

# Malachi 03 – Holy Law: Unholy Priests

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Malachi 2:1-9

## Background for Understanding

- Worth repeating over and over again
  - Exodus revealed God's holiness, man's sinfulness and God's answer: Himself as the sacrifice for sin
  - Israel, His chosen people, were to teach His message of salvation to all nations (Axial Age religions resulted)
  - Old Testament is a history of both Israel and Gentile rejection of His message though individuals did respond from both groups demonstrating His grace & mercy

## Previous Lesson – Empirical

- Our previous lesson revealed the priesthood's rejection of God via outward demonstrations that mocked Christ as the coming sacrifice for sin: unbelief in God
  - Blemished (sinful) sacrifices
  - Delegitimized the gospel truth contained in the Law
  - Struggle for worldly power and control (3, 4-6)
  - More concern for pleasing worldly rulers than God (3, 5-8)

## This Lesson - Spiritual

- This lesson addresses the root cause of the priest's trivialization of God's Law and sacrificial system
  - They did not grasp the concept of God's holiness, man's sinfulness and the need for a sinless sacrifice that immediately disqualified any person from being Messiah
  - Simply, they did not understand the doctrine of Total Depravity; i.e., they believed they were *good* (11:16,18)

## Man's History is God's Revelation

- History is nothing more complicated than man's response on every level to the truth of God in the Bible
  - The Dispensations reveal man's rejection of God on multiple levels despite God's revelation, mercy & grace
  - One perceives the unfolding revelation of God and His truths (Doctrines)
  - Theology is the coherent unification of doctrinal truths pointing to salvation in Christ for all men everywhere

## Old Testament Themes

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Old Testament laid the foundation for the major doctrines completed in the New Testament in the <i>fullness of time</i> (2P 1:1-3)</li> <li>○ Bible answers all mysteries of God: Christ in us (1Co 1:27)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ God</li> <li>○ Man</li> <li>○ Lucifer</li> <li>○ Sin</li> <li>○ Holiness</li> <li>○ Grace</li> <li>○ Salvation</li> <li>○ Christ</li> </ul> |
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## Jew Rejected Systematic Theology

- The Jews did not develop a systematic theology {group of text dealing with similar subjects} as we have today
  - They developed oral traditions supplementing the practice of the Tabernacle/Temple
  - Became corrupted by their own philosophies excusing their sinfulness & legitimizing their depravity: Talmud, Midrash, and Halacha; especially since Babylon

## Priesthood Rejected Most Books

- The Priesthood {Sadducees} rejected most of the writings of the Old Testament
  - They believed only the Torah {Pentateuch} in a literal manner rather than a *normative* manner
  - Thus, they staunchly adhered to the rigid letter of the Law rejecting all other writings *(Lc. 1:46)*
  - Difficult to develop a systematic theology when rejecting the whole council of God *(Ac. 20:25-28)*

## Priesthood's Privilege Position

- Priesthood misunderstood their privileged position *(Ro. 1:20)*
  - Rather than seeing themselves as slaves of both God and His worshipers
  - They saw themselves as the privileged class in positions of power **over** the worshipers *(Ro. 1:17-20)*
  - This occurs because they did not understand Total Depravity; therefore, they saw themselves as **good**

## God Chastens the Priesthood

- God, through Malachi His messenger, tells the priests they are not privileged but rejected by Him
  - Through the sacrificial process the priests continually struggled with uncleanness D/T slaughtering of animals
  - Dung contact was an unavoidable byproduct of flaying the animals for sacrifice (Laver provided for washings)
  - God used this obvious imagery saying He will spread the dung of their offerings on them and their offspring  
(Ex 20:46)

## Revelation of Their Depravity

- God used this imagery, which they would have understood, to reveal to them their innate sinfulness
  - They believed themselves clean when in fact they were unclean, remaining in their sins
  - God is simply revealing this to them in grace offering them an opportunity to repent
  - If they continue to reject God they will teach their children to reject God dooming them to same fate

## God's Covenant Will Stand

- God uses precise wording tying Malachi's message back to Mount Sinai and the reception of the Law via Levi
  - Moses and Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, received the Law
  - They understood the Law was their entrance into the grace of God and not simply a pointless ritual of death
  - Moses and Aaron feared God's holiness because they understood their sinfulness and its consequences (De 6:21)

Fear of the Lord

## Law Brought Life to Aaron

- The Law brought life to Aaron and those faithful to God's message; why not them? (Dt. 31)
- Law amplifies one's sinfulness driving him toward repentance and God's salvation by grace (Ro. 7:5-9)
- The sacrificial system demonstrated their need for a sinless Messiah to wash their sin from them
- It was *always* about a repentant heart, not keeping laws

## Aaron Instructed the People

- The priesthood was always the primary instructional body of God's grace via the Tabernacle/Temple
- They failed this often beginning with two of Aaron's sons offering *strange fire* on the altar (Le. 10:1-3)
- Despite the promises and warnings given by Zechariah the priesthood quickly devolved back into its old ways
- Their message was not one of life but of death via worldly philosophies and dead works (Co. 2:8; 1Ti. 6:3)

## They Did Instruct the People

- The priesthood did not instruct the people in God but they did instruct the people in sin; and the people listened to their message to their own destruction (He. 4:6-11)
- People sought knowledge and instruction from the priest, and found it but not in the grace of the Lord
- Though *they* were to be God's messengers, God had to send them messengers (Prophets) chastening them

## They are Abased Before God

- Though the priesthood sought and obtained worldly power, they did not have power with God
  - They gained a position in Jewish society but since they did not believe in an afterlife or judgment they had no *fear of God* (Mt 22:23-33)
  - Though Jewish society suffered terribly during the intertestament period, as foretold by Daniel, the Sadducees only became further entrenched in error (Da 11; Mt 16:5-12)

## Priesthood Executed Messiah

- The priesthood was the actual power that (Mt 26:1-5)
  - Paid Judas IshCariot to betray Jesus
  - Ruled the Sanhedrin to condemn Jesus
  - Manipulated Pilate to execute Jesus
- Their supposed motive: to save the nation; their power (Jo 11:45-53)
- The Pharisees joined their plot

## Did the Church Fare Better?

- The first century church struggled to maintain the true faith of the apostles but the letters to the churches proved that they were straying from the truth (Re 2-3)
- During the Medieval period the RCC and its cohort, the Greek Orthodox Church, redefined God's word just as the Old Testament Jews had and with the same effect - rejection of Christ's Gospel of salvation

## Reformation: Temporary Correction

- The Reformation was a correction to the errors of the RCC and Greek Orthodoxy (as well as numerous other sects that flourished)
  - Systematic theological study was developed
  - Clearer understanding of God's revelation ensued
- However, Protestantism fared little better than the Jews

## Evangelicalism

- The 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries saw the rise of evangelicalism moving Protestantism away from the Christian socialism movement (Social Gospel) (Allegory)
  - Rise of normative hermeneutical exegetical interpretation of the Scriptures
  - Clarification of the doctrines of the Bible
  - Refinement of Eschatology throughout the Bible

## Movements Fail

- All of these movements failed because they institutionalized their particulars, making them equal to God's word, forgetting Paul's admonishment (1Co. 13:12)
- God only saves individuals, never groups or movements
- It is not about impressing God with self-righteousness (Law)
- It's about repentance, acceptance, & growing in maturity (Ro. 10:9-11)