

Malachi 2:17-3:6 — Where is The God Of Justice?

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Have you ever found yourself frustrated with God, especially when you see someone getting away with something downright evil and God didn't stop it? Right now, you are probably thinking of a killer entering a Florida school and taking the lives of 17 children this past week. Can you imagine what it feels like to be one of their parents? Where is the God of justice? God, if you are there, why didn't you stop him?

Maybe you wrestle with something different. You are angry with God because you see wicked people prospering. They are dishonest in their business dealings in order to make a handsome profit. It is not that you want to be dishonest but you are irritated at God that they prosper from being dishonest. One example is the dictator of North Korea. He starves his people and works them to death but every photo we see of him tells us he needs less food and more exercise. God, why do you let him get away with this? Where is your justice?

If you are frustrated when you see evil people succeed and good people suffer, this morning will be a good study for you.

We are working our way through the book of Malachi. The banner over this book is found in the first five verses, that is God's unchanging love for his people even when his people don't love him. God passionately loves his people, and he never leaves his people even when they don't feel God's love in their circumstances.

Earlier in the book, we learned why God's people were facing hard times. While God's people were still loved, we saw the first reason they had lost God's favor was because of the lives of the priests. When it came to offerings, rather than giving God their best, they gave God their garbage. Dumping your garbage in the offering plate isn't acceptable worship. It was not just the offerings the priests gave for God's people that was dishonoring to God, it was also the attitude they displayed when they served as priests. Rather than being grateful to serve, they grumbled they had to serve. They also dishonored God in their teaching. In their teaching, they were not men of truth. They were men who played favorites. They were people pleasers, not God pleasers, when they taught the people. Instead of the the priests leading people to God, they were leading people away from God. The priests had led the way when it came to God's people falling out of God's favor.

Last week, we began a new section in Malachi that moved from looking at the sins of the priests of God to looking at the sins of the people of God. How were the people of God living that moved them out of the light of God's favor into the shadow of his displeasure? They were dating and marrying people outside of the family of God.

Last week we saw the strong language God used on this issue. God sees a Christian dating and ultimately marrying someone outside of the family of God as an act of infidelity against God. He literally calls it life profanity. It is like cussing God out not with our words but with the choices of our lives. God is

adamant that the single people of God only date and marry within the family of God.

In addition, we saw those who were married were acting unfaithfully to their spouses. God's men were divorcing their godly wives to marry younger, cuter pagan women. God also called that an act of infidelity. It was not just infidelity against one's spouse but it was infidelity against God, who joined that husband and wife together.

This morning, as we continue in Malachi, we see another area where God's people chose sin so they fell out of his favor. They were questioning God's character. They were accusing him of being evil, not good. They questioned God's justice and accused him of refusing to judge sin. They were even considering switching teams and starting to live like pagan people instead of God's people. Let's dive in to see how things unfolded.

Where is God's justice?

You have wearied the Lord with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?" Malachi 2:17 (ESV)

These people were actually tiring God. Technically, God can't get tired, but if he could, they would have gotten him there. They were like toddlers on a road trip that keep asking the same question 20 times. "Are we there yet!?" The questions they kept asking was not how much farther to grandmother's house but where is God's justice?

I want you to notice the tone they used when they say this. They were asking questions, but they were not genuine questions. They were cynical

questions. They were mocking questions. They were ridiculing God for his lack of justice. Let's look at their words.

Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and he delights in them. They were angry, evil people gaining material prosperity. Evil people were getting away with evil deeds. They thought God was either not there or God switched sides. Perhaps God actually blesses sin. Their words insulted God's character.

Where is the God of justice? The other thing they didn't believe was God hands out justice. They thought everyone gets away with everything because God won't intervene. You can cheat on your spouse, and it won't matter. You can underpay your workers, and God will close his eyes. If you can get away with not paying your bills, don't worry, you won't need to answer to God.

Have you ever felt that way?

First, I want to give two topical answers to their questions, then we will continue in the book of Malachi and see the additional answers Malachi gave to their questions. Let's look at some answers to those questions from the broad brushstroke of the Bible.

They didn't see their suffering as a consequence of their sin.

