

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Malachi Chapter 1 — When Worship Loses Its Honor

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Malachi Chapter 1 begins with one of the most important truths God's people can ever understand:

God loves His people.

Yet Israel had begun to question that love.

God said:

“I have loved you.”

But Israel responded:

“How have You loved us?”

Their spiritual condition had become so cold that they could no longer recognize the evidence of God's covenant love.

The problem quickly becomes even more serious.

The priests, who were responsible for leading the people in worship, had begun treating God's altar with contempt. They offered blind, lame, sick, and defective animals to the Lord.

They were giving God what they would never have dared to give an earthly governor.

Their worship had become careless.

Their sacrifices had become convenient.

Their service had become burdensome.

Their reverence had disappeared.

Malachi 1 therefore confronts one of the greatest dangers in spiritual life:

It is possible to continue practicing religion while losing genuine reverence for God.

The central message of this chapter is clear:

God is a great King, and He deserves wholehearted worship.

I. GOD SENDS HIS WORD TO HIS PEOPLE

Malachi 1:1 — The Burden of the Lord

“The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi.”

Malachi begins by describing his message as a **burden**.

The Hebrew idea behind the word can refer to a weighty message or divine declaration placed upon God's messenger.

Malachi was not presenting personal opinions.

He was delivering the Word of the Lord.

Cross References

Nahum 1:1

This is the message concerning Nineveh. It is the record of the vision that Nahum, who was from Elkosh, received from God.

Habakkuk 1:1

This is the message that Habakkuk the prophet received from God in a vision.

Zechariah 9:1

This is the burden of the word of the Lord concerning the land of Hadrach, with Damascus as its resting place, because the eyes of mankind and all the tribes of Israel belong to the Lord.

Malachi's message was serious because it came from God.

Spiritual Principle

When God speaks, His people must listen.

Scripture is not merely religious literature.

It carries divine authority.

God's people do not have the right to accept the portions they enjoy while ignoring the portions that confront them.

Application

When you read Scripture, ask:

What is God revealing about Himself?

What is God revealing about me?

What needs to change because of what He has said?

II. GOD DECLARES HIS LOVE

Malachi 1:2 — “I Have Loved You”

“‘I have loved you,’ says the Lord. Yet you say, ‘How have You loved us?’ Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? declares the Lord. Yet I loved Jacob.”

God begins His message with love.

Before addressing Israel's failure, God reminds them of His grace.

He says:

“I have loved you.”

Yet Israel questions Him.

“How have You loved us?”

Their circumstances had apparently caused them to doubt God's goodness.

God answers by pointing to His sovereign covenant choice involving Jacob and Esau.

Cross References

Genesis 25:23

The Lord said to Rebekah, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples will come from you and be divided. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

Deuteronomy 7:7

The Lord did not set His love upon you and choose you because you were greater in number than other peoples, because you were actually the smallest of all peoples.

Deuteronomy 4:37

Because He loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, He personally brought you out of Egypt by His great power.

Israel's relationship with God began with God's gracious initiative.

They had not earned His covenant love.

Key Truth

God's love should be measured by His character and His promises—not merely by our present circumstances.

There are times when God's people may not understand what He is doing.

But difficulty does not mean God has stopped loving His people.

Application

Never allow temporary circumstances to erase your memory of God's faithfulness.

When your circumstances cause you to ask,

“Does God really love me?”

look back at what God has already done.

III. JACOB AND ESAU

Malachi 1:3 — God's Judgment Upon Edom

“But Esau I hated. I made his mountains a wasteland and left his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”

This is strong language.

God contrasts His covenant relationship with Jacob and His judgment upon Esau's descendants, the nation of Edom.

The language emphasizes God's sovereign distinction between the two nations and His righteous judgment against Edom.

Cross References

Romans 9:13

As Scripture says, “I loved Jacob, but Esau I hated.”

Obadiah 1:10

Because of the violence you committed against your brother Jacob, shame will cover you, and you will be destroyed forever.

Jeremiah 49:17

Edom will become a place of horror. Everyone who passes by it will be shocked and will shake his head because of all the disasters that have fallen upon it.

Edom had repeatedly opposed Israel.

God's judgment was not arbitrary injustice.

Edom's history was marked by pride, hostility, and violence.

Spiritual Principle

God's patience should never be mistaken for indifference toward sin.

God may allow rebellion to continue for a time.

But He remains righteous.

His judgment is certain.

