



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Malachi 3:13-4:6

“The Day of the Lord”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we turn again tonight to Thy word with anticipation. We thank Thee for the truths that are contained in it. We thank Thee that Thou hast given us a reliable and authoritative word from Thee. And we praise Thee that Thou hast been faithful in fulfilling all parts of it. We pray again as we conclude our study of the prophecy of Malachi that this message may reach our hearts and that we may respond to it in the power of the Holy Spirit. Give us illumination and give us motivation and enablement. And we do ask, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us thereby to please Thee. We pray that the things that are said concerning the godly remnant in Malachi's day may be things that can be said about us through Thy grace. Now we commit each one to Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon this hour and upon the hours that follow. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our subject is "The Day of the Lord." And I must apologize for those of you that do read our Calendar of Concern. I gave Mrs. Ray the title largely by memory. And if you were listening, I mean if you were reading and paying attention, I imagine there are a few that do, you probably noticed that we already had discussed the

topic of "The Coming Judge." And unfortunately, I think I gave her the wrong title. And the title for this final message is "The Day of the Lord."

When we study the Scriptures, we notice that there is a rather unusual emphasis upon the days of the Bible. We know, for example, in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 in verse 3 that the Apostle Paul speaks about man's day, and he refers by that expression to the present age. This he calls man's day.

Now you won't get that if you just read the Authorized Version. But if you do look at the original text or at a more literal translation, you will see that that is what he wrote. He thinks of today as man's day. And, evidently, the thing that lies back of the use of that expression is that it is a time when righteousness truly suffers. Righteousness is not rewarded, evidently, in the experience of men throughout this age. The ungodly frequently seem to be better off than the godly. The ungodly do not suffer often as the godly suffer. So, man's day is a day when man is in the ascendancy by God's directive will for his purposes, his ultimate purposes, and righteousness suffers during that time.

The Apostle Paul speaks in Philippians chapter 1 in verse 6 of the day of Christ. Many Bible interpreters have felt that the day of Christ is a reference to the rapture, the time when the Lord Jesus shall come in the air, and the living believers shall be caught up to meet him, and the dead believers shall be resurrected, and the two shall begin their life as the church of the living God with our Lord Jesus throughout all eternity, which lasts throughout all eternity. That, they have said, is the time when righteousness receives its reward.

Now, I'm not at all sure that that is necessarily so, that is, that that expression "the day of Christ" is a reference to the rapture. But I have no reason for saying that it is not either.

There is a third day which is the subject of a great deal of Scriptural revelation and that is the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is referred to throughout the Old Testament. And I'm sure that if you have read any of the prophets beginning with the

greatest of them all, the Prophet Isaiah, on through the Book of Malachi you'll notice that over and over again the prophets speak about the Day of the Lord. Sometimes they simply refer to "the day" but they mean, it is evident, the Day of the Lord.

That is the day in which the Lord Jesus comes again, destroys the opponents of the Father in heaven and begins his millennial reign. And according to the biblical revelation, the Day of the Lord, which begins during the period of the tribulation, lasts throughout the entire millennial age. For in those prophecies that speak of the coming Day of the Lord and the judgment that characterizes that day, frequently the prophets go on and say "in that day," "in that day," and then give us marvelous information concerning the character of life during the kingdom.

The final expression that is used is found in 2 Peter chapter 3 in verse 12. And there the apostle speaks of the "day of God." And many have felt from the study of that particular passage that the reference there is to the eternal state. Again there is some question among the biblical interpreters. They disagree over that particular interpretation. But if that is so, then that is the day in which righteousness dwells as he says in the new heavens and the new earth and dwells there permanently.

So the Day of the Lord is the day when righteousness reigns, but the day of God is the day in which righteousness dwells.

There is another thing that characterizes this passage that we're looking at beside its emphasis on the Day of the Lord. That is the emphasis and the strange statement, I guess I should say, in the 5th verse of the 4th chapter in which the prophet tells us that the Lord has said that he is "going to send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of the Lord." So here we have a prophecy of the second coming of Elijah.

