



+ **YOU**

Sermon Series: Irrefutable: Prophecies that Point Us to Jesus

To be used with: Session 1: God With Us

Sermon Title Possibilities: The Messenger of the Covenant

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-6

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *Irrefutable: Prophecies that Point Us to Jesus*, these sermon outlines will follow the same theme as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The Point: Jesus is Immanuel – God with us.

Introduction: Many of us remember the story of King Midas, who absolutely loved gold. His whole life was devoted to the acquisition of gold. He wished everything he touched would turn to gold. One morning, he got his wish. When he woke up, he touched his bed sheets, they turned to gold. So did his robe and his slippers. He turned all of his furniture into gold. Then he went out into his daughter's flower garden, and he turned all of her flowers to gold. He was tickled to death, but his pleasure did not last very long. When he tried to eat, all of his food turned to gold. When he tried to drink some water, the water turned to gold. He knew he couldn't go on like this; he'd starve to death! Then his daughter came in, and she was upset. She had been outside to water her flowers, but she saw that they had all been turned to gold. They no longer smelled good, and they wouldn't grow. The king put his arms around her to comfort her, and you can probably guess what happened. She turned into a gold statue! The king suddenly decided that having the "golden touch" wasn't so wonderful after all.

Someone has wisely said, "Be careful what you wish for." The things we wish for don't always turn out like we want. In the text before us, the prophet Malachi was addressing some people who had a wish. The people of Israel wished for the Messiah to come. Some eighty years had passed since they returned from captivity in Babylon. However, Israel was still under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire. It had been nearly 150 years since they had known political independence. They longed for the Messiah to come and destroy God's enemies. Malachi warned the people to be careful what they wished for! Yes, the Messiah was coming, and when He came, He would indeed punish God's enemies. What they didn't realize was, some of God's enemies were in the nation of Israel, and they would be punished, too! This passage reminds us that our Lord Jesus is not only the Savior of the world, but He is also its Lord and Judge.

I. The affirmation of the Messenger.

A. Since their return from Babylon, the people had become discouraged.

1. They had rebuilt the temple and the city walls, but they had become lax in other areas.
 - a. They were offering improper sacrifices (1:7-8).
 - b. They had married pagan women (2:11).

- c. They had been unfaithful in marriage (2:14-17).
 - d. They had failed to give their tithes (3:8-12).
- 2. They thought God had abandoned them.
 - a. The wicked seemed to be prospering (2:17).
 - b. They had given up hope of the Messiah.
- B. God assured them that His “Messenger” would come someday.
 - 1. He would actually send two messengers.
 - a. The first messenger would “prepare the way”.
 - b. The second messenger would be the Messiah.
 - 2. The first “messenger” refers to John the Baptist.
 - a. He was the first true prophet in four hundred years.
 - b. He repeatedly stated that he was not the Messiah.
 - c. He called on people to repent – and to express their repentance through baptism – in preparation for the Messiah’s coming.
 - 3. Some details about the “Messenger of the Covenant”.
 - a. He is equated with the Lord Himself.
 - b. He would initiate a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

II. The assignment of the Messenger.

- A. The Messiah would not only be a Savior, but also a Judge.
 - 1. He would be like a “refiner’s fire” and “fullers’ soap”.
 - a. A refiner’s fire was hot enough to melt metals, and it would bring impurities to the surface so they could be removed.
 - b. “Fullers’ soap”, also known as “launderers’ soap”, was what we call lye soap. It was used for washing clothing.
 - My mother grew up in the Great Depression as a sharecropper’s daughter. Her family used lye soap, and she doesn’t remember it with fondness. She said, “It’ll take the hide right off of you.”
 - 2. He would “purify the sons of Levi”.
 - a. The “sons of Levi” were the priestly class (not all Levites were priests, but all priests came from the tribe of Levi).
 - b. The Messiah would set them straight for their lackadaisical attitudes, and it wouldn’t be pleasant.
 - Today’s society largely subscribes to the image of “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild”. Yet if you’ll read the Gospels, you’ll see that Jesus wasn’t always gentle, meek, or mild!
- B. What would happen after the Messiah cleansed the nation?
 - 1. Their offerings would once again become pleasant to God.
 - a. Malachi and other Old Testament prophets had denounced their burnt offerings as insufficient.
 - b. Likewise, our good works and religious rituals cannot change the fact that we’ve sinned against God.
 - 2. Only the Messiah can bring true cleansing.
 - a. He made the final sacrifice for our sins when He died on the cross.
 - b. When you repent of your sins and trust in Him as your Lord and Savior, then you will stand clean and pure before God.

III. The aftermath of the Messenger.

- A. He would execute judgment on all the wicked.
 - 1. He listed several specific sins that would be punished.
 - a. Sorcerers – People who think they can control the forces of nature with their spells and charms.
 - b. Adulterers – People who are unfaithful in marriage.
 - c. “False swearers” – Those who lie under oath.
 - d. Those who exploit the poor.
 - 2. The list was not exhaustive, but His point was no one would escape.
 - a. He was referring to unrepentant sinners.
 - b. The wicked in Israel would be no exception.
- B. God reminded the people of Israel that He does not change.
 - 1. His justice does not change.
 - a. He still punishes those who do wrong.
 - b. What He declared wrong centuries ago is still wrong.
 - 2. His mercy does not change.
 - a. It was only by His mercy that Israel continued to exist.
 - People often ask why God does not destroy the wicked. We must be careful in saying such things. After all, our own nation is quite deserving of God’s judgment. Only His mercy has spared us.
 - b. He is still willing to forgive those who repent.

Conclusion: I have a cousin who is about my age. When we were about ten or eleven years old, we spent a week with our grandmother. One morning, Grandma was working outside, and my cousin and I were alone in the house. We started roughhousing, and I pushed him a little harder than I meant to, and he fell backwards – right on top of Grandma’s coffee table! A leg snapped off the table. As you can imagine, Grandma was not a bit happy! When she cooled down, she said she would leave it to our parents to decide our fate. My parents were supposed to come and get me that night, so as you can imagine, that was a very long day! They finally arrived that night, and Greg and I fessed up to what had happened. Fortunately, they were very understanding. They knew we hadn’t done it on purpose, so they went easy on me.

Some people will say my cousin and I deserved a lot worse than we got. I agree! My parents went easy on me not because it was fair, but because they were merciful. We must be careful about demanding justice from God. After all, if He gave you what you deserve, you’d be in hell right now! Aren’t you glad to know that our God is merciful? He showed that mercy by sending Jesus to die on the cross for your sins. One day Jesus is coming again, and the day of mercy will be over. Until that day comes, God offers forgiveness and eternal life to all who repent of their sins and believe on Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Do you know Him today?

Ken Jones is the pastor of Worsham Baptist Church in Farmville, Virginia. He holds a B.S. in history from the University of Tennessee at Martin and an MDiv. from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. His wife, Celia Carroll Jones, is an associate professor of government at Hampden-Sydney College.