They were so worried about God not extending his justice for sin against other people that they completely missed the fact that God was busy extending justice against them for the sin in their lives. Interestingly, they didn't see the hard times they faced were part of God's will to respond to sin, their sin. Earlier in our study, we talked about the empty worship they gave, their infidelity to God in their

dating lives and the frequent divorce they exhibited in their married lives. They didn't see their hard times as the way God was responding to their own sin.

They forgot that a little more than 100 years before, their grandparents and great-grandparents were suffering in Babylonian exile because of their sin. When it comes to sin, God takes the initiative to respond to the sin of his own people before he takes the initiative to respond to the sin of other people. The sin of God's people always leads to suffering for God's people. This is a principle that covers the entire Old and New Testaments like an umbrella. It is just as true today as it was in biblical times. When God's people sin, God is quick to bring his people suffering for sin to turn them from sin. Instead of focusing our thoughts in envy on evil people who are far from God that enjoy success, we need to first focus our thoughts on the suffering we face in our lives to see if God is trying to get our attention and turn us from our sin. While all suffering in the lives of God's people does not come from sin, God uses suffering as a way to get the attention of his people when they are in sin. Look how the writer of Hebrews teaches this to us.

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. Hebrews 12:6 (ESV)

What is the meaning of the word chastise? Chastise means to correct something or someone. It is punishment, not with vindictiveness but constructive suffering designed to turn someone from the sin and folly of his or her ways which is ruining his or her life. When God's people experience suffering in our lives because of sin, that is not evidence of God's hate for us. It is evidence of God's love for us. Aggressive correction from God for our sin is evidence of

God's great love for us that he passionately wants to turn us from sin. Why does he so aggressively want to turn us from sin? It is because he loves us so passionately.

Some of you are frustrated. As soon as you sin, you seem to get caught. Why do your friends seem to get away with everything but your smallest steps into sin are constantly exposed? Instead of fretting over your inability to get away with sin, celebrate that God loves you enough to constantly turn you from sin. That is evidence of God's great love for you. When we suffer because of our sin, that is God's loving way of turning us away from sin. Those who continually get away with sin give evidence that God is not intervening to correct them from sin. They are not his children.

This morning, if you are suffering, look in your heart and ask yourself if God is using the suffering in your life as a way of leading you to repentance of sin.

By the way, that doesn't mean all suffering in our lives is discipline for sin. Hebrews says sometimes God uses suffering not to correct us from sin but to discipline us for maturity. Sometimes God allows us to suffer not because we have done anything wrong but because he wants to mature us so we can do more things right.

If you reflect on this, every great man of God walked with a limp. God allowed them to experience suffering to mature them and make them more useful for Christ and his kingdom. For example, think of Abraham. What was the Achilles heel in his life? He had no son. He and his wife, Sarah, agonized over

her infertility their entire lives. They called out to God. They questioned God. Why did God stretch Abraham's faith? He did it to build Abraham's faith. The Scriptures call Abraham the father of faith because he learned to live and trust God by faith. Abraham's suffering was used by God to build his faith and make him an example for us to follow.

Take another example, Joseph. While Joseph was immature and bratty, he didn't do anything that merited his own brothers selling him as a slave to Egypt. When he was in Egypt, even when he did the right thing, Mrs. Potiphar falsely accused him of rape so he suffered severely for sins he didn't commit. What was God doing? God was maturing him through suffering. God was preparing him through suffering to be a righteous man second in command to Pharaoh. God was preparing him to not just save his own flesh-and-blood brothers from famine but to save an entire nation in famine. Joseph's sufferings were allowed by God to prepare Joseph for the great work God gave him to do.

Another example is David. Even when he was a youth, David was set apart by God to be king. In love for Saul — the reigning king — David served him, he fought for him, he defended his honor and loved Jonathan, Saul's son. How was David treated by Saul? He spent many years running from the king he loved as he was hunted like a fugitive from justice. Why did God allow David, who was doing the right things, to experience this suffering? God was using David's suffering to prepare him to be king. The sufferings were teaching him compassion for the people. They were teaching him about hard life before he

enjoyed the good life. His sufferings were allowed by God to prepare him for a greater work, because God was not content to use him for a lesser work.