Well, we're not surprised when people talk about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is a little startling to even say the second coming of Elijah the prophet. But that seems to be, at least at first glance, the teaching of the prophet here. And when

we turn over to the New Testament in passages such as Matthew chapter 17, verse 9 through verse 13, we have our Lord Jesus confirming that for he says Elijah truly shall first come. And those words in the light of their context say that the Lord Jesus affirms the second coming of Elijah. Now when we get to this, if we have a little time, we'll say a little more about it in its context.

There is one final emphasis that we find here in these last verses of the prophecy of Malachi, and it is that the prophet sees the Day of the Lord as the time when hypocrisy and unreality shall finally end.

Now when you've lived as long as I have, you rather look forward to that because I've seen a great deal of hypocrisy and have also experienced a great deal of it, both as a receiver of it and as a giver of it. And a great deal of unreality, too. So it is going to be a great thing to look forward to the day when hypocrisy shall no longer exist and unreality shall no longer exist.

But now let's turn to our section that we are to look at. And you'll notice from the outline that I have given here, the prophet begins by setting forth the complaint again that the Lord has with reference to Israel in the day of the prophet Malachi. Let's read verses 13 through 15.

" "Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against Thee?' You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.' " "

Now these words are the words that the prophet puts in the mouth of the people. This complaint lays stress upon three attitudes that they have. First of all, they have the

attitude of doubting the reward of service of the Lord. "Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against Thee?'"

Well first in verse 14, "You have said, 'It's vain to serve the Lord; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge?'"

Now they have considered their service of the Lord, and since they do not receive the things that they think they should receive, they have the attitude that the Lord really does not reward those who serve him.

Now the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews said they that come to God must believe that he exists and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. So, characteristic of the true believer is the conviction that service to the Lord, genuine service to the Lord, will receive his reward. And so when we doubt that we shall receive a reward for the service of the Lord, we are in a sense, we are in that sense in unbelief. So this is an attitude of unbelief, the attitude that, well, we serve the Lord but he really doesn't pay a bit of attention to our service.

You know, we can engage in the same kind of thinking today. We can teach Sunday school classes, and when it becomes a little boring. All teaching becomes a little boring. I won't tell you whether it's boring at the moment or not, [Laughter] but it does become boring in those hours of preparation that you must engage in. They can become very boring. And sometimes, because perhaps you don't get the response that you think you should, you want to act like Jonah and go and sit under some tree and mourn over the fact that people do not respond to the things that you say. It can be very disappointing and discouraging. And you can even get the impression and feeling that the Lord really is not paying any attention at all to this sacrificial service that I am rendering him.

Now it is good to remember that all service, true genuine service for the Lord and to the Lord, is remembered by him. So their attitude, first of all, is the attitude of doubting that God really pays any attention to their Christian service.

The second thing that he speaks about is, well, it is something very closely related to that, their attitude of serving God for profit. "You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts?'"

So, closely related to this failure to realize that the Lord does reward service is the kind of service in which you serve only for the reward. You do not really serve out of love for God or love for the truth that you're proclaiming, but you serve because you do want some profit. And it's very possible for people to do that.

I think this is spoken particularly for preachers because it is a fact. And I'm not saying anything that is not absolutely true. It is a fact in evangelicalism that people do preach if they obtain a certain reward for their preaching. There are many evangelical men, I won't name some of them, you'd be shocked, who will not preach if you do not give them a certain specific amount of money. It always is a minimum. They'd be happy for more, but it is a minimum.

Some have even put it down on paper and send it out and say this is the amount which I require for preaching. Sometimes it's rather large, too. There are individuals who claim that they will not enter the pulpit for anything less than a thousand dollars, evangelical men. Strange thing. Very hard to find that in the Bible.

I assure you my price is much less. [Laughter] And I don't want to brag about preaching for nothing. I'm sure that there are many times I don't want to expose myself to the comment, 'Well he didn't say anything worthwhile,' because there were plenty of times, I'm sure, that I have not. But it's very easy for preachers to fall into the habit of doing things for money. Very easy. And so here, the nation is said to have the attitude of serving God for profit.

Now we should expect that the Lord will reward the things that we do for him. But he rewards in different ways. And if we have the attitude of serving him for profit, we're like Ananias. Or we're like a Simon magus who sought to obtain from Peter the gift

of bestowing the Holy Spirit in order that he might enhance his reputation among the Samaritans. Or we're like Pliable, Bunyan's Pliable, who went along with the Christian movement, went along with the journey in order that he may get some things as a result of it. We have lots of Mr. Pliables today.

