

1. Malachi used the imagery of a refiner's fire in chapter 3:2. Now he speaks of a destructive fire here in chapter 4:1.
2. The day mentioned in chapter 4:1 refers back to chapter 3:17.
3. The fact that "it will burn like an oven/furnace" stresses not only its intensity but also its judgmental purpose. (Isaiah 66:15 and Zephaniah 1:18; 3:8)
4. The coming day, however, will not only remove the wicked; it will also heal the righteous.
5. Having figuratively described the end of the wicked by means of a sequence of destructive events, Malachi unfolds a series of events by which the righteous will be rewarded.
6. God now addresses the righteous in verse 2, and promises them that the "sun of righteousness" will rise upon them.
7. Healing or salvation comes to those who fear God through the wings - or beams of this sun, shining fully upon them.
8. As when the sun returns to the earth in spring time, all nature rejoices in its light and warmth, so the righteous shall be awaked to a new life by the beams of this sun.
9. The faithful - the remnant - will leap for joy like young cows let out into a field after being confined in a stall.
10. Next - verse 3 not only indicates the finality of the judgment on the wicked, but it also brings to a sharp conclusion the answer to the question asked by the unfaithful Israelites, "What do we gain by carrying out His requirements?" (Malachi 3:14)
11. Malachi closes by reminding the people of two other faithful prophets, Moses and Elijah. (Malachi 4:4-6)
12. The Law of Moses was still God's rule of life for the Jews, and if they obeyed, God would bless them.
13. The continuing discussion revolves around the question - "Who is the Elijah whom the Lord will send?"
14. The Jewish leaders interrogated John the Baptist about it (John 1:19-21) and Peter, James, and John asked Jesus about it. (Matthew 17:10)
15. The prophet Elijah is mentioned at least thirty times in the New Testament, and ten of those references relate him to John the Baptist.
16. However - John the Baptist said plainly that he was no Elijah. (John 1:21, 25)
17. He did come in the "spirit and power" of Elijah and turn the hearts of fathers and children. (Luke 1:16-17)

18. Like Elijah, John was a courageous man, a man of prayer, a man who lived alone in the wilderness, and a servant who turned many people to the Lord - but he was not Elijah returned to earth.
19. For those who believed on Christ during His earthly ministry, John the Baptist performed the work of Elijah in their lives: he prepared them to meet the Lord. (Matthew 11:14; 17:10-13)
20. But Malachi 4:5 promises that Elijah himself will come, and that his coming is related to the "Day of the Lord" that will bring judgment to the wicked.
21. That's why Jesus said, "Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things." (Matthew 17:11)
22. Since "the great and terrible Day of the Lord" did not occur in New Testament times -John the Baptist could not have been the promised Elijah - even though he ministered like Elijah.
23. The prophecy contained in verse 5 and 6 is yet to be fulfilled.
24. It may well be that Elijah will return to earth as one of the two witnesses. (Revelation 11:3-12)
25. After the ministry of the witnesses, the Lord will pour out His wrath upon the earth and the Day of the Lord will come upon the world in its fury. (Revelation 11:18 and 16:1)
26. It seems strange that the Old Testament should end with the word "curse." When we near the end of the New Testament we find that it ends with grace. (Revelation 22:21)
27. All of creation is eagerly awaiting the return of the Savior, expecting Him to deliver creation from the bondage of sin.
28. We too should be expecting Him and, while we're waiting, witness to others.

For you, will the last word be one of salvation or judgment?