell you. No. But rather division. Does that shock you?

Of course you don't expect. A service at Christmas. To talk about that. You expect it to be all about. Peace on earth. Don't you? Not the opposite. But these are Jesus' own words.

Doesn't sound very Christmassy. And of course it shocked. Jesus. Hearers. Pretty violently too. They did not like it at all. In fact. They said Jesus had to be cancelled.

He had to be censored. Cancel culture didn't start in the 21st century. You know. It's right back there in the first century. And that's why they ended up murdering him.

[18:33] Popping off people who don't agree with the government narrative. Didn't begin with the CIA. It's been going on right through history. And that's the United Testament. And that's the United Testament.

Of the prophets. And of John. And of Jesus. This message. Christmas. Is all about. The promise. Of a shaking coming. Of God. To this earth. To reveal.

His absolute justice. To this world. And therefore. It must bestow.

His absolute judgment. On all who have mocked his ways. Rejected his ways. Scorned him. And ignored him. And according to Jesus.

That's what Christmas is all about. But it's not all. That Christmas. Is all about. There is more.

[19:31] There's something more to be said. And that is of overwhelming importance. Because. Despite everything I've said about Christmas. And we cannot avoid that. Because it's the truth of God. Told by every prophet. Told by Jesus himself.

Despite that. But nevertheless. Christmas does. Also strike for us. The hour of God's grace. Because. He who comes.

As promised. As a refiner's fire. Is also. Also. The one who comes first. With redeeming love. The promise of Christmas.

That Malachi. And the other prophets gave. Is without question. A day of fiery judgment. That will punish. All evil. And all scorn. And all mockery.

Of God. And because of that. And only through that judgment. On evil. It will. Usher in. A true.

[20:32] And lasting. Peace. To this world. A world. That is at last. Made new. And made right. Forever. And ever. Forever. But you see. All the Bible tells us.

Is that on that day. It will then be too late. For all of those. Who have mocked. And scorned their maker. Malachi says.

They will not be able. To endure. The day of that coming. The fire of that judgment. They. Will be stubble. He says. And Jesus is very clear.

About that. Because. There must be justice. Otherwise. God would be unjust. God would be evil. He is a just. Judge. And will do right. But you see.

And this is why. This is why Christmas. Is such great. Good news. What the angels. Announced. Was that the coming. Of the Lord. Would first of all. First of all. Not be.

[ 21 : 30 ] That terrible. Shaking coming. Revealing. God's absolute. Righteousness. But it would. First of all. Be a saving coming. Revealing.

God's abundant. Mercy. To this world. Look over to Malachi. Chapter 4. And verse 5. At the very end. Of his prophecy.

God says. He'll send. Elijah the prophet. Before. Before. The great. And awesome. Day of the Lord. Comes to turn. People's hearts. Back. To God. To call them.

To repent. To turn. And so. To avoid. That judgment. Because. He is a God. Of abundant. Mercy. And so. John the Baptist.

The promised Elijah. Came. We read of him. In the gospels. And that was. Exactly. His message. To that generation. In Israel. Wasn't it? Repent.

[ 22 : 26 ] Turn. Because. The kingdom of God. Is at hand. Now you read on. In Matthew's gospel. To the beginning. Of Jesus ministry. His first.

Publicly. Proclaimed words. Exactly the same. Repent. Why? Because. The kingdom of heaven. Is at hand. Not.

Notice. Or just. Keep. Keep on doing. What you're doing. Keep on doing. As you please. Because God. Is a God of love. He'll never judge anybody. Not. Not that. Not ever that. But rather. The kingdom of his righteousness.

Is coming. And that means that. Judgment is coming. His fire is coming. But because. Of his great love. I have come now.

To bring a day of mercy. So that you may turn back. Before the judgment. You may be saved. Through that judgment. Jesus came to proclaim.

[ 23 : 21 ] God's great mercy. And to call people. To receive that mercy. By trusting in him. By following him. By bowing the knee. To his rule. And he could only do that.

Because he came. To win. Mercy for his people. Through his own death. On the cross. For our sins. To take. Upon himself.

The punishment. For all our mockery. For all our scorn. For all our. Rejection. Of God. Who made us. So that we might be forgiven.

For that scorn. For that mockery. So that we might be brought near. To the God. Who so loved us. That he bore.

In his own person. That judgment. For our sins. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Himself. Faced. The blazing fire.

[ 24 : 20 ] Of God's righteous judgment. So that we might sing. Christ the Redeemer. Is here. So that we might know. That love. Is smiling.

From his face. So that we know. That that strikes for us. Now the hour of grace. Because the Savior. Has been born. Because his coming.

Long promised. Was first. A saving. Coming. That reveals. To the world forever. God's abundant mercy. Before. Before.

That great and awesome. Final day of judgment. When you should be. Absolutely certain. That the risen Lord Jesus. Will return. To judge this whole earth. In perfect righteousness.

When he will come at last. To overcome all enemies. To establish. To enforce. His peace. In this world. Friends. That's the real message. Of Christmas. That's what the prophets promised.

[ 25 : 15 ] That's what John the Baptist. Announced. That's what Jesus himself. Confirmed. Again and again. Christmas has come. In part. The promise has been fulfilled.

In the dawning. Of that day of grace. But. It's yet. To be. Fully realized. And Christmas. Christmas is coming again. Because Jesus.

