

THE RIGHTEOUS REMNANT

Malachi 3:16-4:3

INTRODUCTION

God has always had a **Righteous Remnant**.

We see this in the Book of Judges – the cycle of a righteous judge being raised up, some measure of repentance and restoration, and then the nation falling back into sin, again and again. However, there was always a faithful remnant.

In the times of Elijah, there were 7000 who did not bow the knee to Baal – the faithful remnant.

Luke 2:25 – Simeon, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Anna, Mary, Joseph

Acts 18:9-10 – “the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; ¹⁰for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.’”

In Church History, there was always a **remnant**. There were groups of people hiding in the woodwork ... in possession of the truth and sometimes dying for the truth.

The groups persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church during the Dark Ages: Bogomils, Petrobusians, Albigenses, Waldenses. These groups held to, for example:

- Freedom of Conscience, Believer’s Baptism, Autonomy of the Local Church
- regenerated church membership, believer’s baptism, salvation by faith alone, authority of the Bible

Malachi turns His attention from the wicked to the faithful remnant → encouraging words to the **Righteous Remnant**

Proposition: 3 Demonstrations of Divine Love:

- I. God **Remembers** the Righteous
- II. God **Recognizes** the Righteous
- III. God **Rewards** the Righteous

So That: You will look with hope to the future and live well in the present.

READ Mal 3:16-4:3

Immediate reference is the **Righteous Remnant** of Israel, the true Israel (Rom 9:6-9), the Israel of God (Gal 6:16)

1st Demonstration of Divine Love, ...

- I. God **Remembers** the Righteous **Mal 3:16-7**

Illustration – What do you think it was like for **Noah** and his family? Drifting on the endless sea for a year following the onslaught of the Flood?

He is a man of faith, “blameless among the people of his time.” But he is human. And the sea is a very lonely place.

Way down below the Ark lies the ruins of a dead and buried world. The Nephilim and the mighty men of old are gone. Everyone in the world has died – the children they went to school with; their neighbors and family members – all except Noah and his family.

Imagine drifting in a large box for a year — with no steering, no navigation, nothing in sight, and no word from God. Don't you think, night after night, month after month, Noah must have begun to wonder if God had forgotten him and his family as they all floated like insignificant pieces of driftwood on the worldwide mass of water?

Point – God remembers ... and God acts.

Proof – “^{16a}**Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another**”

Old Testament snippet of New Testament “one another”
→ Fellowship! Encouragement!

Illustration – It’s like the little boy who said, “Dad, did Grandpa make you go to Sunday school when you were my age?”

His father replied, “He sure did. We went every Sunday.”

The boy thought about it ... and said matter of factly, “Well, it probably won’t do me any good either.” ☺

Application – It is not enough to just go to church. We must be an active living part of a local body of Christ.

God commands us to edify other members by practicing the “one-anothers” of Scripture and exercising our spiritual gifts.

The Righteous Remnant “**spoke to one another**”.

“^{16b}**and the LORD gave attention and heard it,**”

→ This kind of God-honoring, God-rooted, doctrine-enriched fellowship catches God’s eye.

“^{16c}**and a book of remembrance was written before Him**”

- this phrase is found only in Malachi

We see “the book” in other places:

Psa 69:28 – “the book of life” where the righteous are “recorded”

Dan 12:1 – “everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.”

“^{16d}**for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.**”

“**fear**” – 1:14; 2:5; 3:5, 16, 4:2, 5 → this is Healthy Fear

“**esteem**” – same word translated as ‘reckon’, ‘take into account’ (Gen 15:6)

Illustration – Interesting contrast – regarding the nation of Israel at the time of Malachi – at the time, the Persian King’s chronicles

recorded righteous deeds of some of the key and important members of their realm. But here it is not about the deeds of the Remnant. It is about those who fear God and esteem Him. That is a big difference.

“^{17a} **And they will be Mine, says the LORD of hosts, on the day that I prepare My own possession”**

- grammatically – Mine is emphatic in Hebrew

My prized treasure, My treasured possession

Deut 26:18 – “And the LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you”

Not like we might think of **remember**.

We might “remember” where we left our car keys. Or we might “remember” the answer to a problem on a test.

We know that God is eternal.

He is powerful.

He is holy.

He is omnipresent.

And He is omniscient.

The “**book of remembrance**” is not written because God’s memory is ailing. It is written because our hearts are ailing.

