

TEXT – Malachi 4:1-2a

Introduction: The game show host asks the contestant, “Is that your final answer?” After a dramatic pause and a little thinking out loud the contestant states his choice and then says, “Final answer.” Now that works great for a game show in which contestants can win thousands even a million dollars if they answer all the questions correctly. Throw in a few lifelines and a quirky host named Regis, and you have a successful T.V. game show. It is not all fun and games, however, when dealing with the final Judgment Day, especially for those who have rejected God’s saving plan. There are many opinions out there on how to avoid an unfavorable judgment on Judgment Day, namely an eternity in hell. For many people they simply try to convince themselves that there is no hell or that pretty much everyone goes to heaven anyway. But on Judgment Day it will not be the contestants as those being judged who will be offering their opinions and making their choices. This won’t be an opportunity to give God their final answer. It will be too late. Judgment Day is not a second chance for unbelievers. It is a judgment day. God’s court is in session to give his sentencing. On this Judgment Day, God gives his final answer to both unbelievers and believers of where they will be spending eternity. It will be a dreadful day for some and a glorious day for others. On this Last Judgment weekend as we look ahead to Judgment Day let’s consider it as GOD’S FINAL ANSWER. In the words of God’s prophet Malachi it will be 1) punishment for all the evildoers, and 2) healing for those who revere his name.

I. Punishment for all the evildoers

- Malachi is the final word for God’s O.T. people. There would not be another word of God spoken through the prophets until the arrival on the scene of John the Baptist some 400 years after the time of Malachi.
- God’s prophet Malachi delivered a message of repentance to God’s people. After returning home from their captivity in Babylon, they started reverting to their old sinful ways.
- The Israelites were neglecting worship and offerings, mistreating the poor, and intermarrying with their foreign, unbelieving neighbors.
- Malachi is a great prophet for our generation as we look at worship attendance sagging, offerings not at a level they should be based on the way God has richly blessed us, and struggling with an understanding of what a God-pleasing marriage is.
- The people of Malachi’s time also then had the gall to complain against God that their lives weren’t any better than those who worshiped idols. What good was it, they wondered, to be God’s special people.
- In our text the Lord through his prophet reminds the people and us as well of the great distinction that will be made on the Last Day, the Judgment Day. On that day all the arrogant and unbelieving evildoers will be burnt up like the worthless chaff when winnowing grain.
- God’s anger and punishment will burn hot in the furnace of hell. All those who rejected his love and scorned his grace in Christ will be consumed in the fires of eternal torment but never die – just burn forever.
- Isaiah concludes his magnificent book with this horrible thought, “Their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.”
- This is by no means a pretty picture, nor is it intended to be. When the final judgment comes God will destroy everything material in this world. Peter writes, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” There will be nothing left – not even a branch or a root Malachi says.
- What an awful and dreadful day it will be for unbelievers as they receive God’s final answer. We may cringe at the thought of billions of people being tormented and burning in hell forever. Some of these people may be our neighbors, friends, even members of our own families.
- It is hard to fathom such a thought, maybe even better not to think about it at all. If anything, we should be more diligent and urgent in our witnessing of the sinner’s only hope for salvation – God’s Son, Jesus Christ.
- Every single person we know and meet needs Jesus more than ever. We look for opportunities to weave our Savior into every conversation, to speak up for the truth of God’s Word, and to look at each person as a lost soul crying out for help and desperately needing salvation.

Transition: Judgment Day is God’s final answer. That answer is punishment for the evildoer. But Malachi also reminds us that God’s final answer is healing for those who revere his name.

II. Healing for those who revere his name

- God's final answer in the judgment will not be a horrific defeat for everyone. For some God's final judgment will be a day of deliverance and unbelievable blessings.
- Who will receive these blessings? Malachi says it is those who revere God's name. To revere is to fear in a good sense, that is, to stand in awe of God. Such awe is a child-like faith that leads to worship and praise.
- This reverence is for God's name, which is another way to say God's Word – what he has revealed about himself to us in the Scriptures. God's name is everything we have been told about God in the Bible.
- What do you think of when you hear the name Lord or Savior or Jesus Christ, God the Father, Holy Spirit, Immanuel, God almighty, Prince of Peace, King of kings and Lord of lords? These names for God conjure up in our hearts and minds what God has revealed to us about himself in his Word.
- In Exodus 34 the LORD himself reveals what his name means when he says, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness...forgiving wickedness, rebellious and sin."
- For those who revere, who stand in awe, who worship, adore and trust in God's saving name, Malachi says they will receive healing when God gives his final answer in the judgment. They will receive healing through the sun or righteousness as he comes with healing in his wings.
- The Sun of Righteousness is our Savior himself. Jesus is our righteousness, holiness and redemption before God. Of Jesus who obeyed God's law without ever sinning, the Father could say, "With him I am well-pleased." He could never say that of us because we have sinned countless times in every conceivable way.
- But the Sun will rise again. He will return in glory and power. Jesus our righteousness not only gives us his perfection and holiness he also removes every trace of guilt and sin.
- Nothing removes 100% of the germs floating around. As careful as we are about protecting ourselves against such germs, they still sneak through and we get sick. If sin is a spiritual germ, then this germ lives in us and breeds in us. It is part of our very nature and it is acted out by what we think, say and do. There is nothing that can kill it or get rid of it – except the blood of Jesus. He makes us righteous in God's sight.
- As Malachi says this Sun of Righteousness brings healing in his wings. There is healing, a cure for our sinful condition. When Jesus returns on the Last Day he will give to those who believe in him as their Savior the final cleansing.
- Our sins will be cleared off our record as the prophet Jeremiah records these words of our God, "For I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more."
- The final act of healing will not just be a spiritual cleansing but also a physical restoration. God will bring back the luster and shine of these frail bodies. In the resurrection he will restore our bodies to their perfect physical condition.
- Paul says, "We eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body."
- Our healing of all the effects and consequences of sin will be complete when Jesus returns to escort us into the mansions that he has prepared for us in heaven.
- Not included in our text is the rest of verse 2 which reads, "And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall." No longer penned up by sin and all its earthly suffering, in heaven we will finally be able to enjoy the freedom and joy of being sin-free, perfectly healed and able to worship our Savior God as he should be worshiped and glorified forever and ever.

Conclusion: Judgment Day is a) a myth and never coming, b) a possibility though nothing to worry about, c) a day no one looks forward to, or d) a day on which Jesus is coming to judge the living and the dead. What is your final answer? That's a question sinners need to answer correctly right now before it's too late. When people think about Judgment Day they often view it as the chance to give their final answer to God. Unfortunately it won't work that way. Judgment Day will be God's final answer and judgment. Once the trumpet call is sounded that Christ is returning people's time of grace will be up. The buzzer will have sounded. It's over. For all the evildoers who in their arrogance and rebellion rejected God's saving grace in Christ there will be eternal punishment in hell. For those who by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel revered God's name and trusted in Jesus as their Savior they will receive an eternal healing from all sin and suffering in heaven. What a blessing it will be to hear Jesus say, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." Amen.