

# Messenger!

## A Journey Through the Burden of Malachi

### **Malachi 4:5**

### 15 I Am Going to Send You Elijah the Prophet

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December 8, 2019

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**Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.**

To the Glory of God

Now I suppose that the subject of "Last Things" is one of the most commonly looked at subjects in all the Bible. Many, many people have written many, many books about just how this World and this Life and this Age will wind down.

And the subject of "Last Things" is so vast and so serious that they invented a name for it, "Eschatology". which has to do with the "Science of" or the "Study of" or the "Knowledge of" Last and Final Things.

And, as many of you know, I have struggled quite a lot about this subject for many, many years. But I have been honest about my struggles, because the last thing I want to do is to lead anyone astray. I don't want to be deceived myself, and I sure don't want to lead anyone else astray. And so, I just think it is both wise and safe for me to say, "*I don't know*", when I don't know. And there are just a lot of things that people say, *with such confidence*, about a particular verse or passage that deals with future events, and I simply don't understand how they arrived at their conclusion. I hear what they say, I'm not deaf. But I honestly don't see how they arrive at some of their conclusions. Now I may be wrong, but I honestly believe that most of these people get what they believe from what other people say, and from books written, and from movies, and from what is currently being taught, than they do from an honest examination of the Bible. And that is why I am very reserved about this. I don't just join in with people when they talk about it.

For example, if you and I lived back before the mid 1800's-, we would hear Pastors and Teachers preach and teach about Eschatology. But we would never hear what we are hearing in our day, because the primary Theology about Eschatology that dominates the modern Church simply was not taught until the mid- to late 1800's. And what that means is that for 1,850 years out of 2,000 years, the Church of Jesus did NOT teach what is being taught today about how all things are going to wind down. And that's not my opinion; that is a fact of history. And, since there aren't any new Scriptures to analyze, I think that statistic is important to understand.

"Pre-Millennial Dispensationalism" *dominates* the modern church of our day. It is what almost everybody in this room has been exposed to for the *majority* of their Christian Experience. Most people alive today have bought into the logic of Dispensationalism<sup>1</sup>, lock, stock, and barrel. And the only quibble among most of them is when the Rapture occurs.

For example, PMD is the official Eschatological position of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Assemblies of God, the Church of God, the United Methodist Church, the UPC, Calvary Chapel, and almost every single small non-denominational and inter-denominational church in the United States. And that comprises the overwhelming majority of all Evangelicals in this country. And yet, 150 years ago nobody heard of this View. Nobody taught it and nobody believed in it until a Baptist preacher, by the name of John Nelson Darby literally *invented* it, and CI Scofield put Darby's notes in his reference Bible in 1909.<sup>2</sup>

But even though Eschatology is a mystery to me, it is very important. Having a *wrong* Eschatology is the primary reason why so many people rejected Jesus as being the Messiah, even though it must have been hard to ignore all the miracles, and all the healings, and all the casting out of demons. Jesus had total and complete Authority over matter, over life and death, over demons, over disease, over Sin, over animals, and over plants, and He manifested that Authority *constantly*. More miracles, more signs and wonders, more healings, and more demons were cast out during Jesus' short earthly Ministry than in all of recorded History before Him. And yet, because He didn't "fit the mold"

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<sup>1</sup> *Dispensationalism* is the way to understand History as divided into seven different "eras" or "dispensations"

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/pastorsandpreachers/john-nelson-darby.html>

of their “already worked out Eschatology”, they reasoned that Jesus simply could NOT be the Messiah.

Even after the Resurrection. After His Disciples had seen Jesus alive for forty days after His Crucifixion, after they had talked to Him and watched Him appear and disappear, even after He had spoken to them the “**things concerning the Kingdom of God**” (The Acts 1:3), they still didn't know how all things would wind down. And so, they asked Him just minutes before Jesus was to bodily ascend into Heaven:

#### **The Acts 1:6b**

... **"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"**

... because at this point, they still were looking for a natural Kingdom in the geographic nation of Israel to be the center of all of God's Will! A ethno-centric Eschatology with Israel and Jerusalem at the center was so engrained in them that they simply could not imagine God dealing with dirty pagan Gentiles. And so, Jesus told them:

