

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS NEVER SETS!

Today's Text: Malachi Chap. 4

Extracts:

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble, and the day which is coming shall burn them up,” says the Lord of hosts, “that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,” says the Lord of hosts [Mal. 4: 1-3]

The sun is that ball of blinding light that we see up in the sky each new day (depending on your location on earth). Although it is one of the more than 100 billion stars in our galaxy, it accounts for 99.8% of the total mass of the Solar System.¹ It has a diameter (distance across its surface) of 1.39 million kilometres. It is the centre of the Solar System, with eight planets (including our earth but excluding Pluto) orbiting it. Its distance from our earth is almost 150 million kilometres. Consequently, it (along with its satellite, the moon) significantly controls our seasons, days and years [Gen. 1: 14-18]. That is why it has been erroneously worshipped by idolaters [2 Kgs 21: 3, 5].

Although we see the sun rise every morning and set in the evening, in truth, it never sets! It is our earth that moves by rotating around the sun (every 24 hours or one day) and revolves around it once a year of 365¼ days. The one-quarter day is accounted for every Leap Year when one day is added to February to make it 29 days. According to scientists, the sun will one day run out of hydrogen fuel that will induce radical changes which will ultimately result in the destruction of the earth.² However, Scripture has a better explanation. God who created the galaxy and all things also controls the sun [Matt. 5: 45]. Before the return of Christ, the sun, moon and stars will lose their lights and fall from heaven [Matt. 24: 29]. Therefore, the natural sun will one day set permanently.

But there is another sun that does not set and will never do. He is the Sun of Righteousness. Who is He? He is the one that we shall learn about in this week's study.

¹ Story is based on 'Our Sun,' www.nineplanets.org/sol.html

² *Op. Cit.*

1. Background: Waiting for the first coming of the Lord- a long night or a nightmare?

According to Bible historians, Malachi proclaimed his prophetic message between 432 B.C. and 425 B.C.³ Malachi prophesied that the coming of Christ would be preceded by the return of Elijah the prophet [Mal. 4: 5]. You will recall that at the end of his earthly ministry, Elijah did not die but was instead taken in a chariot of fire and “went up by a whirlwind into heaven” [2 Kgs 2: 11]. In referring to John the Baptist, Jesus told His disciples, quoting the prophet Malachi [Mal. 3: 1], “This is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You’” [Matt. 11: 10]. For the avoidance of any doubt, Jesus added, “And if you are willing to receive it, he (John the Baptist) is Elijah who is to come” [v. 14]. To show that this is not the same concept as reincarnation, Luke’s Gospel shows that John the Baptist came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” [Lk 1: 17]. Jesus the Christ was born around 4 B.C.,⁴ six months after the birth of John the Baptist [v. 36]. Thus, between 425 B.C. and 4 B.C., a period of over 400 years, *the people of Israel did not hear a single word from God!*

Try to put yourself in the place of those people. You had been assured that the Messiah would *soon* come, that He would be preceded by a messenger who would “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” lest the Lord would come and “strike the earth with a curse” [Mal. 4: 5-6]. You were at the time labouring under an oppressive Persian regime and you looked forward to a new king that would throw such yoke out of your neck. What kind of waiting would you do?

Nobody likes to wait or mark time! You are either making progress and moving forward, or avoiding stagnating by retreating or changing course. Yet, most times, God tells us to wait! But what is waiting? You are either *waiting for* or *waiting on* God, or preferably, waiting on God while waiting for Him.⁵

To *wait for* somebody is to stay where you are or delay acting or doing something for a specified time, or wait until something happens or somebody comes. The Psalmist says, “I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry” [Ps. 40: 1]. On the day of His ascension into heaven, Jesus told His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem but to “wait for the promise of the Father ... not many days hence” [Acts 1: 4-5]. The promised Holy Spirit came ten days later on Pentecost Sunday [Acts 2: 1-4]. But where the waiting time is not defined or specified, we run into ‘waiting problems.’

