

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“Behold, the day is coming”, the penultimate Prophet of the Old Testament warns. His warning still stands. His warning is for you. The day is coming. Malachi does not warn of “days”. He warns of a “Day”, the “Day”, a single Day that brings the ruin of this creation, and ushers in the new creation. The cusp of that Day was ushered in by the final Prophet of the Old crying out “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”

The Prophet’s description of the Day is frightening. The events will be horrible. That Day will come burning like an oven. But hear well what the fodder for that consuming fire will be: not trees and mountains, not grass and flowers, not field and valley, but men. Sinners will serve as kindling for the unquenchable fire that will consume the earth and then burn all the hotter without end in the depths of hell. For all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble.

Four hundred and thirty years after Malachi, the Incarnate Lord Himself describes the same Day: “Men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” That Day will begin in terror, and will end in fire. And truth be told, that Day has already begun.

That you be prepared, the Lord speaks a Parable. “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.” He tells you to judge the season. He tells you to measure the nearness of that terrible Day. Look for the signs. Look for abnormalities in the heavenly luminaries. They have already begun, ages ago. Look for distress of the nations on earth. It is all around you, indeed, even in our nation.

Look for the perplexity of man. The only True God is rejected, and even mocked by most. The most basic distinction, the distinction between male and female, is lost in our society. The Name of God and His Word have been wrested from our public square. Crass unbelievers and idolaters seem to prevail. Men believe that they themselves are the ultimate answer to all problems, and the real problems they teach are no problems at all, rather as normal and right. Fallen man knows neither His Maker, nor himself. Can there be greater perplexity?

But the sign that the great Day is yet to come is not only external. The surest sign is in the hearts of men. For the Lord teaches that men’s hearts will fail from the fear and expectation of those things which are coming. But now it is not fear, but apathy; not reverence, but hubris and denial and unbelief; not humility, but pride, that fills the hearts of the men of this age. So while the signs have begun, it will yet grow more horrible. And then the fire will come.

So that leaves the hearer with two groups – the wicked and the righteous, those who are holy, and those who sin. There are no “undecideds”. There is no “in-between”. The wicked are prepared as tinder. The righteous look forward to that Day in great hope and joyful expectation, the Day when the righteous will tread upon the ashes of the wicked.

All men must hearken to the Inspired Prophetic Word, by which they can measure themselves, by which they can know their status before the final fire engulfs the creation. For God, speaking through the Prophet, warned: “Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.”

So let the Law do its appointed work. Let it needle and prod and poke and dig, to uncover your unclean thoughts, your unkind words, the thoughtless and self-serving works that you have done. Remember for whom the fire is prepared. Remember, and repent. For while the fig tree is a parable, the coming fire is no parable.

It is right to prepare for the Coming of the Lord, the Coming of the Lord who has come. That's why the paraments are violet this day. But as you prepare, do not be afraid, dear Christian. Take heart, O Baptized of Christ. For that Day comes with a Promise: "But to you who fear My Name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings."

For the One who took on Flesh for you, the One who died for you, the One who shed His Blood for you, is the One who comes. He comes for you. He comes to heal and give life. So do not be afraid. Hope for that Day. Wait for that Day. Pray for that Day. Prepare for that Day.

For "then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." You who love the Lord, you who believe in His Coming, you who hope for His Coming, you need not fear. For you that Day is a Day of joy. So your Lord speaks comfort to you: "Now when these things begin to happen, look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

The Law is fulfilled. Your Lord fulfilled it for you. His perfect active and passive obedience, and His atoning death, have satisfied the Law for all you who believe in Him. The fire that comes cannot hurt you, for you are saved by water. You are saved in baptismal water, for Jesus Christ has become a Servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers. And that fulfillment He makes yours as He removes all your sins, as His righteousness is declared to be yours, and as He fills you with His Spirit.

As Malachi foretold, "There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope." He came as promised. He was crucified, but He defeated death. He is risen. He is your hope, O Redeemed of Christ. He is your Savior. And His Promise is sure, for while heaven and earth will pass away, His Words will by no means pass away.

The One the Prophets promised, the One the Virgin bore, the One who hung on the cross and filled the tomb, the One who emptied the tomb and ascended to His rightful throne, the Coming One, comes to you here, this day. He comes to fill you with His Word which will by no means pass away. He comes to fill you with His Spirit, the eternal Spirit that guides and strengthens and comforts you as you prayerfully await the Coming of your Savior.

He comes to you in His Body and Blood, to fill you with Himself. He bids you eat and drink, to receive the Coming One, to be filled with the Coming One. So kneel at this rail and lift up your heads, because your Redemption draws near.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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