

VIII. Covenant Hypocrisy

21-Jan-07 Malachi 1:6-14

Theme: God requires His people to worship Him as He commands; anything less is hypocritical, empty, vain religion.

Key Verses: Malachi 1:11 ¹¹“For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations,” says the LORD of hosts.

Review

Last week we began our study of Malachi with an introduction to the book. The overall theme of Malachi is “refining and reforming the covenant people.” Malachi is a post-exilic prophet during the time period of the governor Nehemiah. He is the last of the Old Testament writing prophets and the final voice of God before the coming of Jesus Christ in the New Testament age.

Malachi addresses the spiritual malaise that has overtaken the people of God during the Restoration period. Although they have been permanently cured of the sin of idolatry by the traumatic experience of the Babylonian exile, other sins have crept into Israel, most notably self-righteousness and hypocrisy. The people of Judah seem to expect that God is required to bless them because of His covenant, regardless of whether or not they live according to their covenant obligations.

Although they appear religious on the outside, their worship is corrupt and utterly unacceptable to God. The reason that the people have not received God’s blessing is not due to any breach of covenant by God; rather it is their sin against God’s covenant. Malachi describes several sins of Judah: failure to worship properly, failure to tithe, failure to give God respect, and mixed marriages. Their physical infidelity is a picture of their infidelity to their spiritual husband, the LORD God. True they are no longer idolaters, but they have become spiritual hypocrites.

Malachi begins his charge against Israel by showing how God has loved them despite their feeling that God has not loved them. God’s covenant love for Israel is demonstrated in His saving election of that undeserving nation. The picture of God’s redeeming love goes all the way back to the patriarchs Jacob and Esau. For no other reason than His holy will and good pleasure, God elected Jacob and rejected Esau; He loved Israel and hated Edom. The election of Israel is all the proof needed to demonstrate God’s covenant love toward His people. This doctrine of election and reprobation is a hard one to understand, but ultimately it leads to the glorification of our holy, just, and merciful God.

Introduction

Because God loves His people, He has called them to worship Him. This morning, as we study the second section of Malachi (1:6-14), we will see that the worship of Judah has become sloppy, irreverent, and hypocritical. In particular, Malachi condemns the priesthood, the spiritual leaders of Judah, for their defiled worship and contempt for the privilege of drawing close to the living God. Because of their casual attitude and unacceptable sacrifices, God threatens to shut down the temple worship in Jerusalem and open up universal worship among the Gentile nations. In this warning, Malachi is pre-figuring the New Testament age when the temple worship is fulfilled in Christ and the worship of the LORD is spread throughout the nations of the world.

Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Malachi

The passage in front of us is organized in a seven-part chiasm. Each part of the chiasm is spoken by God and ends with this phrase, “Says the LORD of hosts.” Dorsey outlines the passage as follows:

- a. **As Israel's father and lord**, Yahweh is not honored or feared (1:6a)
- b. **Priests have offered Yahweh polluted food**, and Yahweh's table is despised (1:6b-8)
 - c. **Yahweh will not accept offerings from your hands** (1:9)
 - d. CENTER: **Close the temple!** (1:10a)
 - c'. **Yahweh will not accept offerings from your hands**; but his name will be great among the nations (1:10b-11)
- b'. **Priests have offered Yahweh unacceptable sacrifices**, so that Yahweh's table is polluted and his food despised (1:12-13)
- a'. **As Israel's king and lord**, Yahweh has been dishonored by Israel's sacrifices; but his name will be feared among the nations (1:14)

As you can see from the outline, the focal point of the passage is God’s rejection of the temple worship (d). Working outward from the center, the reason that God will not accept their offerings (c-c’) is because their sacrifices are polluted (b-b’). Ultimately, the priests are showing irreverence and disrespect to God by their vain and empty worship (a-a’). God requires His people to worship Him as He commands; anything less is hypocritical, empty, vain religion.

Exposition

A. Irreverent Worshipers (1:6a)

⁶“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?” says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name (Malachi 1:6a).