Finally he says, you have the odd attitude of doubting the judgment of the wicked. Look at the 15th verse. "So now we" (He's giving the words of the people here.) "So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape." So the people had the attitude that one could get away with murder with God. The judgment of God does not really fall upon the wicked. They can tempt him, test him, and he doesn't do anything about it. So you can see their attitude toward the Lord is the attitude of constant complaint and false service.

Incidentally, in connection with the service of the Lord for other rewards than monetary or financial rewards, there's a beautiful little section in Exodus chapter 21 concerning a servant who was a Hebrew man. Moses in the Levitical law in Exodus chapter 21 writes about a Hebrew man who has as his servant a Hebrew slave. In Exodus chapter 21 we read,

"Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them: If you buy a Hebrew slave (Notice, a Hebrew slave, that is a person who is so destitute that he has to sell himself into slavery). If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. If he comes alone, he shall go out alone (That is, if you buy him as a single man); if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. (She shall serve with him, but when he is freed, she shall be freed too.) If his master gives him a wife, (that is the owner) If his master gives him a wife (among his other slaves) and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to the master, (Isn't that interesting?) and he shall go out alone."

So if he is the servant of a Hebrew man and he's given one of the servants of the Hebrew man as his wife and he marries her and has children by her, when he leaves, goes free from his bondage, she's still the property of the master. Wouldn't it be nice if we lived this way? No, it wouldn't, of course.

Now notice the 5th verse though,

"But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,' then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently."

Do you know what kind of service that is? That's the service of love. That's the kind of service that is true service: the service that is the service of love. He loves his master. He loves his wife. He loves his children. And so he becomes the permanent slave of his master because he loves them.

Now that is the kind of service that the Lord would love to have from every one of us. A service of love because of redemption, because of what we know about the precious blood, because of what we know about our sin and how we were redeemed from it. And the motivating power of the realization of our redemption from our guilt and condemnation is the greatest Christian power there is. All other service is secondary to the service that arises out of love.

You know, as a man who preaches the word in Believers Chapel, if I have one thing, I guess, that I would like in the service of the saints in Believers Chapel, it would be that they served out of love because of what Christ had done for them. Nothing greater than that. There's nothing greater among the Christians than the fellowship that is produced by the sense of that common deliverance from bondage of guilt and condemnation.

Well now, the prophet goes on to speak about the remnant, the company of the faithful, in verses 16 through 18. He says now, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name."

Now you'll notice he speaks about their character, and their character is very striking. The first thing he says about them is that they are individuals who feared the Lord.

Now this fear is not the fear of fright. It's the kind of fear that Paul says, when he is speaking about, when he says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." It's the kind of fear that is a godly awe, the kind of fear by which you recognize that you are in contact with the God of heaven. So he speaks about those who fear the Lord through this section.

"Then those who feared the Lord." They're individuals who believe the Bible to be the word of God. They're the individuals who join churches that are Scriptural churches. They are the individuals who fellowship in Christian churches that are in harmony with the word of God. In other words, the thing that is predominant in their thoughts is: What does God say in the Scriptures. They fear the Lord. They have reverence for him.

That has a great deal of practical application. Now I hope I don't offend any. I don't mean to do that because let me assure you, there are many things in my life, undoubtedly, they're out of harmony with the word of God. But there are some things that are very simple for us to think about. And one of them is: Does the Bible teach that we should call ourselves something other than Christian?

Dr. Ironside used to be often asked what church he belonged to. He said he always said to them he belonged to David's church. And when they said, what church is that? He said, "I'm a companion of all them that fear Thee." That's a good church to belong to, that is, you have no connections except with the believers who fear the Lord,

and no other names than brethren, saints, believers, Christians. Not a Believers Chapelite. Not a Brethren, with a capital B, but simply a Christian. They feared the Lord. They accepted the things that were found in Scripture as they understood them.

It is said at the end of verse 16, "And who esteem His name." They thought upon him. What that means is that they valued him. They thought of him as being more significant than their possessions, their hobbies, even their citizenship, or their religion. They esteemed the name of the Lord. Now what a great thing that is too, to put him first above all of the other things that seek to attract our attention and interest and hold us.

