

## **Malachi 3:13–4:6**

**Illustration:** Pizza Hut, manager stealing and cheating on his wife with the Assistant Manager. He was a scum bag. He said the bank was losing checks and cash. Register always “short” so they wouldn’t ring up those paying in cash to “balance” the books. He was forced to pay the money back but never prosecuted. He was able to pay back the money from the profit from his detailing shop that he opened. He never got what he deserved. They closed the Pizza Hut b/c of him. He actually profited from his wickedness.

*Have you ever seen someone profit from wickedness? Why do the right thing?*

### **Background –**

- Returned to Israel from Babylonian rule to find themselves under Persian rule.
- Harvests were not good, locusts were a problem (3:1).
- Foreign cultures had made inroads, Jews married with Gentiles, divorce was common.
- The Book of Malachi addresses the nation (Yahweh’s love), the priests (sacrifices), the head of the households (loving wives and fellow Israelites), and individuals (giving). These were all symptoms of their unfaithful and halfhearted attitude towards Yahweh. Verses 7-12 (tithing) are the background to this passage. Yahweh reminds Israel that if they are obedient, they will be blessed (Mal 3/Deut 28 & 29).

### **Complacency Towards Serving God (vv 13-15)**

- They were harshly talking about Yahweh amongst themselves. They actually walked around whining about not being blessed, yet what was Israel like? (nation? Priests? Head of households? Individuals?)
- They had three claims against Yahweh:
  1. There was no value in serving the Lord.
  2. No profit in keeping the Law. There was no return on their investment, yet Yahweh reminds them that they are robbing Him (v. 8).

*What ways do we treat God as a vending machine?*

- There is no evidence that Malachi didn’t accept their demands for blessing, yet they had not kept their end of the bargain.

3. The Israelites thought that it was better to be wicked because the wicked seemed to prosper (2:17). The word (raised up) speaks of a root, being firmly established. They wanted an immediate payoff.

*Do you ever feel like the wicked profit? What does that do to our attitude towards God when we have thoughts like that?*

- Some of these people were guilty of the legalism that would later characterize first century Judaism.

*"I hear this complaint from some believers about their churches. 'We're not getting anything out of it!' But a church is like a bank or a home: you don't get anything out of it unless you put something into it" (Wiersbe, 487).*

### **Motivation 1: The Coming of the Lord (3:16–4:3)**

- vv16-18 – Yahweh would honor those that feared Him – most likely day of the Lord when Jesus will return and resurrect OT saints (Dan 12:2). The righteous and wicked will be revealed.
- 4:1 – Day of the Lord like a fiery furnace. Judgment would be at the end of the Millennium (Rev 20:11-15).
- v2 – Just as the sun can burn, it can also bless and heal. They will grow fat like stall fed calves.
- v3 – Just as calves skip from the stall after winter, those that enjoy the Millennial Kingdom will rejoice at being set free from the effects of the curse. Not only will Christ trample on His enemies, the righteous will share this as well.

*How should the Day of the Lord motivate us to faithfulness?*

### **Motivation 2: Remember the Law (vv 4-6)**

- v4 – Moses last words exhorted the people to keep the law. Malachi began by quoting from Genesis and reminding the priests and the people to keep the Mosaic Law (Jacob/Esau). Now for another reminder to keep the law.
- v5 – An Elijah-like figure would come. An angel told John the Baptist's parents that he would minister with the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17), but he denied that he was Elijah (John 1:21-23). Thus, an Elijah-like figure will come before Jesus' second coming to prepare the way, possibly one of the two witnesses in Rev 12. They will have the power to shut up heaven and stop rain, just like Elijah did at the beginning of his ministry (1 Kings 17)
- v6 – Just as Elijah turned the hearts of Israel back to Yahweh during their apostasy, the eschatological Elijah will return Israel's hearts once again.

“Genesis reveals the entrance of the curse into the human family (Gen. 3); the last word of the O.T. shows the curse still persisting (Mal. 4:6); Matthew begins (1:1) with Him who came to remove the curse (Gal. 3:13; Rev. 21:3-5; 22:3)” (Scofield).

### **Application:**

1. ***We should remember that God is not a vending machine.*** We shouldn't whine for blessings if we aren't living obediently. Also, we should expect persecution in this life, not sunshine and lollipops. The wicked may profit in this life, but one day everything will be set right.
2. One day the curse will be fully removed. Our hope should sustain us. We need to keep our eyes fixed on the prize, not our present life. We will be rewarded one day for our obedience in this life.