Like many of the prophets, Malachi begins his message of condemnation against sin with a statement that his listeners are in agreement with. In this case, he invokes the Fifth Commandment: “Honor your father and your mother” (Ex. 15:12a). The Fifth Commandment teaches respect not only for parents, but for all those in positions of authority, whether they are teachers, leaders, employers, etc. Ultimately, it requires respect for God, who is above all and over all things.

The priests and the Levites without doubt had no problem applying the Fifth Commandment to themselves. As leaders in positions of authority, they certainly would have expected respect from the populace of Judah. However, God is calling out their hypocrisy by revealing that they do not in turn show a commensurate level of respect for the LORD.

After all, God was their Father and Israel was His son (Ex. 4:22; Hos. 11:1). Furthermore, He was their Master and covenant LORD. They owed Him reverence because of who He is and what He had done for them. Malachi has already laid the groundwork for their obedience – the covenant love of God which had chosen them and redeemed them. And yet the honor of a son for the Father was missing from the people of God.

Not only do they show disrespect, but they “despise the name of the LORD.” This is a violation of the Third Commandment (Ex. 20:7), which demands that we honor the name of God and do not treat it lightly or take it in vain. Names in the Old Testament were much more than a label; they signified qualities and attributes of that person. Thus, to despise the name of God is to despise God Himself.

Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Malachi

The priests and the Levites had not been given any land after the Exodus; instead, their inheritance and portion forever was the LORD Himself (Dt. 18:1-2). What a special privilege and blessing it was for the Levites to serve God and be close to Him in a special way. And yet Malachi says they despise the LORD; they have no respect for their privilege; they don't value their inheritance; they treat God's covenant love with contempt.

We demonstrate honor and reverence to God both by what we say and what we do. Malachi is going to ably demonstrate that the self-righteous, hypocritical priests are guilty on both accounts. They think so lightly of God that they offer Him inferior sacrifices and then expect Him to be grateful that they are showing Him any attention at all. As usual, the heart of the problem is a problem of the heart. Their relationship with God is broken, and yet they believe it is all right, leading them to dishonor, disrespect, and despise the LORD of hosts, Almighty God.

B. Defiled Food (1:6b-8)

⁶“Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’ ⁷You offer defiled food on My altar, but say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The table of the LORD is contemptible.’ ⁸And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?” (Malachi 1:6b-8a).

In verse 2, Malachi gave the first of seven disputes raised by God's people: “How have You loved us?” Here at the end of verse 6 we have the second disputation. God has declared that they despise His name, and they disagree: “How have we despised Your name? How have we defiled You?” As we go through Malachi, we will see this formula a lot. It takes a lot of arrogance and self-righteousness to continually question God in this fashion. In each and every case, God delivers a devastating condemnation of their heart attitudes and actions.

In this case, God declares that their disrespect for His name is demonstrated by the contemptible way they offer defiled food on His altar or table (*cp.* Ez. 41:22; 44:16). This is a central issue of the utmost importance, because the heart of Old Testament worship was sacrifice. In order to approach God, in order to have sins forgiven, in order to be reconciled with the LORD, an acceptable sacrifice had to be made.

God made His will very clear on what was considered an acceptable sacrifice. Of paramount importance was the quality of the animal being offered. It had to be physically perfect, without blemish or defect (Ex. 12:5; Lev. 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6). In fact, the Mosaic Law specifies at length that a sacrificial animal was unacceptable if it was lame, blind, broken, or maimed; if it had an ulcer, eczema, scabs, or a malformed limb; if it was bruised, crushed, torn, or cut; or if it had any other serious defect (Lev. 22:18-25; Dt. 15:21).

Why all this emphasis on physical perfection of the animal? There are at least three reasons. First, a sacrifice must be costly. It is hardly a “sacrifice” if it costs nothing. King David expressed this sentiment when he offered to buy the oxen of Araunah rather than receive them as a gift:

²⁴Then the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver (2 Samuel 24:14).

Sickly, diseased animals hardly have any value. They cost the worshipper next to nothing to sacrifice to God. In fact, it benefits the owner to get the sick animal out of his flock before it can

Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Malachi

infect others. On the other hand, healthy animals in the prime of their life have great value to the owner. Offering these animals to God actually constitutes a sacrifice for the worshipper. A sacrifice of no value was no sacrifice at all.