IV. HUMAN PRIDE CANNOT OVERRULE GOD

Malachi 1:4 — “We Will Rebuild”

“Though Edom says, ‘We are shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins,’ this is what the Lord of hosts says: ‘They may build, but I will tear down. They will be called the Wicked Land, the people against whom the Lord is angry forever.’”

Edom believed determination could overcome divine judgment.

They said:

“We will rebuild.”

God said:

“I will tear down.”

This demonstrates the limits of human pride.

Cross References

Obadiah 1:4

“Even if you rise as high as the eagle and make your home among the stars, I will bring you down from there,” declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 49:16

The fear you caused others and the pride of your heart have deceived you. You live among the rocky cliffs and occupy the heights of the hills. Even if you build your home as high as an eagle's nest, I will bring you down from there,” declares the Lord.

Isaiah 34:5

The Lord says, “My sword has completed its work in the heavens. Now it will come down in judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction.”

Human determination cannot overturn God's sovereign decree.

Spiritual Principle

What God opposes cannot ultimately prosper.

Human pride says:

“I will.”

Faith says:

“If the Lord wills.”

Application

There is nothing wrong with rebuilding after difficulty.

But rebuilding in rebellion against God is another matter entirely.

The question is not simply:

“What do I want to build?”

The greater question is:

“Is God in what I am building?”

V. GOD'S GREATNESS EXTENDS BEYOND ISRAEL

Malachi 1:5 — “Great Is the Lord”

“You will see it with your own eyes and say, ‘Great is the Lord—even beyond the borders of Israel!’”

God's greatness is not confined to one geographical location.

He is not merely Israel's local deity.

He is Lord over all creation.

Cross References

Psalms 48:1

The Lord is great and deserves the highest praise in the city of our God, on His holy mountain.

Psalms 113:4

The Lord is exalted above every nation, and His glory is higher than the heavens.

Psalms 35:27

Let those who desire my vindication shout for joy and be glad. Let them continually say,
“The Lord is great! He delights in the well-being of His servant.”

Key Truth

The greatness of God is universal.

Nations rise.

Nations fall.

Empires appear.

Empires disappear.

But God remains King.

VI. GOD DESERVES HONOR

Malachi 1:6 — “Where Is My Honor?”

“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My respect?” says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise My name. But you say, “How have we despised Your name?”

God confronts the priests directly.

Even ordinary human relationships recognized principles of honor.

A son honored his father.

A servant respected his master.

Yet the priests claimed God as Father and Master while failing to honor Him.

Cross References

Isaiah 1:2

Listen, heavens, and hear, earth, because the Lord has spoken: “I raised children and cared for them, but they have rebelled against Me.”

Deuteronomy 32:6

Is this how you repay the Lord, you foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father who created you? Did He not make you and establish you?

Leviticus 19:3

Every one of you must respect your mother and father, and you must keep My Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God.

The priests had religious positions but lacked genuine reverence.

Spiritual Principle

Calling God “Father” means little if our lives consistently refuse to honor Him.

Reverence is not merely what we say during worship.

It is demonstrated by how we live.

Application

Ask yourself:

Does the way I live demonstrate that I believe God deserves honor?

VII. DEFILED WORSHIP

Malachi 1:7 — Contempt for God's Table

“You present defiled food upon My altar. But you say, ‘How have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The Lord’s table is contemptible.’”

The priests had become careless about worship.

They continued offering sacrifices, but they no longer treated the altar as holy.

Cross References

Leviticus 22:20

You must not offer anything that has a defect, because such an offering will not be accepted for you.

Deuteronomy 15:21

If an animal has a defect—if it is lame, blind, or has any other serious defect—you must not sacrifice it to the Lord your God.

Ezekiel 44:7

You brought foreigners who were uncircumcised in heart and body into My sanctuary and allowed them to dishonor My house while you offered My food, fat, and blood. In this way you broke My covenant in addition to all your other detestable practices.

God had clearly established standards regarding sacrifices.

The priests knew God's requirements.

Their sin therefore involved deliberate disregard for God's holiness.

Key Truth

Familiarity with holy things can become dangerous when familiarity produces contempt instead of reverence.

VIII. WOULD YOU GIVE GOD LESS THAN A GOVERNOR?

Malachi 1:8 — Blind, Lame, and Sick Sacrifices

“When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer the lame or sick, is that not evil? Try offering them to your governor—would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” says the Lord of hosts.

