

## Offending God With Religion

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Rev. Lex DeLong / General

Major Posts from Minor Prophets: Be an Influencer / Malachi 1:1–2:9

God calls his people to true and genuine worship, to loyalty both to Himself and each other, and to active faith in His active work in this world and for His people, in the present and in the future. Join us in person or follow along online live at 10:30, [HERE!](#)

### Notes

10/01 Malachi 1:1-2:9 "Offending God With Religion," Subtitle: Giving trash and expecting a banquet, Scripture: Gal. 6:7-9

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The message of Zephaniah was clear. Look away from your sin and discouragement and turn your gaze to the Lord and the certain blessing He has promised in a time when all men will worship the true God.

When evil has done its worst, the Lord remains king, plans good, and will be seen as king by all the nations.

His message was one of hope in God, their Savior. It was a message of vision that helped them look away from their adversity and look forward to a time of hope and blessing.

You would think that 70 years of captivity for rebellion against God and doing things man's way instead of God's way, such an inspirational message would turn even the most hardened hearts back to the Lord. Sadly, people want what people want.

Jesus tells the priests of His day in Matthew 23:35, "35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom

you murdered between the temple and the altar." The evil priests in the time of Jesus were profaning and misusing the Jewish religion and God's people by their corrupted religious practices the same way the priests and people in Zechariah's day were doing.

As a direct rebellion against the Lord, they took the Lord's prophet, who cried out for Israel's repentance after the return to their homeland in Jerusalem, brought him into the courtyard of the temple, between the altar of sacrifice and the door that led into the Holy place of the temple, and murdered him in defiance of worshiping God, God's way. They defiantly wanted to "do worship" their own way.

Nehemiah was allowed to return to Jerusalem to help rebuild its walls and city, during the reign of Persia. In the book of Nehemiah 13:23-27, he returns and describes a similar state of corrupted religion as is mentioned here in Malachi.

Malachi prophesied some 70-90 years after Zechariah.

The Lord, who initiated the covenant, and on whose dependability it was established, is the central figure and chief spokesman. Out of a total of fifty-five verses, forty-seven record in the first person the address of the Lord to Israel (the exceptions being 1:1; 2:11-15, 17; 3:16). This use of the first person presents a vivid encounter between God and the people, unsurpassed in the prophetic books.

*Joyce G. Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 28, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 231.*

Both priests and people were apathetic, bored with worship (1:13) and mean in their giving (3:8). In short, they despised the Lord (1:6), cheated him of vows and robbed him of dues (1:14; 3:8). Having failed to love God, they failed also to love their neighbour. A broken relationship with God led on to broken relationships in human society, intermarriage and divorce

being the examples of unfaithfulness quoted by Malachi.

*Joyce G. Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 28, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 231.*

Lest the concept of God as Father should be misused, Malachi sets over against it God's rights as Master and King (1:6, 14). The composite picture guards against over-familiarity on the one hand and a too distant subjection on the other. The note of judgment is intended to warn each individual so that none based hopes of salvation on a false confidence, but was prepared for the testing fires which even the faithful had to expect (3:3). The God of justice (2:17) is about to do a new thing. His intervention will in some way bring the nations to worship him (1:11), he will come to his temple (3:1), appropriately heralded by a forerunner, and there will perform his twofold task, to refine and to judge (3:2–5).

*Joyce G. Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 28, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 232.*

[God's] His desire is to bless his sons with all good things (3:10–12). He wants them to find true satisfaction and be like the ideal priest portrayed in 2:5–7, accepting daily his gifts of life and peace, responding with awe to the privilege of belonging to him, and in his turn passing on to others the good things he enjoys. A living relationship with the Lord is utterly essential if Israel's covenant destiny is to be fulfilled.