Is coming again. In all his glory. As the Lord. As the judge. Of all this earth. And that's not just what the prophets foretold.

That's what Jesus himself. Promised again. And again. He will come to reign. Over all. And the question is. Who.

Who. Will endure. The day of that coming. Look at Malachi's words again there. In chapter 4. Verses 1 and 2. He says.

[ 26 : 12 ] Doesn't he. That there will be a blazing. Fiery judgment. For all the arrogant. For all evil doers. But. Verse 2. A wonderfully different picture.

Of joyous salvation. For those who fear his name. Who fear his name. All through Malachi's prophecy. That great distinction. Is between those who despise God's name.

Through willful ignorance. Willful revolt. Against his words. And his ways. And those who. Well. Chapter 3. Verse 16. There says. Who feared the Lord. Who esteemed. His name. They will be mine. Says the Lord of hosts.

Verse 17. I will spare them. Do you see. As a man. Spares his son. And then you will see. The distinction. Between the righteous.

[ 27 : 12 ] And the wicked. Between. The one who serves God. And the one who does not serve him. Do you see that distinction. It's so. So important. What makes you righteous.

Or wicked. Is not. Not. Primarily. A question. Of your innate moral qualities. It's all.

A question. Of whether you've acknowledged. Whether you've. Bowed down to serve. The one true God. In earth and heaven. Whether you've feared.

And esteemed his name. He says. Or. Whether you've ignored. And despised his name. And shown your contempt. Thereby. For the one who made you.

But to do that. Is disastrous. Malachi is absolutely clear. All through his oracle. You should read it. It's very short. Here's what he says. In chapter one.

[ 28 : 12 ] From the rising of the sun. To its setting. My name. My name. Will be great. Among the nations. Says the Lord of hosts. For I. Am the great king.

My name. Will be feared. Among the nations. Chapter two. If you will not listen. If you will not. Take to heart. And give honor. To my name.

Says the Lord of hosts. I will send the curse. Upon you. But. Chapter four. Verse two. For you who fear.

My name. The son of righteousness. Will rise. With healing. In his wings. You see the. The distinction. Could not be clearer.

Could it. And of course. The new testament. Could not be clearer. Because Jesus. The son of God. Came and was. The great redeemer. Leaving.

[ 29 : 06 ] As we've sung. The glory of heaven. To humble himself. Even to death. On a cross. So that we should be rescued. From that sin. From that judgment. By his extraordinary grace.

And Christ's apostle Paul. Tells us. That therefore. God. Has highly exalted him. And bestowed on him. Jesus. The name.

The name. That is above every name. So that. At the name of Jesus. Every knee should bow. Every tongue confess. That Jesus Christ.

Is Lord. To the glory of God. The father. Christmas has come. But you see. The son of God. Is coming. Into this world again.

That is the unanimous. Testament. Of the scriptures. And the great question. Therefore is. Who. Shall endure. That day.

[ 30 : 04 ] The day of his coming. In glory to reign. And the Bible is very clear. On the answer. Only those. Only those. Who have esteemed. His name.

The name above every name. Only those. Who have bowed. To Jesus Christ. As Lord. And as God. Only those. Who have. Responded now. In the hour.

Of God's grace. And his mercy. Responded now. To Jesus. The savior. Only those. Will be able to stand. Before Jesus. The judge. On the day. When he comes to reign.

Only those. Who have been. Cleansed. And forgiven. And refined. In his purifying fire.

From all of that. Dross. All of that. Impurity. Of sin. The resistance. To God. The mockery. Of God. Our creator. All of that.

[ 31 : 00 ] Which is. Is so. Deeply. Entrenched. In our human hearts. By nature. And wants to be. Our own God. And go our own way. Malachi. 4 verses 1 and 2.

Is absolutely clear. For those. Who will not. Have his forgiveness. Who will not. Welcome his mercy. In this day of grace. Well he says.

They. Themselves. Are determining. That they must face. His fire of judgment. When that day comes. As it surely will. Because the God of heaven and earth.

Will show himself. To be just. He will not. Leave evil. Unpunished. Why would. Anyone. Resist. The day of his grace.

Resist the messengers. Of his mercy. At the first Christmas. The son of God. Himself. Came. To show that abundant mercy. That love. To those who were enemies.

[ 31 : 58 ] He came to work. A great salvation. For all. All. Who will love him. And honor his name. And this Christmas.

Is just the same. He is still saying. To all who will listen. Come. Come to me. And I will give you rest. I will bring you peace. With God. Forever. And ever.

Friends. This Christmas. Don't resist. That call of mercy. Don't resist. That call of everlasting love. Don't insist. On the blaze of his wrath.

When he offers you. Freely. The beauty of his love. Why would you? Come now. With awe. And with joy. And with faith. And with love. Come to Jesus. Our savior. The son of God. And the son of man.

[ 33 : 02 ] Amen. Let's pray together. Oh Lord. Jesus Christ. Who at thy first coming. Did send thy messenger. To prepare. Thy way before thee. Grant.

That the ministers. And stewards. Of thy mysteries. May likewise. So prepare. And make ready. Thy way. By turning the hearts. Of the disobedient. To the wisdom. Of the just. That at thy second coming.

To judge the world. We may. Be found. An acceptable people. In thy sight. Who lives. And reigns. With the father. And the holy spirit.

Ever one God. World without end. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.