God exposes their hypocrisy with a devastating comparison.

They were offering God gifts they would never have offered an earthly official.

Cross References

Leviticus 22:22

You must not offer to the Lord an animal that is blind, injured, crippled, diseased, or has sores. You must not place such an animal upon the altar as an offering to the Lord.

Deuteronomy 17:1

You must not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or sheep that has any defect or serious flaw, because that would be detestable to the Lord your God.

2 Samuel 24:24

But the king said to Araunah, “No. I insist on paying you for it. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty pieces of silver.

David understood something the priests in Malachi's day had forgotten:

God deserves our best.

Spiritual Principle

Worship that costs us nothing may reveal how little we value the One we worship.

This does not mean worship earns God's favor.

It means genuine love refuses to treat God as an afterthought.

IX. RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY CANNOT REPLACE REPENTANCE

Malachi 1:9 — Asking for God's Favor

“Now plead with God to be gracious to us. But with such offerings from your hands, will He accept you?” says the Lord of hosts.

The priests wanted God's blessing while continuing behavior that dishonored Him.

They wanted favor without repentance.

Cross References

Psalms 66:18

If I had cherished sin in my heart and refused to turn from it, the Lord would not have listened to me.

Isaiah 1:15

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will turn My eyes away from you. Even though you offer many prayers, I will not listen, because your hands are covered with blood.

Micah 3:4

Then they will cry to the Lord, but He will not answer them. He will hide His face from them at that time because of the evil they have done.

Spiritual Principle

Prayer is not a substitute for repentance.

We cannot deliberately dishonor God while expecting religious activity to compensate for disobedience.

X. GOD WOULD RATHER CLOSE THE DOORS THAN ACCEPT EMPTY WORSHIP

Malachi 1:10 — “Shut the Temple Doors”

“Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not kindle useless fires on My altar! I take no pleasure in you,” says the Lord of hosts, “and I will not accept an offering from your hands.”

These are sobering words.

God says that closing the temple would be preferable to continuing meaningless worship.

Cross References

Isaiah 1:11

“What do I care about all your sacrifices?” says the Lord. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed animals. I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats when your hearts remain far from Me.”

Amos 5:21

“I hate and reject your religious festivals. I take no pleasure in your solemn gatherings.”

Psalms 51:16

You do not desire sacrifice by itself, or I would give it. You do not delight merely in burnt offerings.

God had commanded sacrifice.

The problem was not the sacrificial system itself.

The problem was worship without the heart.

Important Truth

God is more concerned with sincere worship than religious activity.

A church building can be full.

Songs can be sung.

Sermons can be preached.

Offerings can be collected.

Prayers can be spoken.

And yet hearts can still be far from God.

XI. GOD'S NAME WILL BE GREAT AMONG THE NATIONS

Malachi 1:11 — Worldwide Worship

“For from the rising of the sun to its setting, My name will be great among the nations. In every place incense and pure offerings will be presented in My name, because My name will be great among the nations,” says the Lord of hosts.

This verse looks beyond Israel.

God declares that His name will be honored among the nations.

Cross References

Psalms 113:3

From the place where the sun rises to where it sets, the name of the Lord is worthy of praise.

Isaiah 66:19

I will set a sign among the nations and send survivors to distant peoples who have not heard of My fame or seen My glory. They will proclaim My glory among the nations.

Revelation 15:4

Lord, who will not fear You and give glory to Your name? You alone are holy. Every nation will come and worship before You because Your righteous acts have been revealed.

God's purpose has always extended beyond one nation.

His glory will fill the earth.

Spiritual Principle

God will receive the honor He deserves.

If one generation refuses to honor Him, God's glory is not diminished.

His name will ultimately be praised throughout the earth.

XII. THE PRIESTS PROFANED WHAT WAS HOLY

Malachi 1:12 — Treating God's Table as Common

“But you profane it by saying, ‘The Lord’s table is defiled, and its food is contemptible.’”

The priests had lost their sense of holiness.

They treated sacred responsibilities casually.

Cross References

Leviticus 21:6

The priests must be holy to their God and must not dishonor His name, because they present the Lord's offerings made by fire, the food of their God. Therefore they must be holy.

Ezekiel 22:26

Her priests have violated My law and treated My holy things as though they were common. They have failed to distinguish between what is holy and what is ordinary, and they have not taught the difference between clean and unclean. They have ignored My Sabbaths, and My name has been dishonored among them.

