

Series: Messiah; Sermon: **Who Can Endure the Day of His Coming?**

Delivered by: **Dr. Josh Moody**, senior pastor; Date: **December 17, 2017**

Bible text explored: Malachi 3:1–18

¹“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. ²But 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 fullers’ soap. ³He 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 in righteousness to the LORD. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

⁵“Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

⁶“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. ⁷From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ ⁸Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. ¹¹I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. ¹²Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts.

¹³“Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ ¹⁴You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?’ ¹⁵And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.”

¹⁶Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. ¹⁷“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. [ESV]

Today’s celebration of Christmas has largely become, in Pastor Moody’s words, “a parody of the Incarnation.” Because its lyrics are drawn entirely from Scripture, Handel’s “Messiah” points us beyond sentimentality to a rebalanced perspective.

Review and application:

1. In the Malachi passage quoted in the “*Messiah*” (3:2), what preceding statement (2:17) by Malachi have the residents of Persian-ruled Judah questioned?
What assertion of theirs is God tired of hearing?
What question of theirs is God tired of hearing?
2. How is the first sentence of Malachi’s response (3:1a) an immediate word-play response to the people’s question? (The Hebrew rendering for “my messenger” is *Malachi*.)
How was this response seen 400 years later by Jesus?
(See *Mark 1:2*; also *Matt. 11:10* and *Luke 7:27*.)
3. Who (3:1b) is the Lord whom the people were hoping to see?
Could they be confident that he would come?

4. But was their confidence (v. 3:2-4) of an approving reception on the “day of his coming” justified?
What do the blow-torch and bleach images suggest about how their expectations of justice were unrealistic?
What transformation is “an indispensable consequence” of our salvation?
(See *Isa. 33:14-15; Psa. 24:3-4.*)
5. Our celebration of Christmas may be similarly one-sided. What was the initial reaction of the shepherds to the appearance of the angels? (*Luke 2:9.*)
What was Simeon’s prophetic warning to Mary? (*Luke 2:34-35.*)
How did the Magi respond to the infant Lord and to warning dreams? (*Matt. 2:11-12.*)
6. What is the temptation (*3:13-15*) of thinking that those who break the rules get ahead anyway?
How (*3:16-18*) did Malachi counter the pessimism of those complaining that serving God faithfully didn’t pay?
7. How can the prospect of future true justice (*4:1-3*) help us endure current injustices?

NOTE: No sermon-related questions are planned to accompany the sermon on December 24.