

Series: Malachi: Rediscovering God's Unchanging Love

Sermon: When Worship Becomes Worthless

Passage: Malachi 1:6-2:9



Study Resources:

	Bible Project Overview Video		Free commentary with notes on the background, context, etc.
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Big Idea: Before God ever accepts your *ACTS* of worship, he inspects your *HEART* in worship.

- 1st takeaway: Worship is a way to give God our best, not our leftovers.
- 2nd takeaway: Empty, apathetic worship offends God.
- 3rd takeaway: Our priest, Jesus, transforms our hearts as we worship.

Read the Passage

Read this study's text out loud. Malachi was meant to be read aloud in front of a group of people. By reading it aloud, we can hear the rhythm and flow of the prophecy.

Head

1. God's evidence that worship had become meaningless is rooted in their offerings. Why is presenting "blind," "lame," or "sick" animals not meeting God's expectations (Malachi 1:8). Why did the law specifically prohibit sacrificing defective animals? What was the *spirit* of the law? Refresh yourself by revisiting what the Law of Moses stated: Lev. 21:6; Lev. 27:11-12; Deut. 15:21.
2. The priests called the Lord's table "contemptible" and their duties a "nuisance" or "tiresome" (Malachi 1:12-13). They had become unfaithful priests, which Malachi contrasts with the faithful model, the Levites. Read about the responsibilities God gave to the tribe of Levi: Num. 3:5-10; Deut. 10:8-9; 33:8-11, 2 Chron. 29:11-12. How did the priests in Malachi's day demonstrate a lackadaisical, apathetic attitude that turned a sacred duty into a tedious burden?
3. In 2:2 God speaks of curses. Read Deut. 28:15–68 to refresh your memory and identify how Malachi is hyperlinking the covenant curses outlined in the Law of Moses. Discuss how the blessings and curses would continually warn God's people throughout their history and explain what the consequences will be for disobedience.

Heart

4. The people ask, "*How have we despised Your name?*" The sermon defined this as "blind spot." What makes spiritual blind spots so dangerous, and what practical steps can we take to invite God to expose our own? (Read Psalm 139:23-24).
5. Read 2 Chr 28:24 that talks of idolatrous King Ahaz of Judah who "shut the doors of the LORD's temple and set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem." Malachi may be making an allusion to this historical event, the point being that what the priests of Judah were doing was no better than Ahaz's idolatry. The implication for us as disciples is quite challenging: idolatry and apathy both displease the Lord. In what ways can you be tempted or pulled toward either idolatry or apathy? What are some examples?
6. One takeaway was, "Worship is a way to give God our best, not our leftovers." In what specific areas of your life (time, energy, focus, finances, etc.) are you most tempted to give God "leftovers" rather than "first fruits"?
7. Read Hebrews 7:26-27. What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is your priest who offers you his forgiveness, grace, and healing, and that you don't stand under God's curses or condemnation for when you become apathetic in worship?

Hands

8. The Big Idea: "Before God ever accepts your acts of worship, he inspects your heart in worship." Over the next week, what is one action step you can take to bring more alignment and honesty toward your outward acts of worship and the inward heart posture before the Lord? Be specific. How can you be more mindful of what's happening in your heart? How can you become aware of when you are just "going through the motions" and settling for the bare minimum as a worshipper before the Lord? (Read Rom. 12:1-2). Invite the Lord into this journey!