

Message #3**Malachi 1:6-14**

There are many places of religious worship that really think the goal is to please the people and they don't think the goal is to please God. So everything that is done is designed to please the people. The thinking is let's create an atmosphere for the seeker that is people friendly.

In fact, there are many people who truly believe that evangelism is the ultimate goal of the church. So whatever we need to do to get the people in the door must be our marketing strategy.

The book of Malachi says that is wrong. The ultimate goal of the Church is to worship God and do that which pleases Him.

When people go to worship, they are not to be first; God is to be first. Man is not to be worshipped and praised, God is to be worshipped and praised.

When we finally get to the end of things, all people will fall down and worship God. The problem in many churches is that the leaders are not teaching the people this. They are making people at church out to be more important than God.

It amazes me what is called worship these days in churches. For example, one church featured men running up and down the aisles of the church at full speed and diving into the baptistry. Another church featured a minister jumping up and down yelling and throwing his tie into the audience while people sang and applauded. Another church featured a person yelling God is good, He is goody, goody, and goody all the time as the people were yelling. They call this worship. There are people going to these churches and there are ministers leading these churches who think this is just fine.

What these leaders don't realize is that God detests this and He will hold these leaders highly accountable because what they are doing is evil. **The specific target of this text is the religious priest. The target here is religious leaders who are not leading people in the right direction. God will hold these leaders highly accountable.** That point is stressed right here in Malachi. God will not speak again to His people for the next nearly 450 years because of what the leaders did with worship.

GOD'S PRIESTLY LEADERS WERE NOT WORSHIPPING GOD IN AN ACCEPTABLE WAY AND GOD WAS ENRAGED BY IT AND CLASSIFIED THE WORSHIP AS EVIL AND AS SOMETHING THAT WOULD PROMPT HIM TO CURSE AND NOT BLESS HIS OWN PEOPLE.

Now the Temple building was up in Jerusalem and there was worship action every day. But none of it pleased God and none of it honored God. Now this text is aimed at priests:

- 1) There is an application to the religious ministers who in this context were priests.
- 2) There is an application to the religious leaders who in this context were priests.
- 3) There is an application to every believer who in the N.T. age is a priest.

The religious leaders of Israel were leading the worship and leading the people straight into the judgment of God. They were not honoring God and they were not teaching the people to fear God. They were not teaching the people to give God their best, but they were making a mockery of worship.

In **verse 6**, God says, “a son honors his father” and “a servant honors his master.” So God says “I am a father and where is My honor? I am a master and where is My respect?”

Israel is depicted by God to be a son and Israel is depicted by God to be a servant. We saw last time that God proved His love for Israel by election.

What we learn here about election is that God’s people are elected to sonship and God’s people are elected for service.

The normal response for a son is to honor the parent. The normal response for a servant is to respect the master.

There are two things priests have the responsibility to do:

- 1) See that God and His word are honored (kabod).
- 2) See that God and His word are respected (mora).

The word “honor” (kabod) means to see to it that God is given the worth He deserves. God expects and demands that His ministers make certain that they are giving people the perception and understanding of the worth and value of God.

The word “respect” is one that is closely connected to reverence and fear in a positive sense (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 459). The respect which is closely connected to the fear of the LORD aspect speaks of a reverence for God and fear of God that turns away from sin and evil and obeys God’s word.

God says the priests should be teaching the people to honor Me at the highest level. They should be teaching people to respect Me and fear Me, especially at worship, and that was not happening.

God’s leaders were not promoting this. They were not leading the people to honor God, fear God and respect God.

Now God gives a series of ten charges against the priests and the worship of the people:

CHARGE #1 – The priests have despised God’s name. **1:6c**

The word “despise” (baza) is a participle that means this was a continual attitude these priests had. They continually had an attitude of contempt toward the name of God in that they treated God as something insignificant and worthless. God and His word were not taken seriously and these priests were a key reason why.

Notice when they were confronted with this their response was “How have we despised your name?” Here is a tragic reality about these spiritual leaders. They were living their lives in a way that despised the name of the LORD and did not even realize how they were doing it. They had no sensitivity to the word of God and will of God.

