

STORM WARNINGS!**#12 – MALACHI: DISHONORING GOD IN OUR WORSHIP AND LIVES****MALACHI 1:6-8, 2:1-2, 2:7-8**

Malachi – Malachi (Heb. My Messenger) was the last of the prophets. Malachi's ministry started 430 B.C. Malachi dealt with a general spiritual deterioration of religion, including priests not doing their duties, imperfect sacrifices, God's word not being taught, marriage to idol-worshipping foreign women, divorce, and not giving your due to God. Things were a spiritual mess! These problems exist today.

The priests and people were showing contempt, dishonor, and disrespect for God in their religious practices. How?

I. They Offered Imperfect Sacrifices – Less Than Their Best (Malachi 1:6-8)

- ***The priests' contempt for _____*** – God held the priests responsible for imperfect sacrifices because they were the spiritual leaders and mediators between God and the people. For Christians, the position of priest has been eliminated. Why? Jesus is our High Priest (Hebrews 5:1-10). He is our ultimate mediator between God and us. We are all priests through Christ; we have the privilege and responsibility to relate directly with God! We all are the new priesthood (I Peter 2:5&9, Revelation 5:10). AMAZING! This also means that we are responsible to God to not treat Him with contempt with our worship.
- ***As new priests, our "sacrifices" must not be less than our _____*** – A sacrifice is of great value and great personal cost given to someone in honor (and in God's case for forgiveness of sin). In the Old Testament, the sacrifice had to be perfect to honor God's perfect Holiness and point to the future perfect Lamb of God (Jesus) that would die for the sins of the world (John 1:29). Today, our sacrifice is to honor God and consists of our whole lives (Roman 12:1-2) – living our lives for Him. Our praise and worship is also a "sacrifice" – giving of ourselves to glorify God (Hebrews 13:15). Are we giving our best in our sacrifices to God?

II. The Priests Would Not Listen and Honor God (Malachi 2:1-2)

- ***The priests would not "_____"*** – 1) They would not "listen" to the clear teachings of God in the scripture. They would "hear" what they wanted to "hear" by interpreting the scripture the way that was convenient. Some scriptures were ignored altogether.
2) They would not listen to God through the prophets because it complicated the comfortable status quo. Do we as today's priests do the same?
- ***The priests would not set their heart to _____ God*** – To set your hearts is to have single-minded focus and determination. To honor God's name is to glorify and honor all that God is, has done, and what He commands us to do. In contrast, the priests were taking for granted the high calling of God and treating the Temple ministry with contempt – it was just a job. Today, as priests, are we taking our ministry to God for granted? Do we "go through the motions," but not set our hearts to honor God's name?

III. The Priests Had Turned Away From God's Instruction and Way (Malachi 2:7-8)

- ***The priests had turned away from God's _____*** – The priests were supposed to teach the instructions of God, and be an example and live them. But, they weren't following God's pattern; they were following their own ways. They weren't preserving knowledge – teaching it, living it, and applying it so God's knowledge was preserved by the permanent change in everyone's lives, in what they knew, thought, and lived in their lives.
- ***The Result – The people were “_____”*** – Through life's walk, they were stumbling – unintentionally sinning through lack of preserved knowledge. The people didn't know God's way or practice it. Instead, all they did was practice imperfect and defiling religious ritual. It meant nothing, God wasn't blessing and people's lives were a mess.
- Today, as priests and priest leaders (pastors, teachers, and other spiritual leaders), we need to insure that the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ is taught and preserved. Jesus says, “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed when you do them.” (John 13:17) Are we teaching and living the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ? Otherwise, we are toxic priests like in Malachi's day

True Worship Requires:

Offering our best in sacrifice –

Sacrificial living and glorifying God

Listening to and honoring the name of God

Teaching and preserving the way of God, through the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ

Are we faithful priests or toxic?

Answers: I. God; best. II. Listen; honor. III. Instructions; stumbling.