

Malachi 4:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Analysis

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

This verse answers Israel's complaint about the proud and wicked prospering (3:15). God promises **the day** (הַיּוֹם, ha-yom)—the day of the LORD, divine judgment. It will **burn as an oven** (בָּעֵר כְּתָנָר, bo'er ka-tannur)—blazing like a furnace. The present participle indicates certain, ongoing action: the day is coming and will burn continually. Ancient ovens reached intense heat for baking bread; this image depicts consuming, inescapable judgment.

All the proud (כל־זָדִים, kol-zedim) and **all that do wickedly** (וְכָל־עֲשֵׂה רָשָׁעָה, vekhol-oseh rish'ah) will become **stubble** (שְׂעִיר, qash)—dried straw or chaff, utterly combustible. What appears strong and established now is actually fragile fuel for God's judgment fire. The wicked whom Israel envied (3:15) will be utterly destroyed.

The finality is emphasized: **it shall leave them neither root nor branch** (אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָצַע בְּלִהְם שָׁרֶשׁ וְעָנָף, asher lo-ya'azov lahem shoresh ve'anaf). Complete destruction—no root to sprout again, no branch to propagate. This agricultural

metaphor promises total eradication of wickedness. Yet the next verse (v. 2) promises that for those who fear God's name, the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing. Same day, opposite destinies: judgment for the wicked, salvation for the righteous.

Historical Context

The 'day of the LORD' is a major prophetic theme throughout the Old Testament (Isaiah 13:6-9, Joel 1:15, 2:1-11, Amos 5:18-20, Zephaniah 1:14-18). Originally, Israel expected this day to bring judgment on their enemies and vindication for themselves. The prophets corrected this assumption: the day would bring judgment on all wickedness, including within Israel. Malachi's contemporaries complained that the wicked prospered while the righteous suffered (3:14-15). God's answer: a day approaches when all accounts will be settled. This prophecy has multiple fulfillments: Christ's first coming brought judgment on unrepentant Israel (culminating in AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem), the ongoing judgment throughout history as God overthrows proud empires, and ultimate fulfillment at Christ's return when all the wicked will be destroyed (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, Revelation 20:11-15). Peter uses similar imagery: the present heavens and earth are 'kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men' (2 Peter 3:7).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the certainty of final judgment on the wicked provide hope for believers who see evil apparently triumph?
2. What does the imagery of 'neither root nor branch' teach about the completeness of God's final judgment?

3. How should the reality of coming judgment shape our evangelistic urgency and compassion for the lost?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	הַיְלָדָה	בַּיּוֹם	הַבָּא	בְּעֵר	כְּפֶתֶת וּר	וְבַיִת
H3588	H2009	For behold the day	cometh	that shall burn	as an oven	H1961
		H3117	H935	H1197	H8574	

כָּל	יְהִי מָ	יְכָל	עֲשֵׂה	רְשָׁעָה	קָשָׁ
H3605	and all the proud	H3605	yea and all that do	wickedly	shall be stubble
	H2086		H6213	H7564	H7179

יְהִי הָאָמֵר בְּבַבְּאָמֵר כִּי וּמָה אַתָּה יְלָמֵד שְׁלֹמֹן
the LORD saith For behold the day cometh when I shall burn them up saith the LORD

שֶׁ רֹשֶׁ	לֹבֶם	יָצַא בְּ	לֹא אָשֶׁר	אָבָא וְ	of hosts	H834	H3808	that it shall leave	H1992	them neither root
					H6635			H5800		H8328

וְעַבְדָּךְ:

nor branch

H6057

Additional Cross-References

2 Thessalonians 1:8 (References Lord): In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 3:7 (Parallel theme): But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Malachi 3:2 (Parallel theme): But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope:

Isaiah 47:14 (Parallel theme): Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

Isaiah 5:24 (References Lord): Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Obadiah 1:18 (References Lord): And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it.

Malachi 3:15 (Evil): And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

Job 18:16 (Parallel theme): His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.

Zephaniah 1:18 (References Lord): Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

Exodus 15:7 (Parallel theme): And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.