Leviticus 22:2

Tell Aaron and his sons to treat the holy offerings of the Israelites with proper respect so they will not dishonor My holy name. I am the Lord.

Key Truth

When holy things become ordinary in our minds, irreverence soon follows.

The priests still handled sacrifices.

They still worked around the altar.

But their hearts had changed.

XIII. WHEN SERVING GOD BECOMES A BURDEN

Malachi 1:13 — “What a Burden!”

“And you say, ‘What a burden!’ You sniff at it with disdain,” says the Lord of hosts. “You bring stolen, lame, or sick animals—should I accept these from your hands?” says the Lord.

The priests had reached the point where serving God irritated them.

They said:

“What a burden!”

The privilege of worship had become an inconvenience.

Cross References

Amos 8:5

You say, “When will the New Moon festival be over so we can sell grain again? When will the Sabbath end so we can open the market?” You cheat the people by making the measure smaller, increasing the price, and using dishonest scales.

Isaiah 43:23

You have not brought Me your sheep for burnt offerings or honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you by demanding offerings or wearied you with requests for incense.

1 Samuel 2:29

Why do you treat My sacrifices and offerings with contempt? Why do you honor your sons more than Me by making yourselves fat from the best parts of every offering My people Israel bring?

Spiritual Principle

A dangerous spiritual condition develops when serving God feels like an unwanted interruption rather than a privilege.

Ask yourself:

Do I view prayer as a burden?

Do I view Scripture as a burden?

Do I view worship as a burden?

Do I view serving others as a burden?

Do I give God only what is convenient?

Warning

Spiritual weariness can happen to sincere believers.

But contempt is different from weariness.

A tired servant may need rest.

A contemptuous servant needs repentance.

XIV. THE GREAT KING DESERVES OUR BEST

Malachi 1:14 — “I Am a Great King”

“Cursed is the cheat who has a fine male in his flock, but vows to sacrifice it and then offers a blemished one to the Lord. For I am a great King,” says the Lord of hosts, “and My name is to be feared among the nations.”

The chapter ends with God's declaration concerning Himself:

“I am a great King.”

This is the central issue.

Israel's worship was defective because their view of God had become defective.

If they truly understood His greatness, they would never have offered Him their leftovers.

Cross References

Leviticus 22:19

If you want your offering to be accepted, you must offer a male without defect from the cattle, sheep, or goats.

Psalms 47:2

The Lord Most High is awesome. He is the great King over all the earth.

Deuteronomy 23:21

When you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not delay in fulfilling it, because the Lord your God will certainly require it from you, and you would be guilty of sin.

The worshiper in Malachi 1:14 had something acceptable to give.

He promised it to God.

Then he substituted something inferior.

God calls him a cheat.

Spiritual Principle

God deserves what we promised Him, not whatever is left after we have served ourselves.

XV. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM MALACHI 1

1. Never Forget God's Love

Israel asked:

“How have You loved us?”

They had forgotten God's covenant faithfulness.

Principle:

Difficult circumstances do not erase God's faithfulness.

When you struggle to see God's love, remember what He has already done.

2. God Deserves Honor

God asked:

“If I am a Father, where is My honor?”

The priests spoke about God but failed to reverence Him.

Principle:

The way we worship reveals what we believe about God.

A small view of God produces casual worship.

A great view of God produces reverence.

3. God Deserves Our Best

The priests offered blind, lame, and sick animals.

They gave God what they did not want.

David had a different attitude:

“I will not offer to the Lord something that costs me nothing.”

Principle:

God should never receive the leftovers of our lives.

This includes our:

- Time.
- Attention.
- Energy.
- Worship.
- Service.
- Resources.
- Devotion.

4. Religious Activity Cannot Replace a Right Heart

The temple was operating.

Sacrifices were being offered.

Priests were serving.

Yet God said:

“I take no pleasure in you.”

Principle:

Activity for God is not necessarily intimacy with God.

We can be busy with religious things while spiritually drifting from the Lord.

5. God Is a Great King

The chapter ends with God's declaration:

“I am a great King.”

This truth corrects everything.

If God is King, He deserves obedience.

If God is Father, He deserves honor.

If God is Master, He deserves respect.

If God is holy, He deserves reverence.

Remember:

True worship begins with seeing God as He really is.

XVI. THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF MALACHI 1

Malachi 1 reveals a progression of spiritual decline.

