

Read: Malachi 4:1-3

Jump for Joy!

Malachi 4:1-3

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Have you ever seen a baby cow, a calf, released from its stall? Those young calves have so much energy! They don't want to be enclosed behind a gate. When they are well-fed and well-rested, they can't wait for the gate to be opened. Then, when it finally is, they leap out of the stall and jump around for joy!

In some ways, baby calves are kind of like school kids going outside for recess after lunch. They can't wait to go and play! It's always funny that one of the first things young kids do at recess when they go outside is to start running and shout, “Yaaaaay!” They are so happy! They can't wait to play!

One day soon, every believer will have a moment like this! No, it's not a special recess time just for Christians. This special moment will be on judgment day when Jesus comes back.

When we first hear the words of God through the prophet Malachi for the devotion today, we might be a little scared. God talks about coming back with judgment and with fire, and everything will be done away with and destroyed. That sounds scary!

But then we hear the good news for believers. God says, “But for you who revere my name [that's believers], the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays.” This verse is talking about Jesus. Like a beautiful sunrise that shines light in the morning, so the Son of God will come back to shine on us with the light of his love. Because he has forgiven all our sins and given to us the victory over death, judgment day will simply be a day for all believers to celebrate. We will finally be able to live with God forever in the joy of heaven. It's like an eternal recess where we can be happy and rejoice all the time forever and ever.

It's no wonder that God also says this, “And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.” We sure will! When Jesus comes back for us to give us the final victory and life in heaven, we will run and jump for joy like kids going out to recess . . . like calves released from the stall . . . or

even better, like children of God who have just won the victory forever and ever. What a special day when all believers will run and jump for joy!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What might sound scary about judgment day?
- Why don't believers need to be scared about judgment day?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- The Bible verse today said that Jesus will come back with "healing" on judgment day. Explain what kind of healing that is talking about.
- What are you looking forward to the most on judgment day?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Agree/Disagree: Jesus coming back on judgment day will be a surprise to believers. Explain your answer.
- For those who do not believe, judgment day will actually be a very scary day. Describe how that fact influences the way we live.

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, help us to be patient as we wait for Jesus to return on judgment day. We can't wait to celebrate his victory when he returns! Amen.