Secondly, the essence of the Old Testament sacrificial system was one of substitution. The worshipper who came before the LORD offered up the sacrificial animal in the place of himself. This was further symbolized by the laying on of hands (Lev. 1:4; 3:2; 4:4). In this act, the worshipper was identifying with the animal and symbolically transferring his sins to the sacrifice. Since the sacrificial animal was symbolically taking upon itself the sins of the worshipper, the animal itself needed to be pure and spotless. A deformed, imperfect animal was not an appropriate vessel to be a symbolic sin-bearer.

Most importantly, the sacrificial animal needed to be pure and spotless because it prefigured the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Like the sacrificial animal, Jesus Christ is our substitute, offered up in our place as the perfect sin-bearer, paying the penalty due our sin and satisfying the demands of God's righteous law. The physical purity of the sacrificial animal represents the moral and spiritual purity of the once and for all sacrifice – Jesus Christ.

¹⁸...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Thus, when the priests of Malachi's day were offering up the lame, sick, and blind, they were openly showing their contempt for God's law and righteous demands. They were offering up animals that cost them nothing, did not address their sin problem, and ultimately dishonored and despised the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. No wonder that God found their sacrifices unacceptable!

“Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” says the LORD of hosts (Malachi 1:8b).

To illustrate how unacceptable their sacrifices were, God ironically challenges them to offer the same sickly, blind, and lame animals to their human governor. Would the governor be satisfied with these gifts? Of course not! How much more so is God offended by their contemptible worship. Why would they even begin to believe that God would view such paltry efforts as acceptable?

C. Unacceptable Worship (1:9)

⁹“But now entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, will He accept you favorably?” says the LORD of hosts (Malachi 1:9).

The irony continues in God's next statement. The people of God were complaining that God was not blessing them (3:14-15). Perhaps all they needed to do to secure God's favor was to ask Him to be gracious to them. After all, why wouldn't God look favorably upon them after offering such “magnificent” sacrifices?

Once again, the heart attitude is exposed. The priests expected God to be satisfied with less than their best. In their minds, just a token amount of lip-service on their part obligated God to bless them. Rather than approaching worship as a sacrifice, Jordan points out that the priests were approaching worship as a bribe. This is ultimately a pagan view of worship – that God can be bought off by our gifts or our works. They were trying to buy God's favor by bringing Him gifts, but how miserly and miserable their gifts were! Those who believe in a works-

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righteousness are attempting the same thing – to appease God’s righteous wrath by the merit of their own good deeds. But “all our righteousness is like filthy rags” (Is. 64:6); in God’s sight we are no better than a diseased, malformed animal. And just like these worthless sacrifices, God will not accept us on the basis of our works.

There is a warning in this passage for us today. Although we no longer offer animal sacrifices, we still can offend God by a callous and shallow approach to worship. How do we offer unacceptable worship? What is your attitude towards worship on the Lord’s Day? Are you eager to worship, or do you wish you could just sleep in? Do you offer Him less than your very best, each and every Sunday? Benton points out that “God’s people who would never dare to be late for work if they could possibly help it are totally unconcerned about being punctual for the meetings of God’s church.” Do you rob God of time by coming late to Sunday school, or morning and evening worship? Do you rob God by not paying the full tithe? Do you expect God to appreciate your church attendance? Do you think that God is pleased with your day-dreaming, nodding off, and clock-watching? Do you presume that God has to bless you because you manage to show up most Sundays? Do you offer God unacceptable worship?

D. Shut the Doors! (1:10a)

¹⁰“Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, so that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you,” says the LORD of hosts (Malachi 1:10a).

Perhaps you’ve heard the phrase, “Desperate times call for desperate measures.” Malachi offers up a desperate measure in verse 10 – a call to shut down the temple worship. As terrible a thing as it might be to contemplate the cessation of the temple worship, God is declaring that this scenario would be an improvement over the current situation of defiled and despicable worship.