#### **The Acts 1:7b&8**

... **It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority**

... which is just a polite way of saying, *"That is none of your business"*. But even though Jesus told them that it was none of their business, ever since then the majority of what Pre-Millennial Dispensationalism teaches has to do with “when” and “how” God will restore the Kingdom to Israel, the very thing Jesus said was “none of our business!” But, in His Mercy, Jesus then promised these men something else:

#### **The Acts 1:8**

**but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**

... so, it really wasn't until they were “endued with Power from on High” in the Upper Room did they begin to realize what Jesus meant when He said in **John 18:36b**:

... **My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then**

**My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."**

... and later on, God "carried along" the Apostle Paul to write some important clarifications about the Reality that the Kingdom of God is NOT natural, but spiritual:

**Romans 14:17**

**the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

... and ...

**1 Corinthians 15:50a**

**Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...**

... and ...

**Colossians 1:13-15**

**For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.**

... which teaches that God's Kingdom is NOT *natural*, but *spiritual*.

Now it is very important that we realize that what the New Testament reveals is what the Old Testament always pointed *toward*. The New Testament is NOT a new religion. The Revelation contained in the 27 Books of the New Testament is the *fulfillment* of all that the Old Testament predicted, in the Person and Work of Jesus, the Christ. And so, as the Epistles of the New Testament bring clarity about the Kingdom of God, we have to realize that this is what the Kingdom was all along.

God's Kingdom was NEVER supposed to be natural. And that is true because of two very important reasons:

1. Whatever is natural is limited.
2. Salvation is for "all who believe", NOT to one ethnic group by birth.

So, for example, a saved father cannot bequeath a place in God's Kingdom to his children through his will. Neither are people saved simply because their parents were. Flesh and blood CANNOT inherit God's Kingdom. Every soul in God's Kingdom is allowed entrance by virtue of them personally experiencing the Miracle of the New Birth.

But that also means that every single soul that has experienced the Miracle of the New Birth will be in God's Kingdom, *regardless* of the depth of his sin, *regardless* of his background, *regardless* of his ethnicity, and *regardless* of his nationality, because the Miracle of the New Birth empowers lost sinners to repent and believe.

The New Birth *sovereignly* unveils the blind eyes of wicked rebels so they may see the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. The New Birth *forcefully* opens the deaf ears of transgressors to hear the Sound of Amazing Grace. And the New Birth *powerfully* takes out the stony heart of those who love Darkness and replaces it with a heart of flesh that is both able and willing to believe. And whoever believes will be saved. And whoever is saved will be in God's Kingdom!

And so, God will get Himself Glory. And a *crescendo* of praises will rise up out of every nation, every tribe, every tongue, and every people-group on earth, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father! And that is *infinitely* better than one people, who speak one language, and who live in one nation, worshipping Him!

So, the *overarching* Goal of God is "Worship". God has created all things and has done all things so that created beings will delight themselves in magnifying the Greatness and Beauty and Wisdom and Power of the one, true, and living God. And all we will do, all throughout Eternity, is to praise and magnify the Worth and the Beauty and the Glory of God, in the Person of Jesus Christ!

But all do not see, nor do they hear, nor do they believe. And so, "Evangelism" exists because "Worship" does not already exist. And so, in order to get Himself Glory, in order to magnify the Glory of His Grace, God took on flesh and became Man so as to seek and save God's people from their Sins. And by saving them,- they will be changed. And by changing them, they will find the fullness of their own Joy in worshipping the Lamb.

But the "Way" in which God determined to do all this was by sending someone else, *first*. And that is what the Prophet Malachi speaks to us today about. Verse 5 of Chapter 4 says:

**Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.**

... so, somebody has to come BEFORE the Messiah comes to do several things. The very next verse says:

**Malachi 4:6a**

**He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers...**

... now why is this "restoring" of Fathers and Sons important? Malachi tells us in the last few words of his "Burden":

**Malachi 4:6b**

**... so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.**

... and those were the last words of Malachi. But they are also the last words of the Old Testament. The Promise of Elijah, the restoring of hearts of both Fathers and Sons, and all this is done so that God will not have to come and smite the Land with a Divine Curse. That is how the partial Revelation of the First Covenant ended. But add to this what Malachi has already said:

