

**Malachi 4:1-6**  
*The Day of Judgment*

NKJ Malachi 4:1 "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.

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.

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.

4 "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments.

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

6 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."

You will remember that up until this point the greater number of the people of Israel have been grumbling against the Lord and his ordinances, they have concluded that the wicked are the ones who are really blessed and have complained bitterly that he has not seen fit to bless them the way they wanted in return for their half-hearted and profane service to him. They have even concluded in verse 3:14 ***'It is useless to serve God;***

They provoke the Lord and almost beg the question, *why shouldn't we just throw in our lot with the sacrilegious, those who care nothing for the Lord or his service. Those who follow their own desires and live entirely according to what is right in their own eyes?*

But the Lord now assures them that there is a day coming that will show how wrong such a conclusion ultimately is. He has already said that on that day there will be a great division, a division between the wicked and the righteous, a division ultimately between those who will receive mercy and those who will receive judgment. And the inference is that all the decisions that we make in the here and now, should not be judged merely in terms of their short term effects, but rather all the decisions that we make should be judged in reference to that coming day.

It is odd to consider how the same events of one day can have wildly different consequences for people depending on the stands they have taken, the allegiances they have made and maintained. Let me give you an example. Let us think of France in 1944. Since June of 1940 the greater part of the continent of Europe had been controlled by the Nazis. Accordingly, many Frenchmen looking around at the state of affairs had concluded that it was vain to maintain a loyalty to the fallen French republic and the government in exile. Why should they resist the occupying power? Didn't it make more sense to throw in their lot with them? To act as the Vichy government had done? By adding their oppressors, as Zacchaeus had aided the Romans, they would reap a palpable benefit. So many in fact chose to do that.

Rather than putting stock in promises of a liberation that might never come and seemed remote and impossible when compared to the reality they saw all around them, they said I will throw in my lot with the power reigning now.

But then June 6, 1944 came, the day we know better as D-Day, and the folly of the decision of the collaborators began to be evident. Before that day, it seemed that those who had remained loyal were the foolish ones, but after the events of that day those who had cast in their lot could only watch the events that followed with increasing alarm and fear. For they knew very well that their decision to collaborate was not going to be forgotten. As the allies advanced, the day of their judgement drew nearer and nearer. On the other hand, those who had remained loyal viewed the events of that day with joy. For them it was not the harbinger of judgement it was a day of vindication, a day of deliverance. It showed that their decision to resist evil rather than throw in their lot with it for self-aggrandizement was right.

Eventually, they who had been oppressed by the collaborators were eventually the ones that trampled them underfoot. They who had seemed so powerful eventually became as ashes under the soles of their feet. But remember it was D-DAY, the day of deliverance, and not their own power that made that turnabout possible.

What made all the difference then in France of 1944 between deliverance and judgment, even between two brothers, was the stand that they had made, the allegiances that they had formed.

That cataclysmic event in world history by comparison was nothing compared to the event that the prophet is speaking of in these verses. D-Day by comparison was just the harbinger of a little day of judgment, that brought about a localized removal of what was a terrible evil and a vindication of those who had stood against it. But those events are nothing compared to the great and terrible day of the Lord that the prophet is speaking of.

For on that day, not just some evil somewhere will be removed, but the final decision between good and evil, the wicked and the righteous, the chaff and the wheat, the servants of the Lord and those who have rebelled against him will be made.

And your position in that day, whether it will be to you a day of horror and judgment or deliverance and joy will hinge once again on the stands that you have taken, your allegiance. It will ultimately depend on whether you are found in that day numbered amongst those who are called by the name of the Sun of Righteousness, who is the Son of God, or whether you stood opposed to Him. Do not be deceived, there is no middle ground. As Jesus himself said in Matthew 12:30 ***"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."***

What will that day be like for those who remain opposed to Christ, who look around at the way things presently are in this present evil age and say *"It is useless to serve God."* Why should I endure persecution and ridicule with the followers of Christ when I can enjoy favor, and wealth, and power, and acceptance if I stand with those who stand against him? For we shouldn't kid ourselves, the majority of the worlds inhabitants are walking on the broad path that leads to destruction. The majority serve idols.

Turn in your bibles to Rev. 6:12 if you would:

***Rev. 6:12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.***

***13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.***

***14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.***

***15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,***

***16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"***

***17 "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"***

If you make a decision in this lifetime to stand opposed to Christ, or simply not to love and serve Him, that will be your end. It doesn't matter whether you are great or small, whether you are free or a slave, nothing but your allegiance will matter in that coming day of judgment. You shall be as the stubble of the field that is burned after the harvest.

But what of those who by His grace do claim your allegiance to the Lamb, an allegiance that is reconfirmed every time you come to the Lord's table (and I hope you are preparing your hearts for that next week) what will be their lot?

Who are these people and what will be their reward on that day?

***1 Thess 1:9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,***

***10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come***

On you who have turned to God from Idols, who serve the Living God, who are called by the name of the Lamb, on you that day will not be a day of judgment but a day of deliverance, on you ***The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.***

Jesus is that Sun of Righteousness,

***NKJ Isaiah 60:1 Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.***

***2 For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.***

***3 The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.***

***John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."***

Now we live, so to speak, in the time of forbearance, in the time of decision where the lines of allegiance are being drawn. Now is the age of grace and mercy, but that time will close with the coming of the day of vengeance.

The great and terrible day of the Lord does not come without warning, warnings to flee from the wrath to come.

We see even in these verses warnings to look to the word of the Lord, to heed his commandments, and the fact that he will send Elijah to turn many from darkness to light. Who was this Elijah:

*Luke 1:11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.*

*12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*

*13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.*

*14 "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.*

*15 "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.*

*16 "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.*

*17 "He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

John the Baptist was the Elijah, the Preacher of righteousness who pointed men to the rising Sun to Jesus, saying "**Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**" and warning that after his coming to save, he would come again to Judge: "12 "His **winnowing fan** is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Since that time there have been many lesser Elijahs who have pointed to the Risen Son, men like Luther and Calvin, and Edwards, and Whitefield, and Spurgeon, and even far more humble shepherds like myself. All of whom have been sent for this express purpose to warn you to flee from the wrath to come.

*Turn in your bibles to Rev. 19:11*

*Rev. 19:11 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.*

*12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.*

*13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.*

*14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

*15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Your standing on that day will be determined by whom you are united to, the decisions you have made.

**NKJ 2 Corinthians 6:1** We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

**2** For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.