1. They Questioned God's Love

“How have You loved us?”

Gratitude disappeared.

2. They Lost Their Reverence

“Where is My honor?”

God became familiar rather than feared.

3. They Lowered Their Standards

They offered defective sacrifices.

4. They Justified Their Behavior

They repeatedly asked:

“How have we done this?”

They had become spiritually insensitive.

5. Worship Became a Burden

They said:

“What a burden!”

6. They Offered God Their Leftovers

The best was kept.

The inferior was given to God.

7. God's Name Was Dishonored

Their worship contradicted God's greatness.

This progression provides a serious warning.

Spiritual decline usually begins in the heart before it becomes visible in behavior.

XVII. WHAT MALACHI 1 TEACHES US ABOUT WORSHIP

Malachi 1 teaches several essential truths concerning biblical worship.

Worship Begins with God's Worth

The word **worship** carries the idea of recognizing worth.

God deserves worship because of who He is.

Worship Requires Reverence

God is Father.

God is Master.

God is King.

His presence should never be treated casually or contemptuously.

Worship Must Come from the Heart

God rejected offerings because the hearts behind them were corrupt.

Worship Involves Giving God Our Best

The priests offered what was defective.

True worship refuses to treat God as deserving only what remains.

Worship Is Worldwide

God declared:

“My name will be great among the nations.”

One day people from every nation will acknowledge His greatness.

Worship Must Be Sincere

External religious activity means little when the heart is far from God.

XVIII. THE DANGER OF GIVING GOD THE LEFTOVERS

Malachi 1 confronts a tendency that can appear in every generation.

We can give our best attention to everything else and then give God what remains.

Our best energy goes to work.

Our best attention goes to entertainment.

Our best concentration goes to personal interests.

Our best resources go toward ourselves.

Then God receives whatever is left.

The priests did this literally.

They kept the healthy animals and sacrificed the defective ones.

The principle still speaks today.

Ask Yourself:

Does God receive the first and best of my life, or merely what remains?

This does not mean every believer must spend every waking moment engaged in formal religious activity.

It means that God must occupy His rightful place in the heart.

Matthew 6:33

Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, and He will provide what you truly need.

The issue is priority.

XIX. MALACHI 1 AND THE HEART OF THE SERVANT

The priests had become professional about worship.

They performed the duties.

But their hearts had cooled.

This is an important warning for pastors, teachers, church leaders, musicians, ministry workers, and every believer.

It is possible to become so familiar with ministry that sacred things begin to feel ordinary.

A pastor can preach without wonder.

A teacher can teach without devotion.

A singer can sing without worship.

A church worker can serve without love.

A believer can pray without really seeking God.

Principle:

Never allow repeated exposure to holy things to cause you to lose your wonder at the holiness of God.

XX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did God begin Malachi's message by saying, "I have loved you"?

God began with His love because Israel needed to remember that His correction came within the context of His covenant relationship with them.

They had begun questioning God's goodness.

Before God exposed their failure, He reminded them of His faithfulness.

Divine correction should not automatically be interpreted as the absence of divine love.

God's love does not mean He ignores sin.

Because He is holy and loving, He calls His people back to Himself.

Question 2

Why did Israel question God's love?

Malachi does not give every detail behind their question, but their words reveal spiritual dissatisfaction.

They looked at their circumstances and apparently concluded that God's love was not evident.

Their mistake was judging God's love only by what they could presently see.

The same temptation exists today.

When prayers appear unanswered or circumstances become difficult, believers can begin questioning truths that God has already revealed.

Lesson:

Do not interpret God's character entirely through changing circumstances. Interpret circumstances through what God has revealed about His character.

Question 3

What does God's choice of Jacob over Esau teach us?

It reminds us that God's relationship with Israel was based upon His sovereign grace rather than Israel's superiority.

Jacob was not chosen because Israel was greater or more deserving.

God's covenant purposes rested upon His own sovereign will.

This should have produced humility and gratitude in Israel.

Instead, they had become spiritually complacent.

Question 4

Why were the priests' sacrifices unacceptable?

The priests offered animals that were blind, lame, sick, stolen, or otherwise defective.

God had specifically commanded that sacrificial animals meet His standards.

Their offerings revealed that they no longer considered God worthy of their best.

Their external actions exposed an internal problem.

Key Truth:

What we are willing to offer God often reveals what we really think about Him.