**Malachi 3:1-6**

**1 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear 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.**

**2 "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.**

**3 "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.**

**4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.**

**5 "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the Lord of hosts.**

**6 "For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.**

So, now put what Malachi says in 4:5 with what the Prophet said here. The "Messenger" of 3:1 is the "Elijah" of 4:5. And we know several important things about this Elijah Messenger:

- God will send him
- He will be sent BEFORE the Lord
- He will prepare people for the Lord

Now remember that the phrase, "The Lord whom you seek", and "the Messenger of the Covenant" are just two ways to understand about the Messiah, Who is Jesus. But the "Messenger" at the beginning of 3:1 that will come BEFORE the Lord (Who is also the Messenger of the Covenant) is Elijah.

So, the people will be prepared by the Messenger who will precede the Messiah. But look at the WAY that the Messenger will prepare the people (from both Chapter 3 and 4):

- ✓ **he [the Messenger] will clear the way before Me [the Messiah/Jesus]**
- ✓ **He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver**
- ✓ **He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver**
- ✓ **He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers**

So, all of this "clearing", all of this "smelting", all of this "purifying", and all of this "restoring" is carried out by the Messenger/Elijah BEFORE the Messiah/Jesus comes.

Now those of us who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have a hard time grasping the terminology here. Why doesn't the Messiah just come? Why does He have to have *anybody* come BEFORE He comes? If the Messiah is the Lord and everybody who is saved has a relationship with

the Lord, and there are no more intermediaries between us and Jesus, then why does Elijah or anyone else have to come first? Because what Malachi talks about here is a cleansing BEFORE the arrival of the Messiah, and a purification BEFORE the Messiah comes! But if Salvation comes with the Messiah, what is this “pre-cleansing” and what is this “pre- purifying”?

Back in the ancient world, when the King would come to one of his subject's cities, he always had someone or even a group of people who would enter that city *before* him to prepare the people to receive the King. And preparing the people had to do with commanding the people to stop their normal activities and to interrupt their plans, and to dress up and clean themselves, and sweep the streets, and wash the buildings, and fill all the holes in the road, so when the King came he would see the beauty of his city and have the admiration of his subjects.

And fixing the roads and preparing the people took some time. It usually wasn't done in a day. And so, a lot of work and a lot of money and some time was spent “preparing the people” to meet the King.

And the closest thing we have to what Malachi speaks about here is the “Advance Team” for the President of the United States. I actually have a friend who was on the Advance Team for President George HW Bush, back in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

And the Advance Team goes into a city or country, several days *before*, to “prepare” that city, or that hotel, or that airport, or even that nation to receive the President. Now the overwhelming Issue at stake with our President today is safety. But everything from the food that is in the kitchen, to the people that make up the beds, to the airport is all under the control of the Advance Team.

Now the main Issue with the coming of the Messiah is NOT safety, but Worship. The Messenger/Elijah will be sent BEFORE the Messiah comes, and this Messenger will work to prepare the people so that when Messiah comes He will be received in the Way that He deserves. So, all the preparation comes *before* the arrival. And the way that Malachi writes here shows us that *this* preparation has to do with two areas:

1. Internal
2. External

First, the Internal, as the minds and the hearts and the souls of God's people must be prepared to meet the Messiah. And then, the External, as the behavior of God's people must also be changed. Other than that, Messiah will come to a people who will NOT give Him the Welcome that He deserves.

Now, in my opinion, far too much time and energy is spent on Eschatological Issues like *"When the Rapture will occur"*, and *"How the nation of Israel figures into the future of the Church"*, and *"Who the identity of the Antichrist is"*, rather than actually preparing God's people to meet Jesus when He comes. Things like *"How saved people can pursue Holiness on purpose"*, and *"How we can all enter into a Glad Obedience and a Joyful Obedience to the Commands of our Lord"*, and *"Restoring the Hearts of Fathers to Children and Children to Fathers"*, are, in my mind, *infinitely* more important Eschatological concerns than many of the Issues that suck all the air out of the room.

