

RELIGION GONE TO POT MALACHI 1

Background: Ezra and Nehemiah had brought the people back from captivity. The temple and walls had been rebuilt. Under the strong influence and leadership of these two much was accomplished. But in the years following, "old habits" were revitalized. Things were not progressing very well for the Jews. They were becoming disenchanted with Jehovah. They began questioning God's love, and the merits of serving Him faithfully. Not just the people, but also the priests had fallen prey to this pessimism.

CHAPTER 1

Lord's love for Israel.

:1-2 Declared by his choosing Jacob. Gen.25:23

:3-5 Love shown by their rebuilding, but Edom would be left desolate. [See note "Edom"]
Edom overrun by Chaldeans, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Maccabees, and the Romans who drove them into the desert.

Lack of respect.

:6 People and priests rebuked for ingratitude.

Blamed Lord for failing his obligation; while it was really they who failed.

:7-14 Worthless sacrifices.

Better to shut doors and leave off such corrupt sacrifices.

PHRASES WHICH INDICATE THEIR FRAME OF MIND

"How has Thou loved us?" (:2)

Forgot all what God had done for them.

"How have we despised Thy name?" (:6)

Grown so insensitive to God's commands, deceived themselves.

Offering of blemished animals with impunity.

"The table of the Lord is defiled." (:12)

They had lost respect for the altar and its sacrifices.

"How tiresome it is." (:13)

Perfunctory rather than zealous service.

Any sacrifice sufficient (stolen, sick substituted for vowed animal, etc.), just offer it.

LESSONS FOR US TODAY:

Lord has brought out a "remnant" out of the captivity to sin.

Not because we were good, but that He was kind. Rom.5:6-8

We must never forget His great deeds of love (which continue).

A covenant: mutual agreement. Each party makes pledges. 1Co.11:25

A failure on the part of one, releases other of obligation.

We are under the New Covenant.

He has given us moral and religious obligations. Rom.6:17-18

We must faithfully and lovingly discharge our obligations.

When God is not near, it's because we have moved, not Him!

"Children of God" are the faithful (called). Rom.9:6-8ff.

Service that a master/employer/ruler would reject, is not acceptable to God. Eph.6:5-6, Col.3:23

Shoddy service is not acceptable to anyone, especially the Lord?

Perfunctory service shows a lack of faith. "I came to services, isn't that enough?"

"Tiresome" service is useless. Might as well stay at home.

"Do I have to?"

RELIGION CAN 'GO TO POT' SIMPLY BY NEGLECTING IT!

And the fault lies within the individual.

(However, it can be contagious, spreading to others through example and influence.)

The consequences are the result of one's own failure, not God's. He remains faithful. 2Ti.2:19

POOR LEADERS, BAD EXAMPLES MALACHI 2

The priests are rebuked for their poor performance which had an impact upon the whole of God's people. They were the ones who were to "show the way" by teaching and example.

THE TEXT

- :1-4 A promised curse on the priests unless they respond.
- :5-7 The ideal priest as originally intended.
 - Priests were to be chosen by God. Num.3:12
 - Priests were to stand in reverence before God.
- :8-9 The apostate priests who were a disgrace.
- :10-16 The lack of teaching and practice by priests had opened the door for the people to disregard the covenant through divorce/mixed marriages.
(Ezra had addressed the problem earlier. Ezr.10)

THE PROBLEM: PRIESTS WERE POOR INSTRUCTORS/BAD EXAMPLES

- Did not give true instruction. :7-9
 - Had not sought instruction and wisdom. Pro.1:7
- Gave corrupt instruction. (Worse than none at all!)
- Showed partiality (favoritism) in instruction/judgments. Pro.24:23, 28:21
 - Able to be influenced by person, money, etc.

THE OUTGROWTH OF PROBLEM

- People misguided, misinformed. Profaned the covenant.
- People were not rebuked for violating covenant (divorce).
- They became disenchanted with Jehovah.

LESSONS WE LEARN

- Poor leaders are a bane to the church.
 - Poor performance by preachers:
 - who will not study diligently, "throwing out something to fill the time."
 - who will not teach "whole counsel". Act.20:27, 1Ti.4:1ff
 - who "tickle ears". 2Ti.4:2-4
 - who set a poor example. 1Ti.4:12, Phi.3:17-18
 - Poor performance by elders, who don't take care of church.
 - who let false teachings go unchallenged. Tit.1:9-11
 - who don't watch out for straying members. Acts 20:28-30
 - who let wolves tear up the flock.
 - who set a bad example in their daily lives. 1Pe.5:3
- Churches can be destroyed for a lack of knowledge. Hos.4:6
- Christianity can be undermined by poor examples.
 - Poor examples by leaders give momentum to others' misconduct.
 - But members who do evil under such circumstances are none-the-less accountable.
- God hates covenant breakers.
 - To put away wife (one of His people) for another who is not, shows disrespect for two covenants: One with God, one with wife. Such is a sure way to destroy one's relationship with God.
- God's blessing and favors are for the righteous. 1Pe.3:12

THE REMEDY: "take heed" :16

WHERE IS THE GOD OF JUSTICE?
MALACHI 3

Mal.2:17-3:12

Text: questions are asked, and then answered.

