

Malachi 3:18 – 4:6

This relates to the Genesis 18 readings on Abraham's intercession for Sodom before its destruction by fire and as a view of everlasting fire for the wicked here (4:1 - "shall burn as an oven" and in the previous Haftarah chapter, **Isaiah 33:12** - "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.")

Malachi 3:18 - "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

— Probably not "return," in the sense of returning to God in repentance, (too late for that) but see clearly, and distinguish perfectly; be made to see your error.

Malachi 4:1 - "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." or "neither son nor nephew" acc. to the Talmud.

Malachi 4:2 - "But to you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."

"Stall" could be "yoke." Some oxen or heifers were yoked together while they were threshing or treading out of grain. The Law said that they should not be muzzled while thus employed (Deuteronomy 25:4) so these usually grew fat, and so were the choicest and most desirable cattle. They are a fit emblem of saints joined together in holy fellowship, walking together, thriving on spiritual food freely eaten.

The LXX and Talmud have it: "they shall delight themselves in it" and "skip as calves loosed from the yoke" or stall.

Malachi 4:1 - "they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet"

The Talmud (T. Bab. Roshhashanah, fol. 17.1) says this refers to the bodies of the wicked in hell, which after twelve months will be consumed, and the wind will scatter them under the soles of the feet of the righteous.

Malachi 4:3 - "And ye shall tread down the wicked..." Looking toward the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 and the Deliverer who will crush the head of the serpent.

Compare **Psalm 58:10-11** - "The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. And men will say, 'Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth!'"

After Malachi, God withheld prophets for 400 years that men might seek after Christ with the greater desire [Calvin] Or, in Passover terms, so that Israel might be sated (fed up) with the world, and hungry for matzah.

The last few verses of the Old Testament end with a vision of destruction, a glimpse of Messiah (the “Sun of Righteousness” in vs. 2), and a foreshadowing of the preaching of John the Baptist (vs 5 - “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD”) (Compare **Luke 7:27, Matthew 11:10**)

Malachi 4:6 - “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

As with the conclusion of Isaiah, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes, so here the Jews in the synagogue readings, not wanting to end with a curse, would read verse **4:5** again: “Behold I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Lord.”

The word for curse, “cherem,” comes from a root that means “the closing of a net.”

Thus the Old Testament was “closed,” the curse of the Law (**4:4** - “Remember ye the law of Moses”) being the immovable object against which we are squeezed by the irresistible force of God’s love in Christ. The only escape being the Cross, upon which we die with Christ, and then Christ lives in and through us.

Fulfilled:

Luke 1:16-17 - “Many of the sons of Israel he will turn back to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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.”

The picture of the surprise of the wicked in the Day of Judgment, in the Wisdom of Solomon, is a comment on Malachi’s picture of the Day of Judgment (**Wisdom 5:1-5**):

“Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labors; when they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed with the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all they looked for: and they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, ‘This was he whom we had sometimes in derision and a proverb of reproach: we fools counted his life madness and his end to be without honor: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints?’”