And the reason I say this is because of what Malachi says right here:

**Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.**

Malachi calls the Coming of the Lord the "GREAT" and "TERRIBLE" Day of the Lord. And the word, "Great" comes from a Hebrew word [gadowl Strong's#1419] that means: *large, important, and something that is monumental*. While "Terrible" comes from a word [yare Strong's# 3372] that means: *fearful, dreadful, and something that elicits great reverence*.

And that tells me that while the Coming of the Lord back to this earth will be the GREATEST Day of the lives of all truly redeemed people, it will also, at the same time, be the single WORST day for those who do not see the Lamb in His Glory and delight themselves in what they see.

Now several Questions rise up with what Malachi says here:

- Why does *anyone* have to come before the Lord?
- Why Elijah? Why not Moses or Abraham or David?
- Why did God emphasize the hearts of Fathers and Sons?

So, this is a real big deal. And there is something here in these closing two verses that we would expect. But there is also something that I think we would not expect. We would expect that there would be a kind of Bridge between the Old and the New Testaments, between what God has said and done in the past, and what He will say and do in the future. And that is exactly what we have.

In **Malachi 4:4**, we have the Command to look back and remember the Law of Moses: "**Remember the law of Moses my servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb [Sinai] for all Israel.**"

And that backward glance will always be a crucial part of biblical Faith. How would we know the Path to God's *future* Blessing if He had not spoken in the *past* and told us the Way? God has spoken. And we must always look back to that sure, fixed, infallible Word for Guidance and Hope.

But the Bridge stretches not only *back* to the Word of God at Mt. Horeb, it also stretches *forward* in these verses to the great Day of the Lord, the Day when God will bring History to a decisive climax in two ways:

1. Absolute Destruction for those who have remained in rebellion against Him.
2. Absolute Vindication for all His loyal subjects.

Now all through the Bible, God periodically stops and says, "*Remember!*" For example, God told us to:

- Remember the Sabbath (**Exodus 20:8**)
- Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (**Exodus 32:13**)
- Remember the day you stood before the Lord (**Deuteronomy 4:10**)
- Remember what Amalek did to you along the way (**Deuteronomy 25:17**)
- Remember the word which Moses commanded you (**Joshua 1:13**)

... and Malachi tells us, in 4:4, to "remember" the Law of God. And so, over and over, God told His people to "remember." But when Jesus was talking about His Second Coming in **Luke 17**, He suddenly stops talking about all the Calamity and all the Turmoil that will go on during that

time, and in verse 32, Jesus said something that was seemingly out of place:

### **Remember Lot's wife.**

Now why did He say that? Jesus was reminding us that all the things that the fallen world system places in high esteem will, one day, melt before the Wrath of God. All our earthly possessions, all our money, all our shiny trinkets, everything we work so hard to accumulate, will all be consumed when the Lord Comes.

So, here, Jesus appeals for a sense of urgency in the last day and warns against trying to save our lives by piling up worldly securities. And to drive this home, He said, **"Remember Lot's wife!"**, because the memory of what happened to Lot's wife can save us from a similar fate.

You see, there are many people who have been taken by the hand and brought out of the "city of destruction", by the Spirit of God, who then look back with an ungrateful longing for the Ways of Sin. And in that moment, they are hardened like a pillar of salt. But Jesus says, **"Remember Lot's wife!"** And the memory of that terrifying destruction becomes a "means" of Salvation.

And here, in **Malachi 4:5**, God makes known that He is not, by any means, finished with His Plan for the world or for His people. And yet, as Malachi utters these words, God's people are worldly and carnal and far away from Him. There seems to be no fire, no passion, and no love for God among the very people that God called "His Own". And it seems that it would then be appropriate for God to simply pronounce Judgment and Damnation upon the whole nation. They are not treating their wives with dignity, they are sacrificing diseased animals, they aren't honoring their contracts with each other, they aren't preaching or teaching the Truth, and God would be correct to simply pronounce Eternal Destruction upon them.

