

“*Excellence ~ Safe in Jesus*” [8.31.08]

In the [days of the early frontier] there were a group of pioneers making their way across the great plains to a distant place that had been opened up for homesteading.

- They traveled in covered wagons **drawn by oxen** & **progress was naturally slow**; wagon trains averaged (4) to (8) miles per day!
- One day they were horrified to note a long line of smoke in the west; stretching for miles across the prairie.
 - Soon it became evident that the **dried grass was burning fiercely** & was advancing toward them @ a rapid pace.
 - They had crossed a river the day before, but it would be impossible to go back to the river before [*the flames*] would be upon them.
- [Fortunately] one man did not panic -- he knew there was only one way [*to save themselves*] from the **impending flames** that were bearing down on them.
- He quickly ordered the men to set fire to the grass [*behind them*]!
 - Then when a space was burned over -- the whole company moved backed upon it.
- As the flames roared on toward them from the west -- a little girl cried out in terror, “**Are you for sure we will not all be burned up?**”

[*The leader replied*], “My child, the flames [*cannot reach us here*], for we are standing where the fire has already been!”

What a strong picture of the believer who is (**safe in Christ!**)

The fires of God's judgment *burned themselves out on Him* & all who are in **Christ** are (**safe forever**); for we now stand where the fire has been!

There is [*no greater confidence*] than being right with God;
& there is [*no greater fear*] than being uncertain!

You can leave here today being (**safe in Christ**)
Malachi shows us the way!

PRAY[Father, break loose any strongholds that keep us from being **safe in Jesus**]

/. Malachi 3: 1 = "*...the Messenger of the Covenant!*"

A. (R) Malachi 3: 1a

- So, who is this 1st messenger?
- It seems **best to i.d.** this messenger as a future prophet; Jesus plainly i.d.'s this person as *John the Baptist*: [John 1: 23]

"John [the Baptist] replied in the words of Isaiah: I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, prepare a straight pathway for the Lord's coming."

B. (R) Malachi 3: 1b

- So, who is this 2nd messenger = "*...messenger of the covenant*"
- This title **occurs only here** in the Bible;
this individual is obviously different than the 1st messenger.
- The *messenger of the covenant* is Jesus = **re(R) Mal 3: 1b**

& Malachi says -- "*Jesus will SURELY RETURN someday for His children*"

I believe [*Jesus' return is much closer*] than many people expect
because of **these biblical signs** that are being fulfilled before our very eyes!

II. (3) Signs of Jesus' Imminent Return

The Bible says we cannot know the exact time of the Lord's return; but the Bible makes it **equally clear** that we can know when the season is upon us!

(R) | Thessalonians 5: 2 – 11 or p. 906 in pew Bible

[For unbelievers] Jesus return will be like “...a thief in the night.”

But the Bible makes it clear that His RETURN [*should be no surprise*] to those of us who know Him & His word -- for we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to give us understanding of the nature of the END TIMES.

A. 1st Sign = Balfour Declaration in 1917

100 yrs ago, in (1908) there was not one single -- tangible -- measurable sign that indicated we were **living in the season** of the Lord's return.

- The 1st sign to appear was the **Balfour Declaration in 1917**. This declaration was prompted by the fact that during WWI the Turks had sided with the Germans.
- When Germany lost the war so did the Turks & the victorious allies [**divided up**] both the German & Turkish empires.

Great Britain was allotted Palestine & the British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour declared...“that the intention of the British government to establish in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people.”

(R) | Isaiah 11: 11 – 12 or p. 526 in pew Bible

This unforeseen event in history serves as the 1st signal of Jesus' RETURN!

B. 2nd Sign = Decay of Society

- (R) || Timothy 3: 1 – 4 or p. 915 in pew Bible
- If you doubt this sign just turn on the evening news [10 min]
- Our community -- our state -- our country is plagued by abortion / pornography & sexual promiscuity / domestic violence / chemical abuse / & right out disdain for God ☹

****Insert Relevant Example**

C. 3rd Sign = Russian Threat to Israel

Just weeks ago Russia invaded Georgia; [**prophetically**] this invasion clearly shows that the *Russian BEAR* is showing his teeth once again!

Georgia is particularly important because it contains a major petroleum pipeline & it is a land bridge to the Middle East.

Ezekiel 38 & 39 teaches that Russia will lead a great invasion into the Middle East in the **END TIMES** with specified allies; all of who are Muslims nations today.

The invasion will ultimately be directed against Israel; & the invading armies **will be supernaturally destroyed** by God on the mtn.'s of Israel.

(2) Current events to pay attention too...

- 1st = Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin
 - For years the dream of democracy has been fading in Russia; Putin has retained the democratic veneer but is quickly showing his face cards.
 - [**I believe**] Vladimir Putin is the new Tsar of Russia!

- He has throttled the press -- taken over the regional governments -- provinces that broke away from the Soviet Union in 1991.
 - Scripture is coming alive; 2nd Current event to pay attention to is...
- 2nd = the U.S. & Poland [proposed] missile defense shield
 - Adding fuel to the fire -- this agreement between the U.S. & Poland includes a promise to come to each other's aid in the event of an attack!
 - Russia is deeply opposed to this deal; Moscow believes true purpose is to undermine Russia's nuclear deterrent.
 - [Don't Neglect] Russia is building a new military -- increasing ties in Middle East w/ Saudi's - Libya - & Egypt - supply weapons to Syria & Iran!

Bottom line is that we live in exciting times & from all these current events being fulfilled we are living on borrowed time!

The Bible clearly teaches that God never pours out His wrath w/out 1st warning us; b/c He is a just & loving God who does not wish that anyone should perish!

I believe His return is very near -- I believe these signs are true & valid!
 [[If so, what do we need to do?] *Back to Malachi*

III. The Coming Day of Judgment

A. (R) Malachi 3: 2 - 3a

- v. 2 "...who will be able to endure it?" *Who will be safe?*

B. Bible says you can be [safe in Christ]; *YOU MUST...*

- 1st **ACCEPT** *that* salvation & the forgiveness of sins is only achieved by God's grace & Jesus' Christ death on the cross!

Next, is the process of becoming like Jesus!

- *Life-long pursuit; the process of sanctification continues throughout the life of a believer thru the work of the Holy Spirit as we are transformed into the image of Christ [1] Corinthians 3:18] This is how it will happen...*

C. (R) Malachi 3: 2b – 3a

- [INSERT] Purifying precious metals
- You can be [safe in Christ]

It's starts with a Confession & is quickly followed by obedience to Scripture!