

MALACHI 1:6-14

God's Denunciation of the Priests for neglected Temple Duties

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This section is a scathing rebuke of the priests for their failure to honor God in the sacrificial system. It is significant that the priests are denounced first, for they were to lead the people into the reality of fellowship with the Lord but failed miserably. NOTE: As the spiritual leaders go, so go the people in spiritual things.
- B. The priests were to know that God would reckon with them for their poor administration in temple duties.

II. DENUNCIATION FOR DESPISING JEHOVAH'S NAME (1:6)

- A. **"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?"** In 1:1-5, God has told about His love for Israel but He cannot speak of Israel's love for God. Israel's problem was that it did not even respect God.
1. Jehovah first speaks about a family relationship. It is a natural, unwritten law in the heart of men that a son is to respect his father, but the priests did not even have respect towards God. Jehovah is the Father of Israel, for He is the originator of the nation. In love, God treats Israel like a son but they do not treat Him like a Father.
 2. Jehovah then reminds them of a legal relationship. The servant who is owned by the master gives obedience to the master out of pure respect. But Israel and the priests will not obey Jehovah, their Master.
 3. The problem is evident. They had no fear of God. He who is Lord of Hosts, the Ruler of the universe, the covenant-keeping God, is neither honored nor feared. NOTE: Obedience to God is the result of reverential fear of Him, for the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The true child of God need never fear the wrath of God (for Christ has borne his sins) but he should fear the disciplinary hand of God.
- B. **"Saith the Lord of hosts unto you, 0 priests, that despise my name"** These wicked priests thank God for his love by despising, by becoming mockers, sneering at His name and laughing at the revelation of His will. They are constantly showing contempt for God's name (His character) because of their inward dislike for temple ritual. NOTE: The priests did not repudiate their responsibility to the Levitical law for it was being carried out. But there was no true worship. It was a mechanical, cold process, becoming vain ritual.
- C. **"And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?"** The wicked priests challenge the charge of God. They are guilty of profaning sacred things and do not realize they are sinning at all. They are calloused to what sin is, for they have not matched it up against God's law.

III. DENUNCIATION FOR OFFERING UNCLEAN SACRIFICES (1:7-9)

- A. **"Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar"** "Bread" means animal sacrifices (Lev. 21:6, 17-10, 21-22; 22:25; Num. 28:2, 4). They are offering polluted and defiled animal sacrifices by ignoring, twisting or changing the Levitical law on sacrifices. NOTE: It is the Lord's altar, not the priests! He alone has the right to order what shall, and what shall not, be offered on His altar. The priests had no authority to change the Lord's ordinances. Their duty was to teach these regulations to the people and insist on their conscientious observance. The priests were failing to teach the meaning of the sacrifices as well as having a wrong method of offering them.
- B. **"And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee?"** They are so calloused to sin they are insensitive to it.
- C. **"In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible"** The "table" is the grate upon which the sacrifices were made and speaks of the priest's ministry and service to Jehovah. They despised serving in the temple. They were chosen by God to serve and they hated their job. NOTE: They regarded the temple service not as an undeserved

honor, but as a contemptible, miserable job. If they had realized the true dignity of their office, they would have obeyed His least command in grateful love and in holy awe would have performed every detail of their duty in strict observance of His ordinances.

- D. "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?"** The Mosaic Law specifically forbade blemished sacrifices (Lev. 22:21-22, 25; Deut. 15:21). The sacrifices are worthless as well as wicked in the sight of God. NOTE: Contempt for God's appointed service implies contempt for Him.
- E. "Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts."** This is irony. The priests offer sacrifices to God that they would not dare offer to their own Persian governor.
- F. "And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us"** This is another ironical statement. The prophet is saying, "Do you think that such unacceptable offerings God will be pleased with you? Will He regard your persons? Will He become gracious unto us because of your corruptible sacrifices?"
- G. "This hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of hosts."** The fault is laid on the priests. The people did not regard it as an evil to bring blemished sacrifices declared by the Lord as unqualified and unacceptable to Him, nor did the priests hesitate to accept such animals, so that it became quite the common practice. NOTE: The contempt of God came from those bound most to honor Him. The spirituality of the people first depends on the spirituality of the priests.