God takes no pleasure in their worthless and unacceptable worship. The smell of the burnt sacrifice is pictured as rising up to heaven as a sweet aroma to the LORD (Ex. 29:18; Lev. 1:9; Ps. 66:15; Phil. 4:18). God takes pleasure in the acceptable sacrifices of His people, but He takes no pleasure in what is going on in Malachi’s day. God said the same thing to pre-exilic Israel through the prophet Amos:

²¹I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. ²²Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings (Amos 5:21-22).

God did not accept the vain and worthless worship in Amos’ day, and eventually He shut the doors of the temple by destroying Jerusalem and dragging the people away into captivity. In Malachi’s day, the temple has been rebuilt, but the people still haven’t seemed to learn the lesson. God is jealous for the whole-hearted worship of His people. He is looking for zealous worshippers; otherwise He will tear down the temple again. T. V. Moore puts it this way:

The meaning is, "Where is there among you some Phinehas, who will rise in holy indignation and shut the doors of my house against such desecration, and prevent this smoking of useless and polluting sacrifices upon my altar?" The wish that the doors of the temple should be closed conveys an intimation that if no one is found to shut them God will do it Himself; or rather will forsake that temple, and leave it an altar without a promise, and a shrine without a divinity.

E. Acceptable Worship (1:10b-11)

1. Worldwide Worship (1:10b-11)

¹⁰“Nor will I accept an offering from your hands. ¹¹For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations,” says the LORD of hosts (Malachi 1:10b-11).

In contrast to the unacceptable worship foisted upon God by the hypocritical priests in Jerusalem, Malachi now describes a future state in which pure and undefiled worship will be offered to the LORD of hosts. Surprisingly, this acceptable worship is not tied to one particular place – the temple – or to one particular nation – Israel. Instead, throughout the world, “from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,” Gentiles will worship God according to His desire.

The concept of the nations worshipping God was not a new one. Prophets such as Isaiah and Micah had prophesied the ingathering of the nations (*cp.* Is.2:2-4; 11:10; 42:6; 49:6; 55:3-5; 66:18-20; Mi. 4:1-3). These earlier prophets always described the conversion of the nations in terms of temple worship in Jerusalem. However, Malachi foresees a time when the ingathering of the Gentile nations into the people of God will not be dependent upon centralized temple worship and sacrifice. Instead, acceptable worship will be offered throughout the world. In other words, Malachi is talking about the contemporary Church.

God does not accept any kind of worship. Malachi is not suggesting that any sincere worship by any worshipper is acceptable. What makes the worship of these Gentiles acceptable? It is offered in the name of the LORD. Notice the contrast between the way the name of the LORD is respected by the Gentiles, versus the way it was despised by the priests of Jerusalem (1:6). God only accepts worship that honors and respects His name, that honors and respects Him.

The name of acceptable worship today is the name of Jesus Christ. God has given Jesus the name above every other name (Phil 2:9). The name of Jesus is the only name by which anyone may be saved (Acts 4:12). The worship of Buddhists, and Hindus, and Muslims is not acceptable, because they reject the Savior. Unless our worship is offered in the name of Jesus Christ, it is not acceptable either.

2. Grain Offering (Lev. 2:1-16)

Malachi describes worship by the use of a particular Hebrew word (*minachāh*) that is translated in verses 10&11 as “offering.” This Hebrew word can be used to describe any gift or offering (as opposed to a bribe), but it is particularly used of the cereal or grain offering described in Leviticus 2. Since *minachāh* is an important concept in Malachi (*cp.* 2:12, 13; 3:3, 4), it is worthwhile to spend a few minutes to understand the meaning of the grain offering.

The law of the grain offering is found in Leviticus 2. Jordan points out that the first offering in worship is the burnt offering (Lev. 1). The grain offering is offered in conjunction with the burnt offering (Num. 15:2-10; 28:12-13). Symbolically, the burnt offering represents the entire individual, who is sacrificed or given to God to become acceptable in God’s sight. The aroma rises up to heaven and pleases God. Once the entire burnt offering has been received and made the worshipper acceptable, then the grain offering is given. Because the grain offering is obtained through work (human effort to grow the grain, refine it, and bake it into an acceptable loaf), it symbolizes the efforts or works of man. The grain offering is given as a gift, not as a bribe.

Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Malachi

Notice that the works of man do not make him acceptable in the sight of God; it is only through an acceptable blood sacrifice for sin – a substitute – that man can approach God. This was the mistake of Cain. He offered the works of his hands – the produce of the field – as his sacrifice to God. But Abel offered a better sacrifice – a blood sacrifice that dealt with his sin and made him acceptable before God (Gen. 4:3-4).

Each of the elements of the grain offering has symbolic significance. The first item is “fine flour” (Lev. 2:1, 2, 4, etc.). Because the wheat is grown and then refined into the best flour, it represents the best of your works. Lesser grains such as barley are not to be used in the cereal offering.

The second element of the grain offering is the addition of oil (Lev. 2:1, 2, 4, etc.). Olive oil is another fine ingredient that is produced by human effort. The oil is applied in two different ways: it is poured over the offering, and it is mixed in with the offering. In the Old Testament, oil often speaks of the presence of the Holy Spirit (*cp.* Zech. 4:1-6). Jordan calls the Spirit “the bond of the covenant.” Just as the mixed oil holds the flour together so it can bake into a loaf, in the same way the Holy Spirit is the one who establishes and bonds the covenant community together. And just as the oil is poured over the offering, so the Spirit is poured out on the church and anoints it for ministry.

The third element in the grain offering is frankincense. Frankincense, or incense in general, is often associated with the prayers of the saints (Ps. 141:2; Luke 1:10; Rev. 5:8). The fourth element in every grain offering is salt (Lev. 2:13). Salt is a preservative; it speaks to the perpetual nature of the covenant relationship. A perpetual relationship is called a “covenant of salt” in Numbers 18:19. Thus, the salt of the covenant speaks to the enduring covenant bond in fidelity. Of course, the subject of Malachi is the infidelity of God’s people resulting in a broken covenant.

All of the elements of the grain offering speak to the total worship of men toward God. We give Him the best works of our hands, anointed by the Holy Spirit, offered in prayer, and seasoned with the fidelity of our covenant relationship. This is the type of pure offering that God will receive. This is the type of offering that is lacking from the priests and the people of Malachi’s day.

God did not accept their grain offerings, because they did not follow acceptable burnt offerings. God rejected their burnt offerings, and therefore when they gave their grain offerings, they were approaching God in the same way that Cain did. In essence, they were coming to God in their own strength, based on their own works. Is it any wonder that God rejected them?

F. Contemptible Food (1:12-13)

¹²“But you profane it, in that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.’ ¹³You also say, ‘Oh, what a weariness!’ and you sneer at it,” says the LORD of hosts. “And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?” says the LORD (Malachi 1:12-13).

As Malachi works his way back out of the chiastic structure, he once again hammers against the sacrifices that the priests offer. In the earlier section (1:6b-8), the emphasis was on the inadequate nature of the sacrifice – they were blind, lame, and sick. Malachi repeats the charge here, although he adds a new category – “stolen.” Again, this is a sacrifice that is of no value,

Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Malachi

since it cost the worshipper nothing. In fact, violating the Eighth Commandment (Ex. 20:15) to worship God is the height of hypocrisy!

However, the main emphasis of Malachi in these verses is the contemptuous attitude of the priests. The offerings the priests gave on God's altar were supposed to be a sweet savor, a soothing aroma for the LORD. But they sniff at the obligation to offer sacrifices; they sneer at the worship of the LORD; they turn up their noses as if they are offended. Benton comments:

What we have here are priests who despise the work God has given them to do. Here are leaders who are not just weary *in* the work (which may well be legitimate), but they are weary *of* the work. This bored and contemptuous attitude pollutes the worship. It makes the whole thing into a stench in God's nostrils.

G. Cursed Worshipers (1:14)

¹⁴“But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—for I am a great King,” says the LORD of hosts, “and My name is to be feared among the nations” (Malachi 1:14).

Malachi's argument has come full circle. He started his indictment of hypocritical worship by demonstrating that God was not honored or respected as a Father and as a Master. This attitude of disrespect led to worshippers giving God less than their very best. Instead of giving sacrifices which cost them something, they culled their herds and gave God the blemished animals. Empty worship is cursed worship – it has no effect, it is to no avail, it will not be accepted by God.