Does not mean merely a record to file in the mind. This is not some distant memory. This is not even a close memory with no action. This word means to act on what is being remembered!

→ God’s remembering always implies action and movement.

Every good promise of God will come to pass. Not one will fail.

“^{17c} **And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.**”

→ **Zech 11:6** – “have pity”

1 Pet 2:9a – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession,”

2nd Demonstration of Divine Love, ...

II. God Recognizes the Righteous **Mal 3:8-4:1**

Point – Recognize out of a crowd. There is a distinguishing, a discriminating, there is a separating (we see this in Scripture between the sheep and goats; wheat and tares)

Proof – “^{18a}**So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked**”

Clear point we have seen throughout Malachi. There is a great chasm between the “**the righteous and the wicked**”

Charles Feinberg – “*Nothing in Scripture outlines with greater demarcation the vastly different lots of the believing and [the] unbelieving when the Lord comes to judge the earth.*”

Application – Beloved, friend, there are two groups of people in this text ... there are two groups of people in this room.

“^{18b}**between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.**”

Everybody serves somebody.

It isn’t the act, the mechanics. It isn’t about doing things. It is about doing those things of worship in spirit and truth and living in such a way that we love others. That is the difference.

Rom 6:16 – “when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness”

Application – Friend, there is only the right hand and the left hand of the King. And once He has drawn the line, there will be no crossing over from one side to the other.

“^{4:1a}**For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace;**”

Note: There is not chapter 4 in the original Hebrew. This verse connects with **3:18**. The small word “**For**” is the indication.

Imminent! → “For behold, the day is about to come and about to burn like a furnace”

furnace or oven – **Psa 21:9** – “You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger; the LORD will swallow them up in His wrath, and fire will devour them.”

→ This is the **Incinerator’s Fire** – it is enclosed, consuming

“^{4:1b}**and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff;**”

arrogant and every evildoer – notes thought and action
3:7 – “How shall we return?” – refusing to acknowledge their sin. – “We don’t need to return.”

→ I don’t need to repent. I don’t need to be saved.

That is the **arrogance** that is at the heart of **evildoing**.

“**chaff**” – stubble, straw blown away by wind from the threshing floor and consumed by fire. It had no value to the farmer and easily burned up.

We see this imagery in other places in the Scriptures:

Exo 15:7 – “You overthrow those who rise up against You; You send forth Your burning anger, *and* it consumes them as chaff.”

Hos 13:3 – “they will be like the morning cloud, and like dew which soon disappears, like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor, and like smoke from a chimney.

→ **Luke 3:17** – “His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

“^{4:1c} **and the day that is coming will set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.**” - this phrase is a proverbial expression for totality

Amos 2:9 – “it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, though his height *was* like the height of cedars and he *was* strong as the oaks; I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below.”

Now, this is not the purging and purifying fire of the **Refiner** we saw in **3:2**. This is the deleting and destroying fire of the **Destroyer**.

Exod 12:23 – “For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to strike *you*.”

- The Angel of the Lord was the destroyer
- **Exod 12:29** – “the Lord struck all the first born in the land of Egypt”

The **Refiner’s** fire destroys the dross and refines the precious.
The **Incinerator’s** fire destroys everything and consumes all.

This is not a raging forest fire that destroys indiscriminately.
This fire is kept within the walls of the furnace.
An incinerator’s fire does not burn out of control.
It is confined to the oven/furnace.

→ The **Remnant** are safe.

Application – There is no gray area “**between the righteous and the wicked**.” There is no fence to sit on.

→ There is no “No man’s” land.

C.S. Lewis, The Great Divorce (between Heaven and Hell)
– “*There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it. ... Those who seek find. [To] those who knock, it is opened.*”

Application – Friend, embrace Him as your Savior
or you will face Him as your Destroyer

3rd Demonstration of Divine Love, ...

III. God **Rewards** the Righteous **Mal 4:2-3**

Point – Future Reward!

Jewels in the crown, but so much more than just the future reward.

- There is the universal reign of righteousness
- There is the restoration of blessing to the earth

Proof – “^{2a}**But for you who fear My name**”

“**But**” → ☺☺☺ → this is a huge contrast!

3:16 – “esteem His “**name**” **4:2** – “fear [His] “**name**”
“**name**” → all that He is and all that He does

When Jesus comes for His own, He brings **6 Rewards....**

... flowing from our text in beautiful and vivid pictures ☺

The **1st Reward** Jesus brings when He comes for His own ...