³ See Introductory note to the book of Malachi in The New Open Bible Study Edition of the *Holy Bible* (KJV); Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990; p. 1023

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Imonitie Chris Imoisili, ‘Waiting for or waiting on the Lord?’ *Weekly Bible Study Series*, Vol. 3, No.7, 17 Feb. 2002; http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_3/PDFs/WaitingfororwaitingontheLord.pdf

To *wait on* somebody is to act like a servant, to serve. That is why a person who serves meals and drinks in a restaurant is called a waiter or waitress. The waitress panders to the wishes and caprices of customers, no matter how she feels. She serves with a smile on her face even when she is thinking of unpaid bills at home. The customers determine for how long she waits while they take their time to eat and drink. She cannot hurry them up! However, how much tip they give her at the end depends on their perception of the quality of her service. That is why the Psalmist says, “Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land” [Ps. 37: 34]. Joseph waited on the Lord for 13 years and he became the governor of Egypt. David spent about the same time and became king of Israel. While waiting, both of them maintained their fear of the Lord.

The children of Israel might not have had the idea that waiting for the Messiah was going to take such a long time. In no time, they lost concentration, became discouraged and began to pay attention to short term gains with long term pains. They could not beat the lure of the pagan practices around them, so they decided to do likewise. The fear of God receded from their hearts [Mal. 4: 2]. The people forgot the Law of Moses that God had commanded for all Israel [v. 4]. Family strife worsened as parents turned against their children and vice-versa [v. 6].

Backsliding had its drawbacks because God does not spare the wicked or the unrepentant. Speaking through Malachi, God said, “the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble, and the day which is coming shall burn them up” [v. 1]. But there was hope, as the Lord promised [vv. 2-3]:

*But to you who fear (the Lord’s) name, **the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His wings**, and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that (the Lord does) this*

Who is this Sun of Righteousness? Scientists claim that the natural sun is about 4.5 billion years old and that it has another 5 billion years to go before it runs out of hydrogen fuel. Thereafter, it will fall from the sky and destroy the earth.⁶ Although Scripture does not tell us how long ago God created the heavens and the earth [Gen. 1: 1], nor do we know the day and the hour that Christ will return to judge the world [Mk 13: 32], we know that the sun and the moon will be darkened and fall before His return [vv. 24-25]. The Bible also confirms that a new earth represented by the new city of Jerusalem will be created in place of the old (destroyed) earth. Therefore, *Jesus the Christ is the Sun of Righteousness* and only faith in Him can sustain us to eternity.

2. The work of the Sun of Righteousness

The natural sun gives light, heat and radiation. We can use those key features of the natural sun to understand the work of the Sun of Righteousness as follows:

⁶ www.nineplanets.org/sol.html

a) *Jesus as the Light of the world*

An important feature of the natural sun is that it gives light by day and its satellite, the moon, gives light by night [Gen. 1: 15-18]. We need light to see our way. Light is also necessary for life-generating activities, such as photosynthesis⁷ in plants that generates oxygen for humans and animals. However, the sun only shines during day time and in some parts of the world, such as the North Pole and South Pole, the sun may not be seen for several months of the year. The moon has phases and does not come out every night. We know that we can also get light by man-made devices, such as by electric power, but they can be unreliable in a storm or other emergencies. Therefore, natural or man-made lights cannot give us light all the time. That is where the Sun of Righteousness takes over.

Before God created the sun and the moon on the fourth day, He had created light on the first day [v. 3]. Have you noticed that even when the clouds cover the sky and shield the sun away from us that we can still see light? Have you noticed that even when we are in a completely dark room that we begin to see clearly a short time later? Where does such light come from? Speaking of God's love, the Psalmist has said, "for with You is the fountain of life; *in Your light we see light*" [Ps. 36: 9]. Speaking of the Word of God who became flesh, John writes, "All things were made *through* Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men....*That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world*" [Jn 1: 1-9]. Jesus Himself witnessed it before the Pharisees when He told them, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" [Jn 8: 12]. This light of life is the only true way to God the Father and s(he) who has seen Him has seen the Father [Jn 14: 6, 9].

