

“Faithful God” (Malachi 1:6–2:9)

For the week of April 30, 2017

Background/Context for Malachi 1:6-2:9

In this second disputation Malachi flips the tables on the complaint treated in the first. The question was not God's love for Israel but Israel's love for God. Malachi reveals that all the people were guilty of dishonoring God. The focus, however, is on Israel's priests because they had the responsibility to guard the sanctuary from defilement and to inspect all sacrifices and remove blind, lame, or sick animals. The priests were disgracing God's name before the people. The priests showed no respect for God. When Malachi confronted them, the priests arrogantly asked, “How have we ever shown contempt for your name?” (1:6), so He told them.

1. God deserves our best (Malachi 1:6). God uses the examples of a father and a master (or in our context: a boss). Describe how a father deserves respect.

How does a master (a boss) deserve respect?

Describe how respect and awe in God is realized in your life.

God deserves our best in every aspect of our lives. Grade yourself from 1 (not at all) to 5 (100%) in the following categories:

- I give God my best thoughts: 1 2 3 4 5
- I give God my best energies: 1 2 3 4 5
- I give God the best parts of my day: 1 2 3 4 5
- I give God my most sincere affection: 1 2 3 4 5
- I give God my most heartfelt worship: 1 2 3 4 5
- I give God my most meaningful service: 1 2 3 4 5
- I give God my most delightful obedience: 1 2 3 4 5

2. We despise Him with anything else (Malachi 1:7-14). Priests were the spiritual leaders of the day, which we have in the form of elders, pastors, and ministry leaders. God's criticism was that the leaders were influencing the people to despise Him.

How were they despising Him (v. 8)?

There is visible idolatry and idolatry of the heart. The people in this passage were exemplifying idolatry of the heart. Give examples of each in today's world.

God demands 'worship in truth' as mentioned in 1:10. Which is worse – to offer no worship or to offer false worship (read Isaiah 1:14-17; Amos 5:21-24)?

Although we are to give our best, our flesh can view this as a burden. In verse 13 the priests counted giving God their best "a weariness." In other words, we can appear outwardly to give our best but our inward attitude is the opposite. Here are some examples:

- "When we come to church with a bad attitude because we wish we were somewhere else"
- "When we serve because we feel guilty if we don't"
- "When we serve in order to brag to others"
- "When we read our Bibles and pray so we can tell others that we did our quiet time"

Are you guilty of any of the previous statements? If so, what action will you take today?

Comment on the following statement: "God deserves our best; we despise Him with anything else."

3. God gave His best for us (Malachi 2:1-9).

How did the priests react to the news that they had despised the Lord's name?

The Lord pronounces a curse on the priests (2:1-9). Verse 7 identifies the key responsibilities of the priests. They include:

"Guard knowledge" – Why is this important? How do you expect pastors today to guard knowledge? What is your responsibility to guard knowledge?

"People seek instruction from the priests" – How do people today seek instruction from pastors?

What were the details of the rebuke of the priests (how was God going to rebuke them)?

Reread 2:1-2. In this passage is one of the most beautiful words of hope. It is the word "if." What is the significance of the word "if?" What does this say about God?

God chastises the people of Israel and the priests. How does God chastise us today? What is the ideal response to God's reprimand (read Daniel 9:3-19)?

Pray

Pray to offer God your best in every aspect of your life. God deserves our best because He gave His best for us. Pray for our pastors to guard knowledge and give biblical instruction to others. Pray to be obedient to God and repent when not.