

December 25 – Mike Shank - Merry Christmas!

Read Malachi 3:1

What kind of Christmas is today, for you?

If today is a traditional, nostalgic Christmas, you might think of this “messenger of the covenant” as John the Baptist, announcing the coming of Jesus. Good News indeed! Malachi, translated “messenger”, is the last book in the Old Testament, followed by the gospels. Malachi 4:5 says God will send the prophet Elijah before the day of the Lord comes, and Jesus refers to John the Baptist as Elijah.

If today is a “dig deep into your Bible” Christmas, turn to Malachi. It’s a dark time in Israel’s history and God’s not happy. Israel’s been complaining; they’ve rebuilt the temple and don’t see God returning. They accuse God, saying they see good people suffer, evil people prosper, and wonder where God’s justice is. This wearies God. As sinners, they’d do better to ask for love and mercy - not justice. In similar Old Testament stories, this sounds like a set up for a “messenger of the covenant” – a prophetic condemnation of failure to uphold the laws, resulting in “total destruction.” (Malachi 4:6). (Or, as John the Baptist might say, “Merry Christmas you brood of vipers!”)

But read today’s verse again: “Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple.” That tells us what kind of Christmas today is-- a glorious Christmas! Instead of condemnation, the “Lord God” Almighty, God the Father, tells us the “Lord” Jesus is not only coming to God’s temple, but coming to all God’s people, coming to us. That’s worth celebrating!

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of Jesus! Thank you for giving us not the “justice” we ask for, but the mercy, love, grace and forgiveness we need. We ask for a King and you send us a babe-- a Savior, your Son, Jesus. Help us receive your gifts of presence, mercy and grace, and be your messengers, passing on these gifts to others. Amen.

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