

(Mal. 4:1) - At this time, the temple had been rebuilt according to God's commandment, but the people were still in unbelief and rebellion. This showed itself in three areas: (1) False professions of faith with no heart for truth - due to the corrupt priesthood - priests taught the people to dishonor God's altar (way of salvation) (*Neh. 13:7-9, 29; Mal. 1:6-8*); (2) Compromise of God's glory and truth - embraced idolatry and formed alliances with heathen nations around them (*Neh. 13:23-27; Mal. 2:10-16*) - resulted both in mixed marriages, mixed language, and a disregard for God's law; and (3) They robbed God by not supporting the temple and the priesthood with their tithes (*Neh. 13:10-12; Mal. 3:8-10*). Malachi, whose name means "My [God's] messenger," declared that God's judgment would come upon them for their sins. God will punish all sinners to whom sin is imputed.

(Mal. 4:2) - In every age, regardless how dark and sinful, God has always had (and has) a people who believe in and are true to Him, faithful to serve Him. No matter how small that group is, it was (and is) always GOD'S REMNANT ACCORDING TO THE ELECTION OF GRACE (*Rom. 11:1-6*). The salvation of this remnant was (and is) by God's free and sovereign grace based on the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is identified here as "**THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**" (*cf. Rom. 9:11-16*). This book of *Malachi* concludes the Old Testament and emphasizes the theme with the prophecy and proclamation of the salvation for sinners, not only of the Jews but also of the Gentiles, founded in and upon the glorious Person and finished, successful work of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the bright and morning star and the light of life (*2 Sam. 23:4; Psa. 84:11; Isa. 9:2; 60:1-3, 19-20; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 21:23-24; 22:16*). It is as simple as this - Everything connected with salvation (light, life, and righteousness) is found in Christ (*John 14:6; 2 Cor. 11:3*). It is found in:

WHO CHRIST IS - God manifest in the flesh, the Word made flesh Who dwelt among us, and the light of the glory of God (*Matt. 1:23; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Tim. 3:16*).

WHAT CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED IN HIS OBEDIENCE AND RESURRECTION - As Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's chosen people, given to Him before the world began (*2 Tim. 1:9-10*), Christ paid in full the sin-debt of His people imputed to Him and accomplished their redemption, working out righteousness which God has imputed to them and by which they are justified before God. God is just to justify them based on Christ the Sun of Righteousness (*Isa. 45:21-25; 53:10-12; Matt. 1:21; Rom. 3:24-25; 8:33-39; Heb. 9:14; 10:14*).

WHAT CHRIST PROVIDES FOR HIS PEOPLE IN SALVATION - As the Sun of Righteousness, Christ did not make salvation a possibility for those sinners who would believe or meet other conditions to empower His work. He made salvation a sure thing for those for whom He died and arose again. All for whom He died and arose again are guaranteed spiritual life, faith, repentance, and perseverance unto glory. HE COMES "**WITH HEALING IN HIS WINGS.**" Going forth and growing up "**AS CALVES OF THE STALL**" metaphorically describes sinners saved by grace having been given new life by the Holy Spirit and going forth and growing up in the grace, strength, and newness of spiritual life (*cf. Isa. 30:26; John 1:4; 6:37-45; 8:12; 12:31-32; 16:7-11; 17; Rom. 8:31-39; Eph. 1:3-14; Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 2:9-17*).

WHAT CHRIST COMMANDS - The life we live as sinners saved by grace is to be guided by the word of our Lord and Savior and not by the words and opinions of men, and it is to be motivated, not by law or rewards, but by grace, gratitude, and love (*Matt. 4:17, 19; 5:16; 6:19-21, 33; 7:15-16; John 14:15; 21:15-16; Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 4-5*). All of His commandments are found in the New Testament epistles, and these cited are just a few examples.

(Mal. 4:3) - When the Sun of Righteousness comes, He will expose the darkness of sin and unrighteousness, and He will judge the wicked condemned for their sin (*John 3:18-20*). It said that the same sun that melts wax hardens clay. The same Sun of Righteousness Who will melt the hearts of His people and cause them to mourn for sin and seek Him for salvation will harden the hearts of sinners who refuse to repent. As stated, God's judgment of wrath is upon all who are found without Christ, without being washed in His blood and justified in His righteousness imputed (*John 3:36*). There is nothing but wrath for sinners to whom sin is imputed. There is nothing but grace and glory for sinners to whom righteousness is imputed (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:21*). To them, the Lord will give "*beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified*" (*Isa. 61:3*).

(Mal. 4:4) - When the Sun of Righteousness comes, He will not put His people back under "*the law of Moses,*" but He will remind them of the sins and failures of the people under that law and how they could not find righteousness and life by their works under that law. The law was given to show them their sins and the impossibility of salvation by their works (*Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19*). Its pictures and types revealed salvation by God's grace through Christ, the Sun of Righteousness (*John 5:39-47; Luke 24:27,44-49; 2 Cor. 3:12-18*).

(Mal. 4:5) - The unbelieving Jews mistakenly believe that this refers to "*Elijah the prophet*" personally, and that he will come back from the dead in that "*great and dreadful day of the LORD.*" But this prophecy does not refer to Elijah personally. It refers to John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets right before Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, comes into the world. Whereas Moses represented the law, Elijah represented the school, office, and message of the true prophets of God. In the Old Testament, they pointed sinners to look to the future for salvation by the grace of God in the promise of the Messiah (*Luke 9:28-36*). John the Baptist was part of this school, office, and message of the prophets (*Matt. 11:7-15; 17:9-13; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 1:13-17*). He himself was the subject of this Old Testament prophecy (*Mal. 3:1-5*).

(Mal. 4:6) - This is the promise of uniting families spiritually in the Gospel under the headship of Christ, but it also speaks of the "*fathers,*" meaning the patriarchs, such as the faith of Abraham (*Gal. 3:26-29*). Of course, we know that the Gospel will also divide families (*Matt. 10:21,34-39*). But both Jew and Gentile will be united into one family by God's grace in Christ (*Eph. 2:11-22*). "*Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*" - With the assurance of the coming of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Malachi was inspired by the Holy Spirit to end God's revelation in the Old Testament on a very positive note - The promise of eternal life to all who believe in Christ. But there is still a strong warning to all who refuse to believe in and embrace Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. It is the pronouncement of God's curse, His just wrath, upon all to whom Christ is not the Sun of Righteousness. Without Christ's righteousness shining forth upon us as God has imputed it to us, and shining within our hearts as God has given us the light within our hearts that we would believe in Christ and unto righteousness, we would all be under God's curse and be damned forever. But there is hope for sinners, and that hope is in Christ, the Sun of Righteousness and in Him alone - "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" (*Rom. 10:4*).