Yet, God told them something amazing at the very beginning of this Book. God said:

### **Malachi 1:2a**

**I have loved you," says the Lord...**

... and God has not forgotten that He has "set His Love" upon this worldly and sinful people. And so, here in verse 5, God doesn't promise them Damnation, which is what they deserved. Instead, He promises them Hope:

**Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."**

So, what the future holds is a Day of *preparation*, a Day of *clearing*, a Day of *smelting*, a Day of *purifying*, and a Day of *restoring*. And God says He is going to do all this so that He will NOT have to come and smite them with a Curse. In other words, if God doesn't do all this, He will have to come and smite His Own people with a Curse.

So, if anyone will hope to *avoid* the Curse, God must do something marvelous, and powerful, and life-changing, and sovereign. God must send a Messenger, and the Messenger will prepare the Way for the Messiah. But what I don't expect God to say about all this is what He said in verse 6:

**He [the Elijah Messenger] will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers...**

What has that got to do with the Coming of the Lord? Of all that things that God could have talked about, why did He bring up the relationship between Fathers and Sons? *This* is how you end the Old Testament? Well, evidently, because God *did* end the Old Testament this way.

But now we know just how this Prophecy was fulfilled. In just over four centuries from the time Malachi spoke these very words, God moved to fulfill them. So, let's look at **Luke 1** together:

### **Luke 1:5-17**

**5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.**

**6** They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

**7** But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

**8** Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the *appointed* order of his division,

**9** according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

**10** And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

**11** And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

**12** Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him.

**13** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

**14** "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

**15** "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.

**16** "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

**17** "It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ***TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN***, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

And, of course, this is the angelic announcement of the birth of John the Baptist. Now later on, the religious leaders came and asked John point blank if he was the fulfillment of Malachi's Prophecy. Please look at **John 1:19-28**:

**19** This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

**20** And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

**21** They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

**22** Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

**23** He said, "I am *A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,'* as Isaiah the prophet said."

**24** Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

**25** They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

**26** John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, *but* among you stands One whom you do not know.

**27** *"It is* He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

**28** These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

So, according to the arch-Angel Gabriel, John the Baptist came “**in the spirit and power of Elijah**” to fulfill Malachi’s Prophecy. And according to the Apostle John, John the Baptist came to fulfill Isaiah’s Prophecy. And now read **John 3:29-34** with me:

**29** The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

**30** "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

**31** "I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

**32** John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

**33** "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

**34** "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

Here we see that John the Baptist also had the incredible privilege of identifying the Lamb of God! Now let's look at what Jesus Himself said in **Matthew 11:7-15**:

- 7... "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?
- 8 "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft *clothing*? Those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' palaces!
- 9 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.
- 10 "This is the one about whom it is written, '*BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.*'
- 11 "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.
- 12 "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.
- 13 "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.
- 14 "And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who was to come.
- 15 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Now, unlike many of the Eastern, mystical false religions, Christianity doesn't teach about "Re-Incarnation". Christianity teaches about "Resurrection". When we die, we do NOT come back as a bird or a cow or an insect. We do NOT have an *unlimited* amount of natural lives that we keep on living until we can come into the perfect state of Nirvana.

No, the Bible teaches about *physical* and *bodily* Resurrection. And the Bible goes on to teach that we have but one, natural life on this earth. And we live this life for however many years God gives us, and then we die. And if we have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth, our spirit goes immediately into Heaven to forever be in the very Presence of God. But even though our spirit or our soul is in Heaven, and in the very Presence of God, our Salvation is NOT complete. The Bible teaches that there is coming a Day, a single appointed Day, when the souls of the redeemed will be re-united with an immortal body. And that is what the Bible calls "Glorification". And that is the final step in the Salvation process.

But there are some unique differences concerning Elijah and John the Baptist. The Bible says that Elijah never died. The Scriptures of

the Old Testament in **2 Kings 2** teach that Elijah went up into Heaven in a whirlwind. And how all that works out, I don't have a clue, because the Bible is silent about the details.

So, the Scriptures of the New Testament do NOT teach that John the Baptist was a *resurrected* Elijah. He wasn't. And they certainly DON'T teach that John was a *re-incarnated* Elijah. No, John the Baptist was the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and was born just six months prior to Jesus being born by the Virgin Mary. And John had never been alive before. And when he had his head cut off by the wicked king, Herod, he literally died. And at the very moment of his death, John's spirit went immediately into Heaven and joined in with Elijah and all the other redeemed souls, worshipping God, and awaiting the Day when his spirit will be united with a glorified body. And so, John the Baptist has been in the Presence of God, worshipping day and night, for over 2,000 years now. And he will *continue* to do that until the Day of the Resurrection will occur.