*Joyce G. Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 28, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 231.*

Man's creation of religions that part from God's established means of relationship with Him, move humanity further and further from the blessings of that relationship. The Bible is not about creating a religion for mankind, so that he can somehow rise to the presence and acceptance of God, without conforming to the righteousness and holiness of God. The Bible is meant to present God's means by which there is true relationship with Him, in His righteousness and holiness. It communicates the blessing that God has in store for those who are willing to adopt, surrender to, embrace, or inculcate into their daily lives, God's defined means of access

to that acceptable relationship.

The warning is here. You can only come to God, God's way. Any deviation from God's way, at best, waters down the blessing that God intends to give you in your relationship with Him. I say at best, because deviation from God's way might be the very thing that can prevent a person from even experiencing an acceptable relationship with God at all.

Come with me to Malachi so we might see how even we might be "Offending God With Religion" even in our present time. How we might be giving trash to God and expecting Him to give us a banquet of blessing in return.

## God frustrates the efforts of those who rebel against Him (Malachi 1:1-5)

How have you loved us (Malachi 1:2)? Look to the example of how God frustrates others who rebel against Him. Consider what He wants you to learn from them.

Sometimes it is easier to see God's correction in others than it is to see it in yourself.

## God despises the offering of worship that is half-hearted and altered from what He clearly asks for (Malachi 1:6-14)

How have we despised Your name (Malachi 1:6)? Look to the reality of how God sees offerings of worship that are only part of what God asks for, or altered from what He requires.

Half-hearted worship is as worthless to God as no worship (Malachi 1:10). Shut the gates or submit to God and change.

God will have it no other way than purity and full surrender (Malachi 1:11).

Do you see biblical worship as old-fashioned, out of date, or tiresome (Malachi 1:12-13)? Have you forgotten who God is (Malachi 1:14)?

Sometimes it is easier to look for that which makes us feel good at the present time, than it is to look for what pleases God, as our King.

## God blesses those who preserve knowledge, who revere the Lord and stand in awe of Him, and who help turn others back to Him (Malachi 2:1-9)

Anything less brings God's rebuke (Malachi 2:1-3)

God's rebuke is to wake you up out of complacency (Malachi 2:4)

Reverence of God reaps reward (Malachi 2:5-6)

Partial worship pushes you and others apart, from each other and from God (Malachi 2:7-9)

We need to preserve God's knowledge, revere the Lord and stand in awe of Him, and help others to turn to Him.

Malachi's remarkable ethical thrust has lost none of its cutting edge through the passing of time. His teaching, both negative and positive, strikes at the heart of nominal, easygoing Christianity as it did at that of Judaism. Can it be that the book is disparaged because 'With man as the filter through which the word must pass, or, if you like, arbiter of the meaning of the word, it is inevitable that he will censor out what he does not wish to hear and audit only what he is predisposed to hear'?<sup>10</sup>

10 R. W. Funk, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 28, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 233.

Our God herein calls his people to genuine worship, to fidelity both to himself and one another, and to expectant faith in what he is doing and will do in this world and for his people.

Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, vol. 21A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), 204.

God's desire is to bless his sons with all good things (3:10–12). He wants them to find true satisfaction and be like the ideal priest portrayed in 2:5–7, accepting daily his gifts of life and peace, responding with awe to the privilege of belonging to him, and in his turn passing on to others the good things he enjoys. A living relationship with the Lord is utterly essential if the church, this church, is to fulfil its covenant destiny.

How much of your life do you offer to God? God calls you to genuine worship, to fidelity both to Himself and to one another. God calls you to faith in what He is presently doing and what He will do in this world and for His people.

What do you offer to God, how much of yourself do you offer to God, and what is the quality of what you offer to God?

Maybe that which makes us feel so distant from God is really due to our choosing to be distant from Him.

I dare you to give your all to God and not see and experience all the blessing He has reserved and is waiting to be given to you.

God calls his people to true and genuine worship, to loyalty both to Himself

and each other, and to active faith in His active work in this world and for His people, in the present and in the future.