

## God Deserves our Very Best!

### Malachi 1:6-14

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

If God accused us of showing Him contempt, what would we say? Maybe in reverence we would remain silent but most likely our immediate response would be one of self-justification. Foolishly, would we not offer Him our dirty rags of righteousness as evidence that we love Him? Do we truly think that coming to church when it is convenient honors Christ who died for the church? Would God be impressed with us setting aside a few scurried moments to read His commands and talk to Him while giving the remainder of our time over to the “greater,” carnal priorities of our lives? And would God truly be impressed with giving Him our “pocket change” as a tithe while we build riches here on this earth? Surely God has no reason to accuse us of contempt! The first part of this sermon is going to focus on Malachi’s indictment of Israel whose priests refused to show God honor through their offerings and in doing so made their service contemptible, irrelevant and undesirable to their Creator. The second part of this sermon is going to focus on the stern warning Israel’s priests received that is applicable to us today: either serve God with all one’s heart, mind and soul with reverence or risk being cursed by Him!

### God Deserves Honor

**A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due Me? If I am a master, where is the respect due Me?” says the LORD Almighty (verse 6b).**



Does not God who is Israel’s Father (Deuteronomy 32:6; Job 29:16; Isaiah 63:16) and Master (Exodus 23:17; 34:23; Deuteronomy 10:17) <sup>1</sup> by creation, election, preservation, redemption and watchful guardianship<sup>2</sup> not deserve to be honored? In face of these inescapable obligations<sup>3</sup> should not their attitude towards God be one of a “humble sense of inferiority and reverent trust in an immensely powerful and fearful deity, who is at the same time just and benevolent?”<sup>4</sup> Honoring one’s covenantal relationship

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<sup>1</sup> David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2006), 227.

<sup>2</sup> James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), Mal 1:6.

<sup>3</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 28, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 244.

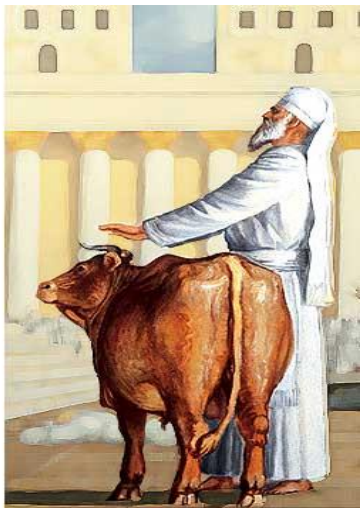
<sup>4</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, vol. 21A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), 265.

with God is not accomplished by treating the Sacred with indifference<sup>5</sup> or platitudes of politeness but with genuine reverence and love.<sup>6</sup> Since honoring God was accomplished through obedience,<sup>7</sup> Israel was told that fear or reverence of God was the beginning of wisdom (Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:7). Reverence was not to be done merely out of a sense of obligation but must be done “with the love of God; for love without fear makes men remiss, and fear without love makes them servile and desperate.”<sup>8</sup> “Sincere and practical recognition of the greatness of God”<sup>9</sup> as the light unto the nations (Isaiah 49) could only be accomplished through their love and total surrender to their covenant Father and King!

## Showing Contempt Through Unholy Offerings

**It is you priests who show contempt for my name. “But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’”<sup>7</sup> “By offering defiled food on my altar. “But you ask, ‘How have we defiled You?’” “By saying that the LORD’s table is contemptible. <sup>8</sup> When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” says the LORD Almighty (verses 6b-8).**

# OFFERINGS



Even though God as their Father and Master deserved to be honored, Israel’s priests were charged with contempt for having treated His name, Word and altar<sup>10</sup> as being insignificant or worthless.<sup>11</sup> Since sinful attitudes are often secret from the consciousness of the sinner,<sup>12</sup> the priests simply could not see how they defiled the altar with their attitudes towards ritual imperfections.<sup>13</sup> Was it not the lay worshipper’s responsibility to chose sacrificial animals that were to be perfect and without blemish (Leviticus 22:18-25; Deuteronomy 15:19-21)?<sup>14</sup> While this was certainly true, Malachi reminded the priests that they had taken a sacred oath to God (Ezekiel 16:50)<sup>15</sup> to “conduct their sacral duties properly so as not to profane

<sup>5</sup> Robert L. Alden, “[Malachi](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 711.