But the Angel told Zacharias that John the Baptist had come “**in the spirit and power of Elijah**”. And Jesus said, “**If you can accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come**” And so, *that* is how God determined to fulfill the Prophecy of Malachi.

Now, most theologians today agree that since *this* is the way that God fulfilled the Prophecy of Malachi, that Malachi's Prophecy has a “*dual* Fulfillment”. Since John was NOT the literal Elijah, but had come “in the spirit and power of Elijah”, that it is very possible that *another* Fulfillment is yet ahead of us. And so, at the *first* Coming of Jesus, a Messenger came to prepare the people, and at the *second* Coming of Jesus, another Messenger will come to do exactly the same thing, prepare God's people to receive the Lord. Here is what the Apostle Paul said was going to happen when the Lord returns from **2 Thessalonians 1:5-10:**

**5 *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.**

**6 For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,**

**7 and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,**

**8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.**

**9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,**

**10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.**

Look at what Paul said again in verse 10:

**when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed**

So, Jesus is NOT coming back to this earth to merely allow us to escape this fallen world. He is also NOT coming back to rescue His Church from all the Evil that is in the world. The Second Coming is NOT illustrated anywhere in the Bible as some form of the 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary riding in at the last moment to save us from being surrounded by the enemy. The Bible doesn't teach that.

No, the Bible says that God is Sovereign. So, evil men are NOT sovereign, God is. Satan is NOT sovereign, God is. And God is going to utterly vanquish all Evil by eliminating all evil people. And Paul says here that evil people are defined as:

**... those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.**

... and then Paul went on to say about these evil people,

**These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power**

So, Messiah will *eventually* vanquish all the pagans. But not just the Romans. Every soul that refuses to bow to Jesus. Every heart that refuses to believe in Jesus. Every person, who persists in their rebellion against Jesus, God will utterly destroy as He removes the tares from His Kingdom FIRST!<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

But then Paul teaches that we, who have been so radically changed, so that we find Jesus to be the Treasure of the Universe, will do two things when Jesus comes back:

1. We will glorify Him
2. We will marvel at Him

So, Jesus will be “glorified” by His saints, His sanctified ones, when He comes back and Jesus will also be “marveled at”. So, this is NOT a Rescue Mission. This is total Victory! This is Jesus winning! This does NOT give us the idea that the overwhelming majority of people continued to rebel. It gives the idea of Jesus *conquering* human rebellion and of asserting His Lordship Rights to have a people for His Name, to marvel at Him when He comes back. And so, I suggest to you that the way Jesus will be *glorified* on that day will be by us *marveling* at Him. In other words, our marveling at Jesus is the way we will glorify Him on that day. And that means that we will have been *prepared* for His Coming. All the preparing, all the smelting, all the purifying, and all the restoring that Malachi said that the Messenger will do before the Messiah came the first time will have to be done again before Jesus comes back. And that means that another Forerunner will come FIRST! But again, how all that will work out, I’m not sure.

Now I think that we have covered everything that Malachi prophesied about, except for one thing. One thing remains in Malachi’s Burden. One thing is left hanging that we need to address. **Malachi 4:6:**

**He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.**

It is hard to see how this part of Malachi’s Burden was fulfilled in John the Baptist. Most of the Jews of John’s Day *rejected* both John and Jesus. Now many people teach that this part of Malachi’s Burden has to do with the hearts of God’s children being “restored” to the “Fathers of the Faith” like Abraham and Moses and Paul and Peter and John and what these men wrote in the Bible. And that would be fine,

except Malachi didn't just say that the heart of the Children would be restored to the Fathers. He also said:

**He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children...**

... and you would be hard pressed to teach that Abraham and Moses and Paul and Peter and John and what they wrote needed to be restored to the hearts of the children today, or back then either.

So, there is still one more thing we need to address before we can finish this amazing Book. And, Lord willing, we will complete our Journey through Malachi, next week, by looking closely at verse 6. Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.