I say this because I know some of us here this morning are going through a great season of suffering. If God loves you, why is he allowing you to experience this pain? It might be because he is trying to correct you from sin. If that is the case, you will know without a shadow of doubt the sin he is dealing with in your life. If he isn't correcting you of sin, he is allowing suffering into your life to shape you for a greater work, not a lesser work. Why is he doing this? He loves you.

So we see suffering is either to correct us from sin or to prepare us for a greater work. Let's look at another things the people in Malachi's day didn't understand.

They didn't realize delaying judgment for sin is different than skipping judgment of sin.

When they said, "Where is the God of justice?" They were wondering if God would ever step in to judge sin. The Bible tells us God always judges sin. He is completely just and fair. Nobody gets away with anything.

Sometimes, in God's kindness, he delays judgment. That is different than skipping judgment. Let's see how the Psalmist speaks about this truth.

Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning... it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors!... For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.
Psalm 73:12–19, 27 (ESV)

The Psalmist tells us that he too was frustrated by the prosperity of the wicked. He also felt righteousness was pointless when the wicked appear to constantly succeed. When he went to the house of worship, he grasped their end. While they may live in ease in this life, they will face judgment by God in the next life. Nobody gets away with anything. If judgment for sin is escaped before the grave, it is faced after the grave.

Peter also talked about why God delays punishment for sin. He delays punishing sin not because he is ignoring sin because he patiently waits for people to turn from their sin.

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:8–9 (ESV)

God is so patient. He extends great patience to sinners, consistently giving them more time to repent. At first, this may make you angry at God. Why is he so patient toward those who don't deserve his mercy?

After we think about this, this point of irritation transforms itself into gratitude. God didn't just express great patience toward others when they sin, but he also expressed great patience to us in our sin. Isn't it true God was patient with us and gave us time to repent? If he gave us what we deserved when we deserved it, none of us would have made it to the point of repentance. God would have fried us within two minutes of our lives. Just as God was patient with us, giving us time to repent, he is patient with other great sinners, giving them countless opportunities to repent. God's patience with sin fills each of us with gratitude to God. It gave us opportunity for repentance.

Now let's see the additional answers Malachi gave to the problem of justice and the prosperity of the wicked in the world.

The answer to injustice in the world is Jesus.

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.
Malachi 3:1 (ESV)

The following verses are complex. They will require some thought. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Malachi spoke for God about the problems of injustice in the world and how God will answer them. God inspired Malachi to prophetically speak about Jesus 400 years before his coming. Jesus is God's answer to the injustices and sin in the world. Let's work our way through these verses and I will explain them along the way. Remember these are God's words, and they were prophecy.

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. He began with the word behold. The word "Behold" means to take notice of something. It is like highlighting a section of a book with a yellow highlighter. It is the ancient equivalent of bolding the text. If you are daydreaming, tune back in at this point. What is about to be said is very important.

God would send a messenger that would prepare the way for him. We started at the front of the verse. Now let's move to the end of the verse. Who was the "him" referencing? Who was coming? Having not read ahead, let me reveal the mystery. God was coming. God was going to address the problems of evil and injustice in this world. Before God came, he would send a messenger to prepare the way for him. Does anybody have an idea of the identity of this

messenger that would prepare the way for God? Think of your Gospels. Who prepared the way for Jesus? His name was John the Baptist. Five times in the New Testament this verse, or its equivalent parallel in Isaiah, is referenced as being fulfilled by John the Baptist as he prepared the way for Christ.¹ Let me show you one example.

For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’ ” Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Matthew 3:3–4 (ESV)

Four hundred years before Jesus arrived on the scene to deal with sin, God inspired Malachi to let us know a messenger would precede Jesus’ ministry to prepare people’s hearts for Jesus. Let’s look at the next line.

The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

Remember these verses were an answer to the question of the injustices in the world. Who was coming to address them? The Lord. In the New Testament we know this is God in the flesh. His name is Jesus.

God was coming and he would come suddenly into his temple. What is this saying?