A. He brings **light** where there is darkness.

Point – **John 8:12** – “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

Proof – “^{2b}**the sun of righteousness will rise**”

What does a sunrise mean?

Light where there was darkness.

Safety where there was danger.

Zacharias prophecy over his son, John the Baptist:

Luke 1:76 – “you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; ⁷⁷to give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, ⁷⁹to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Application – Let the sun of righteousness dawn in your own soul.

The **2nd Reward** Jesus brings when He comes for His own ...

B. He brings **Righteousness** where there was wrong.

Point – The sunbeams of righteousness

Proof – “^{2b}**the sun of righteousness will rise**”

➔ The righteousness is both the source and the product

Application – In the same way, our sun produces heat and heats the object that becomes warm and hot ... so also the also the sunbeams of righteousness fall upon us and cause us to be righteous.

The **3rd Reward** Jesus brings when He comes for His own ...

C. He brings **healing** where there is sickness and brokenness.

Point – the original Greek word is σωζω – translated as ‘save’, ‘heal’

Proof – “^{2c}**with healing in its wings;**”

Hark the Herald Angels Sing – 3rd stanza comes directly from this:

*Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n with healing in His wings*

Application – In the same way, as the rays of the sun give light and heat for the growth of plant and animal life, there is spiritual healing in this Sun. So, the Sun of righteousness will heal the wounds inflicted upon and borne by the righteous.

Jer 3:22 – “I will heal your faithlessness.”

Jer 33:6 – “Behold, I will bring health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth.”

The **4th Reward** Jesus brings when He comes for His own ...

D. He brings **freedom** where there is bondage.

Point – Emancipation! Freedom! Deliverance!

Proof – “^{2d}**and you will go forth**”

Beloved, Jesus brings freedom where there was bondage. The doors of the pen, the jail, are burst open!

Application – **Heb 2:14-15** – “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

The **5th Reward** Jesus brings when He comes for His own ...

E. He brings **joy** where there is dreariness, sadness and discouragement, despair and depression.

Point – Freedom, you see, is the necessary condition for joy.

The angels in Luke 2 – “I bring you good news of great joy” ☺

Proof – “^{2e}**and skip about like calves from the stall.**”

As part of my seminary driven scholarship in studying for the exegesis of this passage ☺ ... I googled, “calf being released from pen and skipping” and watched a couple YouTube videos of this activity... cows too! Not just calves

John 10:10 – “I came that they might have life, and might have *it* abundantly.” → There is an ‘already/not yet’ part of it!!

Illustration – One might party in the stall all night long, but he does not know freedom.

Application – In the same way, you who have been penned up in this evil world, this present misery, this body of death, you will go forth and leap for joy in great celebration.

A leaping of the heart AND a physical leaping.

→ If you are in the wheelchair, if your body is decaying, there will be a physical leaping for you in your new physical body....that is part of the gift of salvation that the God who cannot lie has promised to you.

The **6th Reward** Jesus brings when He comes for His own ...

F. He brings **justice** where there is oppression.

Point – Might be difficult for us to understand this fully in our realm.

Point – This is justice for the oppressed, justice for the downtrodden, justice for the orphan, the widow, the persecuted.

Proof – **“³And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing, says the LORD of hosts.”**

Luke 16:25 – “Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.’”

We do know, from all of Scripture, that Christ is the One who fights the battle and wins the war (Isa 63). → We come after our **General** and trample the ashes left behind.

Rev 14:20 – “And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.”

Already/Not Yet!!!

There is a present dimension and a future hope.

Where Jesus comes, when Jesus comes →

There is **light** where there was darkness

There is **righteousness** where there was wrong

There is **healing** where there was sickness and brokenness

There is **freedom** where there was bondage

There is **joy** where there was dreariness and sadness and discouragement and despair and depression ...

There is **justice** where there was oppression

CONCLUSION

One of my favorite passages about life in the Millennium, as it relates to human life, is **Zech 8:3-8**.

"boys and girls playing in the streets" (v.5) and the return of the people in vv.7-8 "in the midst of Jerusalem" with Christ returned and dwelling "in the midst of Jerusalem" (v.3)

Beloved, this is the reign of righteousness and the domination of Truth which awaits us in eternity and which we experience right here and right now in our local church. And it gives us great joy.