Righteousness is by faith, not by works [Rom. 4: 1-3], and only those who accept Jesus by faith can see the light of the Sun of Righteousness that leads to eternal salvation [Jn 3: 16]. Isaiah prophesied of the coming Son of God, saying, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined" [Is. 9: 2]. In deed, Jesus is the Light of the world.

b) *Jesus as Heat*

The sun that produces light also produces heat that gives warmth and sweat. The heat of the sun can melt snow or cake soils. In places with drought, the heat of the sun makes things worse. This is well captured in today's Bible text where God said, "the day is coming, *burning like an*

⁷ A process by which green plants and other organisms turn carbon dioxide and water into carbohydrates and oxygen, using light energy trapped by chlorophyll

oven (and) all who do wickedly will be stubble (and the day) *shall burn them up*” [Mal. 4: 1]. In extreme cases, the sun’s heat can give us sun burn or sun stroke. For example, the Shunammite’s son died from a sunstroke [2 Kgs 4: 18-20]. In Nineveh, as the prophet Jonah awaited God’s judgment on the people,” the sun beat on (his) head, so that he grew faint” [Jon. 4: 9].

Yes, Jesus is the Light. and Saviour of the world. But He can also put heat on the wicked as the Judge “for the Father judges no one but has committed all judgment to the Son” [Jn 5: 22]. In that capacity, He will return at the end of the age to judge the whole world [Matt. 25: 31-46]. Paul summarises the seeming contradiction between God’s mercy and judgment in the following words, “consider the goodness and severity of God- on those who fell, severity; but toward (those who are faithful) goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off” [Rom. 11: 22]. The Sun of Righteousness can also produce the heat of correction and judgment! He will judge the whole world at the end of the age.

c) *Jesus has healing rays*

Radiation, as used in physics, is energy in the form of waves or moving subatomic particles.⁸ Of relevance to us in this study is radiation therapy which is usually given by aiming X-rays at the tumor or the site where the tumor was. The goal of radiation therapy after surgery is to destroy any cancer cells that may remain in the cancerous site.⁹

Some people enjoy sun shine which gives their skin a beautiful tan. The sun’s rays thus serve as a beauty therapy. However, it may not work for everybody and some people may wind up with damaged skins. But the Sun of Righteousness shall arise “with healing in His wings” [Mal. 4: 2]. During His earthly ministry, Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and “healing all kinds of sickness, and all kinds of disease among the people... They brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics, and He healed them” [Matt. 4: 23, 24]. Did He use medications? No. He used spiritual radiation whose ‘X-rays’ raised Lazarus and many others from the dead. All He did when He raised Lazarus was to cry with a loud voice, saying, “Lazarus, come forth” and he who had died four days earlier came forth right away [Jn 11: 38-44]!

⁸ ‘What is Radiation?’ http://www.righthealth.com/Health/What_Is_Radiation/-od-definition_wiki_Radiation-s

⁹ ‘Radiation,’ http://www.revolutionhealth.com/conditions/breast-cancer/radiation?s_kwcid=radiation%20treatments|1019983194

3. Conclusion: The Sun of Righteousness is returning soon!

Soon after Jesus had ascended into heaven, two men in white robes (apparently angels of God) said to puzzled witnesses gazing into the skies, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” [Acts 1: 9-11]. That was 2,000 years ago and He has not yet returned. The waiting is indefinite but the tell-tale signs suggest that it will be *soon* [Matt. 24: 3-14]. So what are you going to do?

You can follow human suns whose light does not enlighten and will one day fail, whose heat cannot keep you warm or protected, and whose rays of healing cannot last or avail in all circumstances. On the other hand, you can wait for the Sun of Righteousness whose light will take you to eternal life in heaven, whose heat will be mercy and forgiveness and whose rays will heal all your diseases, physical, material and spiritual. He is the one that can bring you into the New Jerusalem, “the city that has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it for the glory of God illuminated it. *The Lamb is its light.*” Anything that “defiles or causes abomination or a lie” shall by no means enter into that city, except “those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” [Rev. 21; 22-27]. In deed, the Sun of righteousness will arise only for those who fear the Lord’s name [Mal. 4: 2].

The Sun of Righteousness never sets. Can you wait on Him as you wait for Him?