Remember the people in Malachi’s day were disappointed. When Solomon’s temple was dedicated, the glory of God filled the temple like a cloud of smoke. God visibly showed his presence in Solomon’s temple. That temple was destroyed by the Babylonians when God’s people were sent into exile. When the people returned from exile, God promised his glory would once again come and fill this new temple, but after they rebuilt the temple and dedicated it to God, no

¹ Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23; Matthew 11:10.

cloud of God's glory filled it. Nothing happened. In frustration, they felt God turned his back on them.

Then God explained that his presence would one day come and fill this new temple. "The God you are seeking will suddenly come into his temple. The glory of God will dwell in the temple." How would this take place?

God's glory filled this new temple in a different way than his glory filled the former temple. Instead of a cloud of smoke filling the temple with God's presence, in 400 years God would come to his temple but it would be in the flesh with Jesus, not in the smoke.

When God's presence came to his temple, he would come suddenly, that means unexpectedly. God's people would not see it coming. It wouldn't be what they expected. That is exactly what happened when Jesus showed up in the temple. The glory of God showed up in a way they never imagined. Let's move a little further.

The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. Who is the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight? In Hebrew this line and the last line are spoken in what is called poetic parallelism. That means this line and the last line are saying the same thing but with different words. This is very common in Hebrew.

This means "the Lord" from the last verse is the same person as "the messenger of the covenant" from this verse. The messenger of the covenant is God who would come unexpectedly to his temple.

The word for messenger in Hebrew can mean either a human messenger or a spiritual messenger. In fact, the word for messenger in Hebrew is the same word for angel. While the messenger in the first line of verse 1 is a human being in the person of John the Baptist, it is grammatically and logically valid to realize the messenger of the covenant is a spiritual being in this line because of the poetic parallelism and the grammatical domain of the Hebrew word for messenger. This is saying, the angel of the covenant in whom you delight is coming! Who is this angel of the covenant who is the Lord, who is God?

This Christmas, we saw how anytime the Old Testament references “the angel of the Lord” in the Old Testament, that is a reference to the preincarnate manifestations of Christ before the New Testament. Those are references to the second person of the Trinity. They are references to Jesus before he took on a body to save us. At Christmas, we learned it was Jesus who was in the cloud that guided the Israelites through the wilderness by day and the pillar of fire at night. We learned it was Jesus in the cloud of glory that filled Solomon’s temple at its dedication. Jesus would show up in his temple again but not in a cloud, but putting this with other verses of Scripture we see he would show up in the flesh.

Here we find that Jesus is called the angel of the covenant. What does this reveal to us about Jesus? Jesus, even before he took on flesh in Bethlehem, was always involved in the inauguration of God’s covenants with God’s people in the Old Testament as well as the new. Jesus was involved in the inauguration of God’s covenant with Moses on Mt. Sinai. Jesus was involved in the inauguration of the sacrificial system where sin was temporarily and figuratively covered by

the blood of an animal. As we look forward in biblical history, we see this was because Jesus was coming to inaugurate a new covenant between God and his people. It wouldn't be a covenant based on the constant sacrifice of animals to figuratively and temporarily cover sin but by Jesus taking on a body so he could be the once-for-all sacrifice for all our sin which never needs to be repeated. Our sin is completely taken care of by Jesus and our faith and trust in him.

Malachi prophetically said, "The one who set up the covenant between God and his people is coming." This was great news. Since we live later in biblical history, we see this was extremely good news because Jesus came to take on flesh and set up a new covenant. A better covenant. A covenant that is so good it make the entire sacrificial system and the temple system completely obsolete!

As an aside, let's look at this from a historical perspective. Four hundred years after this prophecy was given through Malachi, Jesus came and set up the new covenant for God's people. This covenant is so good it is not just for the Jewish people but it is offered to all people. Shortly after Jesus' death, the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., and there is not temple to this day. On the temple mount site is the Muslim Dome of the Rock. There is no way the temple will be rebuilt by the Jews.

Why did God allow the abolition of the temple and the sacrificial system? With the coming of Jesus and his inauguration of a new covenant, a new way for everyone to come before God completely free from our sin because of the death

and resurrection of Jesus, the entire old covenant and the sacrificial system is now obsolete and done away with by God.