They were treating God so lightly and disrespectfully and they had lost all sense of conviction that they were even doing that. They didn’t realize what they were doing at worship services was despicable in the sight of God.

CHARGE #2 – The priests were giving God defective and defiled offerings and sacrifices.
1:7-8

Keep the context of this in view. The people were regularly going to worship services and the priests and leaders were regularly leading the worship services, but it was ritualistic hypocrisy. It was not the kind of worship that pleased God. In fact, it angered God.

These priests were sloppy in their worship and in their sacrifices. They allowed people to bring blind, lame, sick animals to worship and offer them. We learn from Hebrews that these offerings and sacrifices were to be pure and unblemished because they depicted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is unacceptable to God to bring blind, sick and lame animals to offer to God. In fact, it was evil.

They were not following the word of God in their offerings. The priests got a lot of these offerings for food, so they in some respects got paid by these offerings. As long as they got paid, they could not care less what those offerings were.

What they lost sight of, according to **verse 7** was if you offer defiled offerings, you defile yourself and the altar. So not only is this not acceptable to God, it demeans God and it angers God. They were showing how little regard they had for God by the sacrifices they offered and by the food they served from that altar.

They were sacrificing defiled animals and eating defiled food and that alone should have been enough to convict them that as leaders they were not doing right. When a defiled offering was offered on the altar, it defiled the whole altar.

God had given specific instructions concerning what was a defective sacrifice (Lev. 22:17-30). Part of the responsibility of a priest was to judge the worthiness of the sacrifice to determine whether or not the sacrifice met God’s standards. But these priests didn’t study the Scriptures or if they did, they didn’t care if they applied them. In fact, we learn from Ezekiel 22:26 what they were doing: “Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My Sabbaths; and I am profaned among them.”

These priests didn't care what they offered as a sacrifice to God and God does not approve of that nor accept it as worship. God says let's see you give this slop to a governor. Try giving a political leader whatever leftover thing you have and see how he views it.

I want to make a very important application to this. God expects His people and His leaders to be in church on Sunday, the first day of the week. He expects His people to take this seriously. He expects His people to present themselves and their offerings on the first day of the week. The people who will be blessed by God, the church that will be blessed by God, is one that will teach people in the importance of honoring God, reverencing God, worshipping God and bringing their offerings to God.

CHARGE #3 – The priests could not expect to be able to ask God to favor them and bless them.
1:9

Here were people bringing slop offerings to God and God says do you think you can bring God your unclean, blemished offerings to God and then ask God for His favor and grace? That word “entreat” is interesting because it means to “soften” something.

Malachi says do you really think you can soften up God so He will pour out His favor and blessings and kindness on you when you treat Him and His word so disrespectfully? As **verse 8** says, why don't you try giving this to a governor? Do you think you could gain the favor of God by this?

These leaders are going through all kinds of religious actions, but they couldn't even talk to God and expect God to answer them. They could not entreat God for His grace and favor. They could not demean God and think lightly of God's word and expect God would answer their prayers. Malachi says do you think you can offer God junk and expect Him to answer your call for His grace?

CHARGE #4 – The priests do not stop useless worship. **1:10**

I am convinced that most people think that by simply going to a religious place they are pleasing God and finding the favor of God. God says most of these places should be shut down and no one has the spiritual wits about them to see it or know it.

The first real admonition of the book of Malachi is that it is too bad someone doesn't shut this Temple place down and lock the doors. Malachi says it would be better if someone realized this whole place should be shut down.

This is not authentic worship. God does not need anything from us, but if His people and especially His leaders do not honor Him, reverence Him and exalt Him, their worship means nothing and it is worthless and useless and unacceptable to God.

There is nothing automatically praiseworthy about a church that has its doors open on Sunday. If that church is not given to carefully and accurately understanding and applying the word of God, it would be better that the people not go and that the doors of that place be closed for good.

