**Malachi 4 “For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the Lord of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch. 2But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. 3You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do *this,*” Says the Lord of hosts. “Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *With* *the* statutes and judgments. 5Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 6And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”**

 Tonight, we’re in the book of Malachi. It’s estimated that Malachi prophesied around 420 BC. This would have been after Haggai and Zechariah. It would have been after the time of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The second temple has been dedicated by the time of Malachi. The name Malachi means my messenger. There’s been some controversy over the book of Malachi – some of the early Jewish historians gave Ezra credit for authorship – some argued that it was Nehemiah – others have said Zerubbabel, who we met as the governor of the province a few weeks ago, wrote it. But, my Bible has the name Malachi at the top. I’m not here to argue who wrote the book, but here to honor the truth I find in the book. Too often, man wants to argue over a word rather than marvel over The Word; we lose sight of the Message because we look too closely at the sentences; we chase names rather than honor His Name.

 Malachi was the final prophet before God fell silent for more than 400 years. We shouldn’t think though that nothing was happening during the 400 years. God was preparing, Christ was on the way, and the Israelites were in full rebellion. The Persians were conquered by the Greeks in 332 BC. Syria ruled for a bit around 171 BC. The Holy of Holies was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes. Throughout this time, prophecy was being fulfilled – Daniel told of the coming of the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. God may have been silent, but He was not still. He was moving during this great run up to the coming of our blessed Savior Jesus Christ.

We should never think, when God falls silent, that He is still. God is always at work… the greatest moments in our walk may be preceded by the greatest periods of silence in our life. We must stay faithful and pray for God’s guidance even in those times that we strain to hear.

Malachi, in the chapters leading up to chapter 4, very clearly addressed the unfaithful priests and people. He was warning of the coming judgement. He reminded the people of God’s unchanging love, highlighted the people’s unfaithful ways, called for repentance, and foretold the coming of Jesus. He warns people down through the ages not to rob God and reveals how God hears the murmurings of the unfaithful heart.

In chapter 4, we read verse 1 **“For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the Lord of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch.** God is not blind. God sees. Nothing is lost on Him. In Matthew 5, Jesus warns us that looking upon a woman in lust is the same as committing the act. Our thoughts are powerful! When we hate in our heart, we’re hating our brother. When we gossip, we’re murdering with our tongue. Malachi says – the proud, those who do wickedly, will be consumed by fire. It will leave neither root nor branch. They will be utterly consumed. In Malachi 3:14-15 God repeats what the people have said harshly against Him - *You have said, ‘It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the Lord of hosts?* ***15****So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do wickedness are raised up;
They even tempt God and go free*. They thought God wasn’t listening – They thought His ear didn’t hear the grousing and bellyaching. And He heard every word. He hears us too. Jesus hears.

Verse 2 **2But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.** Now Malachi prophesies the coming of Jesus. The Sun of Righteousness shall rise. The Light of the world is on His way. The wicked will be burned up, but we who fear His name will be healed and cared for! There will be no more sadness, no more tears, no more hurting, no more sickness. Very clearly, there will be a day of judgement. The angels will sort the fish from the dragnet – the good fish will be kept and the bad (Matthew 13:50) will be cast into the furnace of fire. But, to be saved, we must fear His name.

Verse 3 **3You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do *this,*” Says the Lord of hosts.** There are some who have interpreted this verse as a type of gleeful victory over the wicked. The righteous will trample the wicked! Some kind of perverse revenge on the wicked. But, the wicked have been consumed… their ashes cover the ground, the wide way with all those following the world has been emptied of the travelers and those few from the narrow way now walk upon the ashes of those consumed in verse 1. The righteous should never feel glee at the fall of the wicked. We must feel sorrow that a soul perished and was cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. To feel glee at the suffering of another reveals something about the state of our own heart.

Verse 4 **4“Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *With* *the* statutes and judgments.** Matthew 5:18, spoken about 450 years later, says not one jot, not one tittle will pass from the Law until all is fulfilled. God is telling His people to stay faithful, don’t follow the world. Yet, over the next 400 years, that’s exactly what the unfaithful priests and people will do. They’ll neglect God and profane His temple. They’ll turn away.

Verse 5 **5Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.** We understand now that this foretold the coming of John the Baptist. John the Baptist came wearing a coat of camels hair, similar to the one worn by Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8. John the Baptist was not Elijah reincarnated, but came in the spirit and authority of Elijah the prophet. In John 1:21, John says that he is not Elijah. In verse 23, he says he is the voice crying in the wilderness make straight the way of the Lord. In verse 26, it says John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. Our Savior Jesus.

Verse 6 **6And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”** John the Baptist would be an instrument to start the turn of many of the Jews, both young and old, back to God. He prepared the way for Jesus to impact both Jew and Gentile. The Jews were divided by Pharisee and Sadducee sects. Two different leaders - Hillell and Shammai – founded different schools in the century before John the Baptist that taught opposing viewpoints on ethics and rituals – and there was much debate. John the Baptist united these by teaching love.

Ultimately, Israel refused to turn to Christ, rejecting a crucifying Him and God did indeed smite the land with a curse. The Romans, in 70 AD, besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. God used Vespasian and his son Titus to smite the people.

Malachi set the stage for the coming of Christ. It is the last book of the Old Testament, but provides peek into the glorious coming of our Savior. It’s a wonderful way to end our march through the Old Testament… by casting our eyes forward to the coming of Jesus Christ.