If you don't believe it, just ask Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). They approached the worship of God too cavalierly, thinking they could lie to the Holy Spirit and get away with it. Their attitude was exactly what Malachi condemns – they thought that God had no choice but to accept them and their blemished offering, and bless them to boot!

The Jews of Malachi's day (as well as Ananias and Sapphira) approached God in this callous, thoughtless, offensive way, because they had forgotten the greatness of God. He wasn't some little deity to be appeased and then quickly forgotten, like the gods of the surrounding nations. No! He is a great King; He is the LORD of hosts, the LORD of armies, God Almighty. Benton says:

Israel had forgotten the greatness of God. This is how they had got into this sad spiritual state of irreverence. They no longer realized what their worship was about because they failed to realize the glory of God. They had forgotten that their God was God over all the nations, the sovereign King of the universe. They had forgotten the responsibility they had through their life and worship to cause God to be feared among the nations. They had lost sight of the unspeakable majesty of God and so, subconsciously, they soon took on the attitude that the temple was there primarily for their convenience rather than for God and the whole sad decline followed naturally. They thought that it was their 'church', which existed for their benefit rather than for the praise of the all-glorious God.

Because the priests despised the name of the LORD, they failed to revere Him and worship Him properly (1:6). But God says that His name will be feared – if not by the priests of Judah, then by the nations of the world.

Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Malachi

Conclusion

This prophecy of Malachi came to pass less than 500 years later. God came to earth in the flesh, and Israel failed to revere Him and worship Him properly. The Pharisees sought to trick Him with their sophistry and manmade rules which left them defiled like whitewashed tombs (Mt. 23:27-28). They despised the name of Jesus Christ, grew weary of His teaching, and plotted to kill the great King of heaven and earth.

And what happened as a result? God closed the doors of the temple. God destroyed the first temple of Solomon in 586 BC because of the idolatry of Judah. And God closed the second temple in 70 AD because of the empty and vain worship which was offered there. Jesus Christ came and offered up the perfect sacrifice once and for all for sin (Heb. 9:12, 28; 10:14). After His death and resurrection, all further animal sacrifices became abominations.

In the place of temple sacrifice in Jerusalem, God is now worshiped “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), throughout the world. The name of Jesus, which the Jews of His day despised, is now feared and revered throughout the nations, literally “from the rising of the sun, even to its going down. I’ve worshiped God in London, in Wales, in Lisbon, in Paris, in Seoul, in Singapore. Jesus Christ is worshiped in every time zone on the planet. Truly the name of Jesus Christ is great among the nations.

What is the lesson for us? What is the application of Malachi’s message against covenant hypocrisy? Simply this: treat the worship of God seriously. Hypocritical and empty worship happens when we forget the greatness of God. Never grow weary of hearing the good news of the gospel, of gathering with the saints, of singing His praises, of lifting up your prayers to Him, of hearing His Word, of fellowshiping at His table.

Each one of us needs to give ourselves a spiritual check-up. How is your spiritual health? Does worship bore you? Do you grow weary of long sermons? Do you sniff at lengthy prayers? Do you wish the Communion Service would just end quickly? Do you show up late and leave early? Do you skip evening worship because you have “more important” things to do? Do you give God the honor and reverence He is due?

A good indicator is our desire to worship God according to His commands. Benton writes:

Reverence is the heartfelt, sincere and practical recognition of the greatness of God. It is the nub of all true spirituality. We are spiritually healthy when, unlike the Jews of Malachi’s day, we have an attitude which believes that only the best is good enough for our God. When we honestly offer him not diseased sacrifices, but the very best of our lives, the best of our hearts, the best of our devotion, that is spiritual health.

How can you offer Him the very best of your lives, your hearts, your devotion? Ponder that question this afternoon, and resolve to improve the manner in which you worship Jesus Christ, your Savior and Lord. Offering Him anything less is vain and empty religion; it is covenant hypocrisy.

Next week: Lesson 9 – Covenant Ministry – Malachi 2:1-9

Close in Prayer.