

Intro:

Have you ever been in a place in life where you felt like your actions didn't really matter? If you did this or that, chose this good route or that bad route, it just wouldn't matter? When did you feel that? When do we feel like that?

We feel like that at moments where **control** seems out of our hands, don't we? The work situation, the family drama. Or we feel like that when we think there are **no consequences**: even if I try to be good, they're just going to screw me over, or let the guy who lies get ahead. If I can't beat them, why not just join them?

I love the Bible because it talks about real life. And as we close up this Lent series, we're going to look at multiple passages where the ancient Israelites felt this way, leading them to seriously doubt God and their spiritual life, leading them to not want to follow God and trust him. Their question is one we can all relate to.

But the answer they get from God as they talk it out with Him- remember this is a book where there are 6 conversations the people have with God... well, it's something I don't think any of us here are used to. In fact, is flat out shocking. But it is something that we all have to form a conclusion on, regardless of where we're coming from. Let's read the passage and talk about this together here.

Read Texts:

You can see the questions laid out plainly at the beginning of these passages. And you can see the answer God gives, something terribly unpopular. But it has to be addressed. It's about the Day of Judgment in the Bible. This is the answer God gives here to the questions of do our actions really count.

Disclaimers:

- We have no vested interest in seeing people face God's judgment.
- I am going to try and describe this passage more than defend it. What I mean is this: there are obviously a lot of philosophical questions that come up in talking about a day of judgment- it's good we think about that. Those questions are important to deal with, and I hope to touch on at least some of it here. But I want to spend the bulk of my time trying to explain what this passage is talking about. I've included a website that I think might be of help. And also you can obviously ask questions as we have our open mic time.

So, the passage lays out pretty clearly:

There is a day of judgment for those who do evil

Text: 3:5, 4:1. "the Day" (4:1), or the "day of the Lord" (4:5)

Jesus picks up on this coming day of judgment. (John 5:28-29)

(Believers will get judged as well).

It's interesting to note what's counted as evil- there are personal evils, and ones that are inflicted on others.

But that is not the whole picture. The text goes on to say:

But there's a day where God also redeems people for himself, purifying them, freeing them from evil, making them new.

This is in fact the bulk of what the passages talk about. Look with me at 3:1-4 and 3:16-3:18. We'll start with the latter.

Apparently there was a group of people during Malachi's day that did in fact fear God and did not give up. They met together, and God saw this. He notes that he will set them apart from that day of judgment, he will call them his own, his possession, symbolically writing their names in a book of remembrance. And he notes that once more the people will see that there is a distinction between good and evil. This is in response to the question they have in v.15. So God spares the people who have chosen to follow Him. The difference here with the other passage is that there's a human element that God responds to.

But there's a divine part as well, and that's the focus of 3:1-4- it talks about how God himself will purify a group of people. And the details are spelled out in a rather intriguing way. First, God will send a messenger before him (v.1). And then he, God, will come "suddenly to his temple." But this is rather unique in that God all of a sudden describes himself in third person. And in fact he further describes himself as "the messenger of the covenant"- I believe that this phrase is not describing the initial messenger in the first part of the verse, but refers to the "Lord," for two reasons: 1) the parallelism (x who you seek/delight in is coming), and 2) God elsewhere is described as a "messenger" as well. We see this when we realize that the word translated "messenger" here is also translated "angel." There's a person in the Bible called the "angel of the Lord" who is a little mysterious in the Old Testament- he seems distinct from God and yet is God, much like

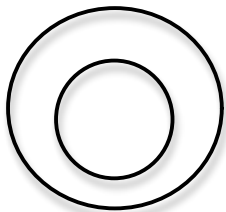
the way God is describing himself here (see Gen 6:7-14). It's unclear how this can be until we enter into the NT and discover that there is one God that exists as three persons, a concept that is described as the trinity. And so what is being described here is that God himself will come after this messenger, but it will be a little different than what the Jewish people would be used to. You can probably guess that we are talking about Jesus here, but we'll expound on that later. In any case, note what God does when he comes: he purifies his people so that they can again live before God, worship him, in a way that actually pleases God. (v.2-4). These people, according to the passage, are the Levites. We mentioned in an earlier message of the series that this refers today to all those who have decided to follow Jesus. The imagery used is of metalworkers refining precious metals, something still done today, where silver (for example) is melted and heated until other elements rise up to the surface allowing for the metalworker to remove the impurities, making the silver more pure. That is what God desires to us do as well.

There is a day of judgment coming, but God will redeem and purify a people who will not face judgment on this day.

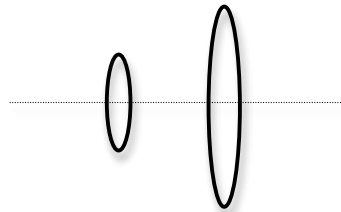
Now, given that this is a prophecy about the future from Malachi's perspective, I think the natural question is how will this happen? What are the events that will fulfill this prophecy? Or even more specific, has it happened?

I've already alluded to the fact that I think some of the events prophesied here have happened. How can this be the case if the Judgment day has not come? The more you study the predictive elements of the prophecies in the Bible, the more you realize some have definitely been fulfilled, but others have not.

They key lies in realizing how Old Testament prophecies were two- dimensional. What I mean is this. From the vantage point of the prophet, they would see various events in the future like these concentric circles. (Show diagram). There is something coming, a day where there is both judgment and refining. They see both, and write about both.



Two Dimensional



Three Dimensional

But the reality is that the events will happen in three dimensions, there's a progress to them.

What does this mean?

The final day of Judgment has not come yet. But the redemption has come. And this is in Jesus.

This is seen in other day of the Lord texts in the NT: 1 Cor. 5:5, 1 Th. 5:2, 2 Th. 2:2, 2 Peter 3:10, as well as the teachings of Jesus (see texts on Jesus and day of judgment/hell).

This is seen as the life of Jesus plays out. A man named John the Baptist is identified as this messenger, one who is like Elijah; these prophecies are applied to him. (Matt. 11:10, Mark 1:1-2, Luke 1:17, 7:27) And Jesus indeed shows up at the temple to begin a new era of actually purifying those who would follow God. (Matt 21:1-17)

What are we to do?

Know that your actions today are not in vain. Continue to obey. This is the admonition of the New Testament authors for followers of Jesus. 1 Thess. 5 (note v. 6, for example), 2 Peter 3:10ff.

On Purity: know that Jesus is here to make you new. You and I can't do it ourselves. The way we come to God according to the Bible is not get ourselves clean/pure, and then come to God. It would never work because we could never make ourselves completely pure. The way it works is we come to God honest and broken, acknowledging that we can't purify ourselves, that He has to do it, and so we let Him in our lives as our leader. And from there we work with Him as He does the work, we respond to what He asks of us as he purifies us.

Challenge:

- Will we continue to obey even when things seem to be in vain?
- Will we let Him in and refine us? This is done by saying to Him, God come and be my leader.
- Will we continue to respond to Him as he challenges us in this process of refining?