<sup>6</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, 264.

<sup>7</sup> David W. Baker, 227.

<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, 264.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Ellsworth, [Opening up Malachi](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2007), 27.

<sup>10</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, 267.

<sup>11</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, 265.

<sup>12</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, [Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary](#), 244.

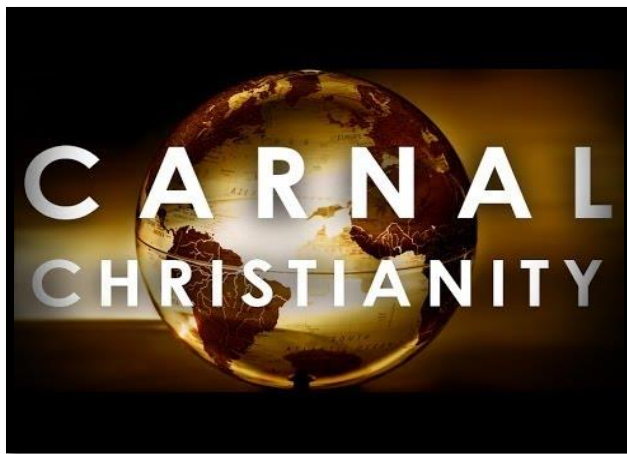
<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> David J. Clark and Howard A. Hatton, [A Handbook on Malachi](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2002), 384.

<sup>15</sup> John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, [Minor Prophets II](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 331.

the Lord’s name” (Leviticus 21:6; 22:2)!<sup>16</sup> By giving into the worshippers and sacrificing animals that were blind, lame and diseased, the priests were “desecrating the sanctuary whose holiness they were responsible to maintain” (Numbers 18:1-7).<sup>17</sup> While their lips honored God (Isaiah 29:13)<sup>18</sup> the priests, who were left to sacrifice and eat portions (Numbers 18:17-19; Deuteronomy 18:1-4)<sup>19</sup> of the very worst animals in Israel, soon became bitter and despised the duties of the Lord’s table.<sup>20</sup> In a very sarcastic tone<sup>21</sup> Malachi stated the following fact: the priest would never offer inferior animals to a Persian governor because that would defile their name and invite their wrath so why would they offer inferior animals to the King of Kings?<sup>22</sup>

In a similar manner do we not defile the name of God by allowing our “flesh-pleasing and self-seeking interests” rule our hearts?<sup>23</sup> Should not we as His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) and priests (1 Peter 2:9) who have been purchased at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20) want to make sure “His reputation is known from east to west, shown by the idiom of the rising and



setting sun (Psalms 50:1; 113:3; cf. Isa. 45:6; 59:19), throughout the entire perceived world?”<sup>24</sup> We should and yet how does “sneaking in” five or ten minutes each day out of a sense of duty or guilt constitute a sacrifice worthy of praising His holy name? Also, is not letting our minds wander on our fleshly desires<sup>25</sup> while we pray, read the Bible and sing songs proof that it is a sense of duty, not love that we serve our Creator? “When duty replaces devotion, human nature is such that it seeks minimum steps, barely enough to meet an

obligation.”<sup>26</sup> And when the people of today’s churches offer such minimal and disrespectful gifts to the King of Kings do not our pastors accept and praise those who have lost their first love<sup>27</sup> in order to fill the pews and keep their positions of leadership? If today’s pastors truly loved God more than praise from the congregation (John 12:43) would not their number one “goal be to reestablish a high and God-honoring standard in their own life”<sup>28</sup> and those God has

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, 268.

<sup>18</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 266.

<sup>19</sup> D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1885.

<sup>20</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 266.

<sup>21</sup> John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, *Minor Prophets II*, 333.

<sup>22</sup> David J. Clark and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Malachi*, 384.

<sup>23</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 579.

<sup>24</sup> David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 230.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Malachi*, 29–30.

<sup>26</sup> David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 226.

<sup>27</sup> David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 226.

<sup>28</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary*, 579.

entrusted to them? We would never dream of disrespecting our boss, spouse, children or friends like this so why would we the Creator and Sustainer of our lives?