And then also it is said, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another." You know when the fires, when the fire burns low in the grate, and you don't have any more fuel, in order to have more of a blaze, you bring the coals together. I often do that in my fireplace, late at night, I don't want to put another log on. But I have a little piece over here, and a little piece over here, and a little piece over there, and they're each burning partially, and so I bring them together, put them together and have a nice little fire for a little while longer.

And the same thing is true in spiritual things. When those who fear the Lord meet together and have as their interests the things of the Lord, they mutually help one another. They mutually stir up one another. They mutually create further interest in one another. It's true that when the fire burns low, the coals are brought together. And it's a great help to get together with other Christians, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, and "to provoke one another;" wait the text says some more: "unto love and good works." Some people do put a period there, provoke one another.

Now in verse 16, we read also of his response, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him."

The Persians had a custom of writing in their books the outstanding contributions to the kingdom that philanthropists and other important men had made in the past. And

so you'll find, for example, in the Book of Esther reference to the book of remembrance. It was a public book in which the kings wrote down the outstanding event, the outstanding actions of various important men.

And then you remember, that's how Mordecai had his life saved because the king had difficulty sleeping one night and asked for the book of remembrance that he might read it. And he read in there about past things that Mordecai had done. So here, he's using the figure of the book of remembrance which he had loaned from Persia and speaking of the fact that "The Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name." It's an expression of the fact that he will reward those who have served him.

And finally, he speaks in verses 17 and 18 of his determination. "And they will be Mine', says the Lord of hosts, on the day that I prepare My own possession." That word in the Hebrew text, *segulah*, which means possession, is the word that was used back in Exodus chapter 19 in verse 5 when God said with reference to Israel that they would be his own peculiar possession. And he was speaking, of course, of the fact that ultimately Israel as a nation will be his own peculiar people. Not necessarily those Israelites who are over in the land of Israel today. Not necessarily the Israelis who are there, but some of their kinfolk, they are going to be God's possession.

Peter even uses it with reference to the church, too, in the New Testament in the Greek language. But here is the same word. But this time it's used of the remnant, that small, evidently small, group within Israel who feared the Lord, who esteemed His name, and who spoke one to another.

So he speaks here about an action and an attitude that is the Lord's part. "They will be mine on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him."

You may not now, but the time is coming when you will make a distinction because I'm going to make a distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous. So if you think today that God does not pay any attention to righteousness and unrighteousness and lumps the two together, that holiness doesn't mean anything to him more than unholiness, well then, the Lord says the day is coming when he is going to make a difference.

Now we turn to chapter 4 and the coming Day of the Lord. And notice the first word that begins chapter 4, verse 1.

Incidentally, in the Hebrew text there is no fourth chapter of the Book of Malachi. This chapter division is a chapter division only in our English text. Chapter 4, verse 1 is chapter 3, verse 19 of the Hebrew text. So there're only three chapters in Malachi in the inspired text, but in our translation there are four. There's nothing of significance in that except that you might sometime be reading something written by a Hebrew man who referred to the 3rd chapter and the 19th or 20th or 24th verse of the Book of Malachi, and you might wonder if you lost part of your Bible.

"For," notice the word begins "for." He says that he's going to again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve him. " 'For behold, the day is coming , burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff, and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,' says the Lord of hosts 'so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.' "

In other words, there is going to come a day when the distinction will be made because the Day of the Lord is coming. And when the Day of the Lord comes, I'm going to make that distinction plain and clear for all to see. So you can see, he speaks here of the severity of that day. It will be "burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff." He's going to burn them all up.

Now this is not a reference to the physical destruction, although many will be physically destroyed. He's speaking here of the spiritual, eternal destruction that he has in

mind, of course. He speaks about the day that burns like a furnace. That is the Second Advent and the judgments that just precede it. And then, all of the unbelievers are going to be destroyed by the Lord; that is, he's going to take them, their lives may be destroyed but their spirits are going to be reserved for the resurrection of damnation. They'll "Be chaff, and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the Lord of hosts, 'so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.' "

There's going to be total destruction. Now as I say, he doesn't mean total destruction in the sense of physical annihilation. He means simply that all being that is blessed by God comes to an end, and the being that exists throughout all eternity is the being under the curse of God.