Malachi said the answer to all the injustices in the world is coming. The answer is God is coming to deal with those injustices. He did that by taking on flesh and dying on the cross for the sins in your life and my life. He came to set up a new covenant that will bring delight and joy based on the sacrifice of himself. That was just 400 years down the road.

When God's people in Malachi's day said, "How have you loved us?" The answer was Jesus. He was coming. When God's people say where is the God of justice? The answer is Jesus hanging on the cross, facing the justice we deserve for our sin.

So Malachi was inspired by God to speak prophetically, telling us God was coming and his name was to be Jesus. He would come suddenly and unexpectedly into his temple. He would come to set up a new covenant. Jesus would deal with the problem of sin and injustice in this world. Let's continue our way through this passage and see what we can learn about the way Jesus deals with sin and injustice.

Jesus came the first time to purify His people.

But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. Malachi 3:2-4 (ESV)

The people in Malachi's day were wishing God would have shown up to judge the sinful people around them for their sin.

Malachi said, “Be careful what you wish for. God will show up but when he does, his first order of business will be to deal with your sin.”

Here we find the coming of God to set up a new covenant and save his people would not be a fun time. It would be a hard time.

Malachi said, “Who can endure the day of his coming?” When Jesus showed up, he would point out the sins of God’s people. He would call God’s people to repentance. In particular, he would point out the sins of the religious leaders — the priests. God is primarily concerned with the purity of his people even before the repentance of all people.

Let’s see if this prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. What did Jesus do to the religious establishment when he showed up? What did he do in the temple when he showed up suddenly and unexpected?

He cleansed the temple according to the Gospel of John both at the beginning of his ministry and at the end of his ministry. He said his father’s house should be a house of prayer — it shouldn’t look like a mall with shops and kiosks blocking the way of people coming to seek God. He threw all that stuff out, because the temple was his father’s house. When Jesus spoke about the religious leaders, he called them white-washed tombs. They looked good on the outside but were filled with death and decay on the inside. A great example of Jesus’ dealign with the religious establishment of the day is found in Matthew 23 when Jesus just unloaded on the religious leaders of his day as he called them to repentance.

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who

would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? Matthew 23:13–17 (ESV)

Malachi said, “You think you are excited about God’s return so he can honor you and punish others. God will come in a way you don’t expect. He will come in the flesh. He will come as Jesus. When he comes, his first order of business will not be to punish others for their sin but to call you to repentance for your sin, in particular the sins of your religious leaders.”

Jesus was the one who would restore true worship of God. He did that through making himself the once-for-all offering for sin so we now worship God through Him in truth and the new covenant he inaugurated.

This text tells us Jesus didn’t just stop with our legal purification before God through the payment of our sins, but Jesus also focuses on the life purification of God’s people to turn us away from the practice of sin.

Jesus’ work is described as a cleansing work. He is like a refiner’s fire. He is like a washer’s soap. He purifies us.

Let’s examine the work of a refiner. When someone mined gold or silver, what they took from the ground was rarely a pure metal. To return the metal to its pure state they put the metal in a container and heated it over an intense flame to melt the metal down to its liquid state. In that state, the impurities would rise to the surface where they could be skimmed off the top. When a refiner could see his reflection in the metal like a mirror, he knew the impurities were gone.

What makes this interesting is the tense of this Hebrew that describes Jesus' work of refining God's people is in the continual tense. The purification referred to is not just a one-and-done process. This says Jesus is in the continual process of putting his people over the heat. He melts us down. He lets us go through hard times to the impurities in our lives. The sin in our lives rises to the surface where God can deal with our sinfulness, where we can confess our sinfulness. The end result is a man or woman whose sinful impurities are slowly removed as he or she becomes a purer and holier person. That is the process Jesus did not just do in his first coming, but he is still purifying us today.

The book of Hebrews describes this purification process we all face as God's children.

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:9–11 (ESV)

What are the answers to the injustices in the world? God is coming to deal with them. His name is Jesus. He came in the flesh. He came to set up a new covenant in his blood. He didn't just come to legally purify his people of sin but he came to purify our lives from sin. He allows us to face the heat to melt us down so the sin in our lives rises to the surface so it can be dealt with.