IV. DENUNCIATION FOR KINDLING "STRANGE FIRE" (1:10)

- A. "Who is there even among you that would shut the doors (for naught)?"** This is an ironic wish: "Oh, that someone would shut the doors!" The doors are a reference to the folding doors to the inner court where the sacrifices were made. God would rather that the sacrifices cease than go into mockery and violate God's method. Better to shut the doors than to have activity with mere formalism. The sacrifices were doing absolutely no good so why have them?
- B. "Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for naught"** This may mean that the sacrifices were not accomplishing their intended purpose so there was no use to kindle a fire. Or this may mean that the priests were so greedy and covetous that they demanded a price for the smallest exertion, even the kindling of a fire.
- C. "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand."** It is better to obey than to sacrifice (I Sam. 15:22). The reason the offerings are not accepted is because the offerer is not acceptable to God. A polluted offering comes from a polluted offerer.

V. DENUNCIATION FOR DEFILING JEHOVAH'S NAME BEFORE THE GENTILES (1:11-14)

- A. "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts."** This universal worship of Jehovah is not referring to the age of Israel or to the present age of the Church but to the yet future Millennial age (Ps. 103:12; Zech. 8:7). Because Jehovah will someday receive pure worship throughout the world and His name will be recognized and honored in every place, He will not really be pleased with the polluted and heartless service of Israel. God will not accept the blemished offering of His people, because He is the great God to be worshipped by incense and pure offering throughout the nations.
- B. "But ye have profaned it."** How has Israel profaned Jehovah's name among the Gentiles! According to Exodus 19:5-6, God set Israel apart for a kingdom of priests to be God's representatives to the nations. They had the responsibility to bring the knowledge of God to the Gentiles. Their knowledge of Jehovah was to be shared with the

world. NOTE: The Gentiles were formulating their concepts of Jehovah by what they saw Israel doing at the altar. The priest's manner of life was making a mockery of God, for they made a mockery of the whole Levitical system which God had designed. NOTE: Israel failed in her responsibility to disseminate truth, and this resulted in ritual without reality.

- C. "In that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible."** They hated temple service, and even their wages (fruit) was despised. They are just griping about their living conditions. They are saying the sick and old and defective animals are palmed off on them by the people, and the best parts, the fat, must be offered on the altar, while they get what is left which is worthless.
- D. "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it!"** They are sick of their sacrificial duties. What weariness to stand all day long and be ready whenever someone feels like bringing his sacrifice, to slay it, and skin it, and gut it, and cut it up - a filthy, bloody job. All the priests get from it is a few pieces of tough meat, unfit for food. NOTE: But whose fault was this? The priests brought it on themselves by their poor attitude towards the law of God. They lowered God's standards and they were suffering because of it.
- E. "And ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts"** They snorted and sniffed at it, treating it with utmost contempt (Is. 43:22-24; Micah 6:3). The temple service was below their dignity.
- F. "And ye brought that which was torn (stolen) and the lame, and the sick, thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord."** The priests were not only permitting blemished sacrifices but stolen ones as well. Why did they not stop it? Because they were motivated by greed and any sacrifices were acceptable.
- G. "But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing"** These deceivers who vow to give sacrifices unto the Lord and then give corrupt animals, they will be cursed. The whole idea in the curse is broken fellowship with God. NOTE: If a Gentile saw a promise made and was not kept by a Jew, this profaned the name of God.
- H. "For I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my Name is dreadful among the heathen (Gentiles)."** With all the revelation the Jews had of Jehovah they still profane His name. At least the Gentiles showed fear, which infers that the Gentiles had more respect for the name of Jehovah than Israel. NOTE: Absence of any awe of God was a central defect of these Jews. They treated Him, as they would not a fellow-creature, for whom they had any respect or awe or fear. Lack of fear and respect of God yielded a cold, wearisome, heartless formalism in temple ritual (Deut. 10:16-17; 20:50-59).