Now he also talks about the salvation of that day. "But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its or his wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall."

So here is the Day of the Lord, and we can think of the sun as beating down upon a field in which there is stubble, or the sun beating down upon trees that are planted by the side of a river. The same sun that is blessing to the trees planted by the side of the river because they are fed from the streams of water of the river, the same sun that is a blessing to the trees is a curse or a means of destruction for the stubble in the dry field, and so the same second coming of the Lord Jesus. During the midst of the Day of the Lord that means destruction for the unbelievers, means the entrance into the kingdom and the blessedness of it for those who fear the name of the Lord. Isn't that a beautiful expression for the Lord? "The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings."

Now if you've been living in a place where they don't have a great deal of sun, like Seattle, Washington. We have some people from Portland, Oregon again here tonight and I won't say a thing about Portland. They don't have a whole lot of sun up there either, but they have more Seattle, I think. Or if you've lived in Edinburgh, or if you've lived in Dallas this spring. We haven't been blessed with a whole lot of sunlight this

spring. And when one of those days after three or four or five when you've never seen the sun, when the day comes and the rays of the sun fan out over God's creation, it really is a time of blessing. That's the figure here. "But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings."

Now he's speaking about the sun, and of course using the figure of the sun, he naturally says "with healing in its (that is, the sun's) wings. But the son of righteousness is the Lord Jesus and so we would speak of him as the sun of righteousness who rises "with healing in his wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall."

Now you know, of course, I could never expound that. I don't even know what a stall is. [Laughter] I know it has something to do with a barn, I think. And I frankly have never seen a calf skip about. But I did see something when I was in Scotland that I had never seen, too. I had never seen little lambs skip about. And I was riding outside of Edinburgh one day and it was, I think, in the spring. And there were lots of little lambs in the midst of a flock of sheep. Scotland is full of this of course. A shepherd was there and these little lambs jumping about. And it was so impressive to me that I stopped the car and got out and just watched them like I guess a father looks at a little child and watches a little child play.

And I don't think I've ever seen anything that was happier looking than a little lamb. I don't even know the right term. What do you say? A little lamb jumping about, skipping about, alright skipping. They were just cavort, they were cavorting about; that isn't the right word either. But nevertheless, that's the figure here. And he says that those who fear his name, when the sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings, they'll go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

And "You will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the Lord of hosts."

Now then having said that, in verses 4 through 6 he gives us not only an exhortation to study the Mosaic Law but give s them a kind of signal by which they can

expect the Day of the Lord to come into being. "Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel." In other words, pay attention to the word of God. But then he adds, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of the Lord."

Now this was a sign, and this is why in the New Testament we have reference made in passages like Matthew chapter 17 about the coming of Elijah because remember on the Mount of Transfiguration when the Lord was there, Peter, James and John had gone up with him. And as they were on Mount Herman, the Lord was transfigured before them, and Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke of his decease, or his death, which he would accomplish at Jerusalem. And the apostles first thought that that must be the fulfillment of the prophecy with reference to the coming of Elijah a second time.

And so we read, "As they were coming down from the Mount, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.' And His disciples asked Him saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'"

You would think that since he was the signal for the coming of the Day of the Lord and the blessing of Israel with the fulfillment of the covenant promises, that now that he's appeared on the mountain with the Lord Jesus that they should go throughout the land and proclaim that Elijah has come. The Day of the Lord is at hand. And the Lord Jesus seems to say just the opposite. He said don't tell anybody about it.

So they were puzzled about that. They didn't understand a whole lot about the first coming and the second coming, of course. But he goes on to say,

"Elijah is coming and will restore all things, but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatsoever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist."

There's no need for us to speak in detail about this. You know that I referred, most of you I think heard the message in which I spoke about the contingency involved in the first coming of the Lord Jesus. And since they did not respond, then Elijah truly shall first come as he says, "Elijah is coming." If they had responded, then of course John the Baptist who came in the spirit and power of Elijah would have been the fulfillment of Malachi chapter 4. And in this, of course, we see the working hand in glove of the sovereign determination of God and also human responsibility, Israel's failure to respond to the message.