QUESTION #1 "WHERE IS THE GOD OF JUSTICE?" 2:17b

Jews complained against God:

The wicked (heathen) were not being punished by God.

They, His people, were not the recipients of His blessings.

God answers:

God declares that He will send a messenger to clear the way.

(No doubt John the Baptist.) Isa.40:3, Mat.11:10, Joh.1:6

Lord will come to His temple.

Jesus the Messiah, who came to save His people.

He will sit (as judge) removing all impure (especially priests).

He will witness against the unrighteous.

Sins are specified:

Sorcerers. (During captivity they began the practice.

Continued until N.T. times. Act.13:6

Adulterers (previously had put away wives, cf. with Mat.19:1ff.)

False swearers. (Cf. Mat.23:16ff)

Oppressors of wage earners. Mat.23:23. (cf. Jam.5:4)

Abused widows and orphans. Mat.23:14

Turn aside alien (traveler).

Do not fear (or revere) God.

The Lord does not change. Right and wrong are never altered by God.

The wicked will be punished (heathen and God's people!).

God does not tempt mankind. Jam.1:13

Underlying thought: Are you Jews ready for justice to be meted out?

Unfaithfulness on part of Jews has been from days of old.

Solution: Return to Me and I will return to you!

QUESTION #2: "HOW [WHEREIN] SHALL WE RETURN?" 3:7b

I.e., "What wrong have we done that needs to be corrected?"

God answers: "You have robbed Me!"

QUESTION #3: "HOW HAVE WE ROBBED THEE?" 3:8b

Pharisaical spirit prevailed. (1:6)

God answers: Robbed Me in tithes and offerings. (widespread).

Left off part, offered inferior sacrifices.

If they would only offer proper sacrifices, God would bless abundantly;

And He would prevent nations and circumstances from hurting them.

LESSONS WE LEARN:

Fear of God is "beginning of knowledge". (Get smart!) Pro.1:7 (Ecc.12:13)

To have God near, must draw near to Him. Jam.4:4-8

No fellowship with Him when walk in darkness. 1Jo.1:5-6

When demanding justice, remember it falls on all alike!

Must be willing and able to own up to (confess) sins. 1Jo.1:8-10

To get back into God's good graces, must repent. Jam.4:9-10

Be miserable and mourn. (As Peter wept.)

Humble self, so God can exalt you. Jam.4:10 (As Simon the sorcerer did. Act.8:21-24)

God never changes, His promises are firm. Jam.1:17

His Word abides forever: it never changes.

Jesus is the same always. Heb.13:8

When God withdraws His blessings and favor—it is because we have wandered from Him!

NOTICE JUDGMENT SCENE: Mat.25:41-46. SOBERING WORDS!

God has spoken of His displeasure with the priests':
 lack of conviction and enthusiasm
 lack of proper sacrifices
 lack of proper regard for the Law.
 lack of proper regard for the separation from other nations/wives.
 God has spoken out against the people who ask "Where is the God of Justice?"

NOW GOD SPEAKS OUT AGAINST THE ARROGANT. Mal.3:13-18

The arrogant speak:
 Say it's "vain" to serve God (no reward).
 Charge God with not considering their mourning (no favors).
 Conclude that it pays to be arrogant (against God), and others successfully test Him without punishment.
 They forgot that only good comes from God. Jam.1:17
 The God-revering remnant speak (by contrast):
 What they said is not recorded, but God approves.
 God speaks (:17-18): He will make it evident that it pays to serve him. Cf. Psa.58:11

A BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

National records were kept. 1Ki.11:41, Ezr.4:15, 6:1
 References to God's records: Pas.56:8, 69:28, Phi.4:3 "book of life", Rev.20:12
 Book of remembrance: God knows those who are His. (2Ti.2:19)
 Book is ever open before the Lord: He remembers, knows!

A DAY IS COMING. Mal.4:1-6

Fearful day for wicked. Justice meted out.
 Opportunity to be healed for those who feared God.
 John (in spirit of Elijah) came to prepare people.
 What day?
 God visited day of judgment of individuals and nations at various times.
 God was to visit Jerusalem with judgment. AD 70.
 "Smite land with curse" = extermination of the nation.
 Also God will judge at the final judgment. 2Th.1:6-10

LESSONS WE LEARN

We show our own lack of remembrance and faith when we complain that it "doesn't pay to serve the Lord", when He doesn't do what we ask.
 We may "do everything right" but still have trouble in life.
 Remember: God helps us over hurdles, not remove them.
 It's possible that our troubles are of our own doing, not a lack of God's care
 We shouldn't concern ourselves with those who do evil and seem to get away with it.
 There is a "Book of Remembrance" – what we have done. Nothing hidden. Heb.4:12-13
 Give account. Rom.14:12
 It is not the Lord's will to condemn anyone.
 John sent to turn hearts of people." Luk.1:17
 Jesus "came not to judge... but to save" Joh.3:17
 "How often I wanted to gather your children together" Mat.23:37
 "Not willing that any should perish, but all come to repentance" 2Pe.3:9
 God doesn't get any perverse enjoyment in condemning men, but justice demands it.
 All those who find "grace and truth" in Jesus are saved from condemnation.
 There is a book of life...and our name needs (must) be in it. Phi.4:3, Rev.21:27, Luk.10:20

your name can be in it: Jesus makes it possible . . .you make it a reality