CHARGE #5 – The nations have revered God’s name. **1:11**

God says the tragedy of this is that even though My own nation and its leaders do not honor Me, there are nations all over the world who will honor Me. Notice three times it is stressed these nations will honor “MY NAME.” Certainly this would include the Trinitarian doctrine of honoring God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

This is clearly a prophetic prediction that God and His word would be worshipped and honored by nations all over the world. Israel with its Temple was not honoring God, but there would be places all over the world where they would honor God.

That of course is what is happening at the present time in some churches. There are true churches, given to honoring God and His word all over the world. They recognize the value of the sacrifice of God the Son and they bow and worship God.

There are many passages that make it clear that the nations will worship God (Is. 11:3-4, 9; Dan. 7:13-14, 27-28; Zeph. 2:11; 3:8-11; Zech. 14:9, 16).

One of the saddest things one will ever see are heathen people from a heathen background who have a better grasp on the greatness of God than God’s own people. This is the truth that exists right now in this dispensation.

Israel’s leaders have not lead Israel to worship and honor the true God of the Bible and His Son and Gentile nations have done that.

CHARGE #6 – The priests have profaned God’s name. **1:12**

The idea of profaning someone’s name is the idea of doing something shameful and degrading to the name of someone. Someone’s name is who they are. It is what makes them special and set apart from others.

To do something that degrades and profanes someone’s name is the lowest of lows. God is set apart from all others. He is Holy and His name is Holy. These priests were profaning God’s name.

They were not exalting God or elevating God. They were demeaning God. They were not bringing the proper offerings to the altar and they were not offering the kinds of offerings God demanded.

It is possible to give an offering to God’s church and it means nothing to God.

CHARGE #7 – The priests consider worship to be a burden. **1:13a**

To these priests everything was a big chore. It was too wearisome to carefully study the word of God and then make sure the offerings and sacrifices were meeting code.

To be a minister who takes his responsibility seriously is a weight. It is a burden. But it is also a great privilege. To prepare a meal worthy of a flock eating takes prayer and hours of preparation. It is fatiguing. It is a mountain to climb every week.

But the moment your heart is not in it and the moment you are just collecting a paycheck is the moment you are involved in religious robbery and evil.

These priests were earning good paychecks with these offerings, but their heart was not given to carefully studying and applying God's word. They considered their responsibilities to be burdensome, so they were loose and sloppy in the way they did things.

CHARGE #8 – The priests turn their noses against worship. **1:13b**

Every leader must carefully be on the lookout for turning up their noses at anything that pertains to God. Every leader must be on the lookout for a cold heart and an unthankful spirit.

If we ever find ourselves turning our noses up against the word and will of God, we are on a path of total decay. God has given us everything and to become cold-hearted against God and His word is the ultimate sign of a shipwrecked spirituality.

There can be an arrogance among religious people, who actually turn their noses up to carefully and accurately understanding God's word.

CHARGE #9 – The priests bring offerings that are degrading. **1:13c**

They were bringing blemished offerings, injured offerings and stolen offerings. King David said "I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (II Sam. 24:24).

God says I will not accept you and I will not accept your worship.

CHARGE #10 – The priests present offerings that have been swindled by negated vow. **1:14a**

There were people coming into the Temple before other people and making some vow and then in front of others would give their offering as a pledge and it was a religious sham and show. A person would come to give an offering and vow that it was an acceptable male offering, but then would not follow through with what he vowed and he would give some blemished animal.

They brought blind, crippled and diseased animals. They wanted other people to view them as spiritual, when God saw them as a liar and a cheat.

This action is inexcusable when it comes to God for He is a great King. He is to be revered and feared.

When God's people go to worship, they had better think very seriously about God. Church is not about us; it is about God. When we give our offerings and we present ourselves to God, we need to think in these terms:

- 1) I am giving my offering to the Lord - the supreme ruler in charge of all.
- 2) I am giving my offering to the Great King - the sovereign ruler over all.
- 3) I am giving my offering to the LORD of hosts - the covenant God over all the armies in heaven and on earth.
- 4) I am giving my offering to the God whose name is to be feared in all nations.

It is possible to go to church for show motives and not spiritual motives. God knows the hearts and He is enraged by those who pretend to honor Him, but really don't.