But here he says, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet." And notice it's "before the coming of the great and terrible Day of the Lord" which is the eschatological day of the future, the Second Advent.

Now what is he going to do? "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers." What does he mean by that?

Well, it could mean that things were bad in the family in the days of Malachi, and that was true because they had a great deal of divorce. We've already seen that. It would seem to me this is a ready made text for some of the people who today are going around speaking on nothing but the Christian family.

Incidentally, that's an important subject. But you ought not to have just that as your subject. But probably that's not what is in mind here. You see, the generation to which Malachi speaks is a generation of disobedient Israelites primarily. And the generation to which they look back in the day of Moses was a much more obedient generation. And he thinks also of the vast number of faithful men down through the years who've paid attention to the word of God and who listened to holy Scripture. And they are very disappointed and upset with this generation which is their children and their children's children, that they're disobedient like a grandfather who is disturbed and upset when his children do not obey the word of God.

I think it would be terrible to have grandchildren who were disobedient to the word of God. That would be very disappointing, very disturbing. And I think that what is meant here is that, he says that when Elijah comes and the Lord comes, the sun of righteousness, there's going to be a restoration of the hearts of the fathers, those great men of the past, to their children, their descendants who will be on the earth at that time and who have been disobedient. And the hearts of the children to their fathers. In other words a restoration within the whole of the company of Israel who are of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob: the true Israel.

Well, let me close. This is the conclusion of the prophecy of Malachi. And, of course, one of the things that has been stressed throughout is the perils of formalism and we find it again incidentally in verse 14 here, "And that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts."

You know what that means? That doesn't mean that they went around real sad because of the fact that they were displeasing the Lord. It meant that they went around fasting. Their sadness was the sadness of a formalistic kind of fasting. So throughout, he has laid a great deal of stress on the perils of formalism. How sacrilegious they are.

You know sacrilegious, to be sacrilegious is not to come into the church and not put any money in the collection plate. To be sacrilegious is to come into the church and put money in the collection plate, but have no reality in the heart. To be sacrilegious is to enter into a Christian assembly as if you're interested in spiritual things, not stay away, but is to enter into all of the activities but not from a heart of love and devotion to the Lord. It's to sit in the pew and say: 'It's great that I'm so righteous as to be here today when so many of my friends have slept in,' but not to have any real interest in the word of God. That is what it means to commit sacrilege.

Well, I want to just close on the note of the preciousness of the faithful in the sight of God. "Then those who feared the Lord spoke one to another, and the Lord gave

attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord." And in chapter 4 in verse 2 he says, "But for those who fear My name."

It's great to have been so wrought upon by God that there is a measure of obedience in the Christian life. It's very important, it seems to me, that we be responsive to the word of God, and it's urgent because of the uncertainty of human life. And if there are some here in this audience who have never really responded to the word of God, let me urge you in the light of the uncertainty of human life, to give yourself to the Lord in faith.

And then I think it's so important to respond to the things of the word of God even if you're a believer right now because so often these feelings that seem to come over us, which seem to be from the Holy Spirit, pass. You know, I wish it were possible for me sometime to be able to speak to the walls and the rafters of this auditorium in Believers Chapel. I think they would tell us a very interesting story about many people who have sat in the pews here who as the word of God has been proclaimed through me, through others, and they have been responding; evidently attracted by the word of God, but instead of making the decision that really counts, have turned away from it and today when the word of God comes, they are totally cold to it.

You know that same thing happens to a Christian. It's very possible for the word of God to be vital and fresh and for ourselves to be responsive to it. And then through the cares of life, through occupation with material things or with our hobbies, or with other things, to put them before the kingdom of God and its righteousness. There were times when we were responsive, listening, but now the same message has no appeal to us at all.

You know that ought to make us get down on our knees and say, O God, deliver me from the indifferent and cold heart to the things of the Lord. May God help us to respond in that way. Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the Scriptures and for the prophet Malachi who has so wonderfully expounded for us the complaints that the Lord had against Israel. And, O God, we do pray that Thou wilt enable each one of us in this auditorium to come to the place where we can be truly described by Thee as those that fear Thy name. For Jesus' sake. Amen.