What else did Jesus come to do with sin?

Jesus will come the second time to judge sin.

“Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against

those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me,” says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 3:5 (ESV)

This is one of those difficult sections. Malachi was just talking about Jesus and his first coming to purify a people for himself.

Then it appears that Malachi was inspired by God to look beyond the first coming of Jesus to save and purify his people to the second coming of Jesus which will be for the judgment for all people.

Remember the complaint of God’s people — when will God hand out justice for sin? Malachi said, “Justice is coming. It is coming in the second coming of Jesus. He will be a swift prosecutor of all sin.”

At first, this sin list appears to be a random catalog. As we look at them a little closer, we realize they are not intended to be a list of random sins. They are intended to express a range of sins. The list begins with the most heinous sins, but it descends into minor sins. The purpose is to say that when Jesus comes the second time, he will execute complete justice for all sin from the most minor to the most grievous. If someone’s sins are not paid for by the death of Jesus in Jesus’ first coming, perfect justice for their sin will be handed out by Jesus in his second coming. Let’s look at the list.

Sorcerers — These are people that are satanic worshippers, Ouija board users, psychics, black magic, and witch doctors.

Adulterers — These are people who violate the marriage covenant. Adultery is one of the most grievous sins, but it is not as bad as sorcery.

Swear falsely — An adulterer is someone who breaks his or her promise of spousal fidelity in the worst way. Swearing falsely is someone breaking his or her

promise in any other way. God will deal with those who are not people of their word.

Oppress the hired worker in their wages — In the ancient world, day laborers were paid at the end of the day. Many people literally lived hand-to-mouth. Sometimes wealthy landowners weren't quick to give their workers their pay at the end of the day. Even though their poor workers desperately needed their salary, wealthy landowners sometimes were tardy in paying the salary. This left workers facing hunger for themselves and their family. Oppressing the hired worker was not necessarily neglecting to pay them, but it was not being timely in paying them. If anyone runs a business, we have experienced people who are slow to pay and you know the financial hardship it causes. This is the practice Malachi was referencing. Jesus will deal with that when he returns.

Oppressing the widow and fatherless — This is taking advantage of people of your own culture that who are weak and have nobody to defend them. This is taking advantage of single mothers who are trying to put food on the table for their children. A woman is vulnerable in that position. God will judge people who take advantage of single mothers and their children.

Those who thrust aside the sojourner — While the last sin was taking advantage of people who are weak and vulnerable in our culture, to thrust aside a sojourner is neglecting care for the vulnerable among us who come from a different culture. These are migrant workers who many not even speak our language, but because their country is so impoverished they have risked their lives to travel to our country on a prayer and a dream that they could provide for

their families. They need food. They need work. Malachi said all those who ignore these foreigners among us in need will need to give an answer to Jesus when he returns to judge all sin.

So the range of sin Jesus will judge when he returns is all the way from sorcery to simply walking by foreigners in need.

Conclusion

Where is justice in this world? Malachi's answer for the need of justice in this world is Jesus. Jesus is coming again to deal with injustice. He came the first time to pay for the sin of his people and even now he is working on the purification of his people. Sometimes he allows his people to face times of suffering that melt us down so the sin in our lives rises to the surface so we can confess it to Jesus, face it and become more like Christ.

In the future, Jesus will return again but this time his return will not to save people and purify his people but it will be to give perfect and complete judgment to all people.

The problem is, why has there been such a long time between Jesus' first coming and his second? Did he forget to return? No, he didn't. For an answer, we turn back to the book of 1 Peter where we began this study.

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some

understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:3-9

Jesus didn't forget to return. He is patient and giving more people a chance to turn from their sin and trust in his payment for sin before he returns. The reason Jesus hasn't returned to judge sin is because he is patient, loving and good to us and even to sinners. We have a great Jesus who has not skipped final justice but is delaying final justice. He is a great Jesus that paid for the justice we deserved on his cross, and he is even now, in love, allowing us to face hard times to purify us and make us more like him.



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