### Irrelevant and Undesirable Service

**<sup>9</sup>“Now plead with God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?”—says the LORD Almighty. <sup>10</sup>“Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD Almighty, “and I will accept no offering from your hands (verses 9-10).**

Malachi reminds the priests that their sacrificial rituals that did not arise from wholehearted devotion to the Lord was a sin, (Prov 15:8; Isa 1:13; Amos 4:4; cf. Rom 14:23;



Heb 11:6),”<sup>29</sup> and as such were pointless and counterproductive<sup>30</sup> in beseeching God’s approval and favor.<sup>31</sup> If the priests did not believe that God hated their sacrifices because they were “rendered hollow by acts of disobedience” (Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8),<sup>32</sup> ask Him for something and see if He responds graciously!<sup>33</sup> Since they refused to “fear and honor God with sacrifices from pure hearts”<sup>34</sup> befitting their King; Malachi told them to shut down the temple so that the priests and people would no longer be lulled into thinking their sacrifices were

effective in getting God’s approval.<sup>35</sup> Had they forgotten it was God who summoned the Babylonians to destroy the temple for their past violations of His holiness?<sup>36</sup> Had they forgotten the anticipation and great joy they felt in 515 B.C. when the temple was rebuilt? <sup>37</sup> Since they refused to acknowledge that God desires obedience more than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22), Malachi gave them the directive<sup>38</sup> close the doors of the temple for “no worship is better than irreverent worship!”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, [Haggai, Malachi](#), 272–273.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, [Haggai, Malachi](#), 271.

<sup>32</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, [Haggai, Malachi](#), 273.

<sup>33</sup> Roger Ellsworth, [Opening up Malachi](#), 32–33.

<sup>34</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, 271–272.

<sup>35</sup> Robert L. Alden, “[Malachi](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, 712–713.

<sup>36</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, [Haggai, Malachi](#), 272.

<sup>37</sup> John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, [Minor Prophets II](#), 333.

<sup>38</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, [Haggai, Malachi](#), 271.

<sup>39</sup> Roger Ellsworth, [Opening up Malachi](#), 34.



Does not Malachi's words "shut the temple doors" also echo in our modern-day churches? Are not those who are called to be the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16) also guilty of offering sacrifices defiled by their desires to conform (Romans 12:2) to rather



than confront the wicked ways of this world?<sup>40</sup> Without a Biblically based and clearly articulated worldview,<sup>41</sup> in which God is Creator, Redeemer and Master of all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16); the edges of church and society have become blurred and our offerings have become worth far less than filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), they have become offensive offerings spit out of the mouth of God for being neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3:15-16)!<sup>42</sup> When God does not answer our prayers or bless us we should not

blame God for not coming good on His promises but instead examine our hearts to see clearly the blemished sacrifices that we are offering Him.<sup>43</sup> While God does not require us to be sinless to have our prayers answered, we must not forget that only those who worship in "Spirit and truth" (John 4:24) honor His name, not those who tolerate and glorify sin!<sup>44</sup>

## His Name will be Great Amongst the Nations

**My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty (verse 11).**



Since Israel's postexilic priests refused to honor God's name with pure sacrifices offered out of love and obedience,<sup>45</sup> Malachi warned them a time was soon coming when the universality of God's reign would be honored amongst all nations as their Maker, King and Redeemer.<sup>46</sup> While this was not a new concept, for Isaiah (2:2-4, 11:10) and

<sup>40</sup> David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 238.

<sup>41</sup> David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*.

<sup>42</sup> Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Malachi*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Malachi*, 33.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), Mal 1:11.

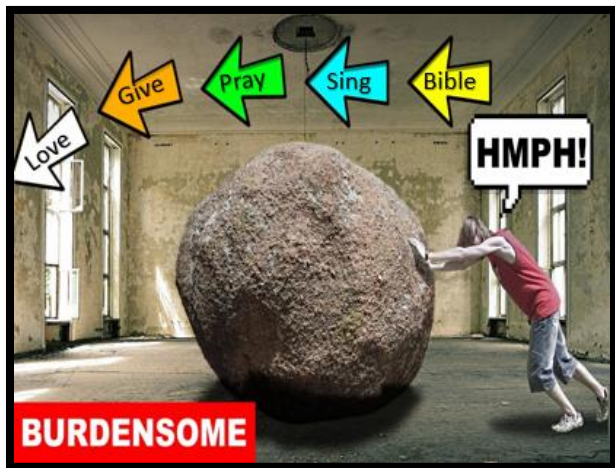
<sup>46</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 247.

Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:23, 37:28) foresaw such a day, worldwide worship of God without dependence on the Levitical sacrifices offered in Jerusalem certainly was!<sup>47</sup> Even though the Mosaic law clearly taught that any “offering made apart from the temple was illegal and unclean,<sup>48</sup> the inadequacies of its sacrificial system was about to be transcended<sup>49</sup> by the coming of the Messiah in the imminent future.<sup>50</sup> Those who were strangers of the covenants of promise would not only be reconciled (Ephesians 2:11-23)<sup>51</sup> but also grafted into His family as true worshipers of God in both Spirit and truth. By offering utterly reprehensible sacrifices to a holy God<sup>52</sup> the priests forfeited their unique privilege as “the ministers of God’s only legitimate sanctuary,”<sup>53</sup> for God would soon be honored by all nations!

## Contemptible Service

**12 “But you profane it by saying, ‘The Lord’s table is defiled,’ and, ‘Its food is contemptible.’ 13 And you say, ‘What a burden!’ and you sniff at it contemptuously,” says the LORD Almighty When you bring injured, lame or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?” says the LORD (Verses 12-13).**

Parallel to verses 7-11 Malachi again repeated the charge against the priests: they have profaned the name of God by offering injured, lame and diseased animals as sacrifices.<sup>54</sup> In



action and attitude<sup>55</sup> they treated God and His altar as “common, insignificant and worthless.”<sup>56</sup> If this was not heinous enough they sinned even more grievously by seeing their duties not as God-honoring but as a weary burden or yoke too heavy to bear!<sup>57</sup> Are we not like the priests in both attitude and deed? When we serve God in the church do we see our duties as precious and glorious or as “unpleasant obligations that must be taken away as quick as possible?”<sup>58</sup> Are we not all too quick to defile God’s word so that we might not meet the qualifications (1 Corinthians 11-14; 1 Timothy 2-3; Titus 1:5-

<sup>47</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 249–250.

<sup>48</sup> James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), Mal 1:11.

<sup>49</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 250.

<sup>50</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 249–250.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), Mal 1:11.

<sup>53</sup> John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, *Minor Prophets II*, 334.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Malachi*, 38.

<sup>56</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 280.

<sup>57</sup> Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Malachi*, 39.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

9) for church offices such as pastors or deacons?<sup>59</sup> Being gifted and yet refusing to serve God is no better than serving Him with contempt, both are sins! He who bought us at a price wants us to honor His name with thanksgiving and joy in our hearts for He alone is worthy of our praise (Revelation 4:11).

## Fear or a Curse

**14 “Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king,” says the LORD Almighty, “and my name is to be feared among the nations (Verse 14).**

Malachi finished his indictment against the priests of Israel and us today by offering a warning: those who cheat God of the honor due to Him will be punished and cursed by Him! He who is a great King will be feared by the nations. “Fear” or “reverence” is not a feeling of



terror or panic from the anticipated, unjust actions from a tyrant; but a “desire to show respect and love to honor and embrace the will of God in one’s life.”<sup>60</sup> Being cursed was no empty threat<sup>61</sup> as Babylon, Persia and Pharaoh would wholeheartedly attest.<sup>62</sup> So, think about the destruction of these great nations the next time you offer a few scurried moments to read His commands and talk to Him while devoting the rest of your time to the “greater” carnal desires of your hearts or when offering Him your “pocket change”

while storing riches on this earth. Surely the Lamb who was slain deserves our very best attempts to honor His name by living holy lives in awe of our Lord, Saviour and King! So which fork in the path will you take: give God your best and be blessed or give Him your worst and be cursed?

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<sup>59</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, [Haggai, Malachi](#), 281.

<sup>60</sup> John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, [Minor Prophets II](#), 335.

<sup>61</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, [Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary](#), 251.

<sup>62</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, [Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary](#), 251–252.