



September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 • Malachi 2:17 – 3:5

Page 802 in the church Bibles • The Book of Malachi

Message #4/6 • by Pastor Marcus Johnson

“Fearing the Great Name of the LORD & Experiencing His Love”

Sermon Series Theme Verse – “For from the rising of the sun to its setting

my name will be great among the nations . . . says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 1:11)



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## **The God of Justice – He is Like a Refiner’s Fire**

### **1. The Prophet’s Rebuke & the LORD of Hosts’ Righteous Reign**

- Malachi rebukes Israel’s sinful religiosity & atheistic slander of God
- the LORD of hosts declares that His messenger is coming
- Malachi prophesies about the coming day of the LORD
- the LORD of hosts says that He will draw near in judgment

### **2. Taking the Prophetic Word to Heart**

- Does our worship & our gospel include humbly fearing the LORD – who is like a refiner’s fire?

- How biblically just is our Christianity & how eschatological is our social justice?

### **Excursus: The 4<sup>th</sup> Disputation in Malachi (Malachi 2:17 – 3:5)**

Summary: In this 4<sup>th</sup> dispute (out of six disputations in Malachi), the LORD condemns Israel for wearing Him with her accusations & for her ungodly living (sorcery, adultery, social injustices). Israel questions God’s justice in light of the apparent prosperity of the wicked, but in the end, God will refine & purify His people and judge sinners.

Commentary Notes: by Joyce G. Baldwin (*Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, pp.263-64)  
The age-old problem raised by the apparent prosperity of the evil man was a live issue in Malachi’s day. It appeared that God favoured the wicked, and both Jeremiah (Jer 12:1) and Habakkuk (Hab 1:2-4) had questioned God’s just ordering of providence, while at the same time maintain their faith in God’s ultimate righteousness. Malachi’s contemporaries, by contrast, had become cynical and unbelieving, and because they had given up all intention of taking right and wrong seriously the prophet faces them with coming judgment. It is noteworthy that he does not attempt a theodicy [a defense/vindication of God’s justice] in order to justify God’s ways. That would merely appeal to the mind, whereas the prophet knew that he needed to quicken the conscience.

**17.** Disillusionment had followed the rebuilding of the Temple because, though decade followed decade, no supernatural event marked the return of the Lord to Zion. So far as could be judged the Jews had done their part, but God failed to fulfill His promises (cf. Zech 8:3). His delays were being taken as an excuse for atheism. The question *Where is the God of Justice?* was tantamount to doubting His existence. It was on account of this failure of faith that they *wearied the Lord with their words*; he is never said to be wearied with human prayers and questions but only with human sin (Isa 43:24).

**3.1** In response to the implied challenge of the question the Lord himself speaks. *Behold* is literally ‘Behold Me’, ‘Here I am, about to send my messenger’. In the end no man will avoid confrontation with God, and it is of his goodness that warning of that event is given. Just as preparations are made in advance for a royal procession, so the Lord’s coming would be heralded by a forerunner to indicate the route (Isa 40:3) and summon the population to fill up the ruts and remove the boulders (Isa 57:14; 62:10), that is, *prepare the way*. Malachi leaves the hearer to apply the metaphor. The identity of *my messenger* is not revealed...