Question 5

Why did God tell them to offer those animals to their governor?

God was exposing their hypocrisy.

They understood that an earthly ruler deserved respectful treatment.

They knew the governor would reject defective gifts.

Yet they offered worse to God.

The comparison forces them to confront the inconsistency.

They treated an earthly authority with greater respect than the King of heaven.

Question 6

What does Malachi 1:10 mean when God says someone should shut the temple doors?

God was declaring that meaningless worship was worse than no worship at all.

He did not desire empty ritual.

He would rather the sacrifices stop than continue receiving offerings from hearts that openly dishonored Him.

This demonstrates that God evaluates worship by more than external activity.

He sees the heart.

Question 7

What does Malachi 1:11 teach about God's plan for the nations?

It teaches that God's name will be honored far beyond Israel.

From sunrise to sunset, God's greatness will be proclaimed.

The biblical story ultimately points toward worship among all peoples.

Revelation pictures people from the nations recognizing God's holiness and glory.

God's kingdom is global.

Question 8

What was wrong with saying, "What a burden"?

The priests viewed serving God as tiresome and irritating.

They no longer recognized worship as a privilege.

The phrase revealed the condition of their hearts.

There is a difference between becoming physically tired while serving God and despising the service itself.

Faithful servants may become weary.

But when the heart develops contempt for God, repentance is necessary.

Question 9

What does Malachi 1 teach Christians about giving God our best?

Christians are not under Israel's Old Testament sacrificial system, but the spiritual principle remains powerful.

God deserves wholehearted devotion.

We should not deliberately reserve our best for ourselves and offer God only the leftovers.

Romans 12:1 teaches believers to present themselves to God as living sacrifices.

Our entire lives belong to Him.

Question 10

What area of your life are you tempted to give God only the leftovers?

This requires personal examination.

It may involve:

- Prayer.
- Bible reading.
- Worship.
- Ministry.
- Time.
- Giving.
- Family responsibilities.
- Service.
- Obedience.
- Attention.

The question is not merely:

“Am I giving something to God?”

The deeper question is:

“Does what I give demonstrate that I believe He is worthy?”

XXI. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Malachi 1 calls us to examine our worship.

Ask yourself:

Have I begun questioning God's love because of difficult circumstances?

Have I lost my reverence for God?

Has worship become routine?

Do I give God my best or my leftovers?

Has serving God become something I resent?

Do my actions demonstrate that I believe God is a great King?

These questions should not lead merely to guilt.

They should lead to repentance and renewed worship.

God's purpose in exposing Israel's failure was to call His people back to Himself.

The same God who confronts careless worship invites His people to return to wholehearted devotion.

XXII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Quality of Our Worship Reveals the Size of Our View of God”

The priests' deepest problem was not defective animals.

The defective sacrifices were symptoms.

The deeper problem was a defective view of God.

They had forgotten who stood behind the altar.

They had forgotten that God was:

Father.

Master.

Lord of hosts.

Great King.

When our understanding of God's greatness becomes small, our worship often becomes small.

When we see God as He truly is, reverence follows.

Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up.

He responded:

“Woe is me.”

John saw the glorified Christ.

He fell at His feet.

Biblical worship begins when the heart becomes overwhelmed with the greatness, holiness, majesty, grace, and glory of God.

Principle:

We will never rise very high in worship while thinking very little of the One we worship.

XXIII. FINAL APPLICATION

Malachi 1 begins with God's love and ends with God's greatness.

God says:

“I have loved you.”

And later:

“I am a great King.”

Those two truths belong together.

The great King loves His people.

Therefore His people should honor the King who loves them.

Israel had forgotten His love.

The priests had forgotten His greatness.

The result was careless worship.

Malachi calls God's people back.

Remember His love.

Recognize His holiness.

Honor His name.

Give Him your best.

Serve Him with gratitude.

Worship Him with reverence.

Never allow the holy things of God to become ordinary in your heart.

Never offer God something merely because you do not want it yourself.

Never let spiritual service become contemptible.

And never forget the declaration with which this chapter closes:

“I am a great King.”

If He is a great King, then He deserves great honor.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for loving us with a faithful love.

Forgive us for the times we have questioned Your goodness simply because we did not understand our circumstances.

Help us remember Your faithfulness.

Forgive us for careless worship.

Forgive us for giving You the leftovers of our time, energy, attention, and devotion.

Teach us to honor You as our Father.

Teach us to respect You as our Master.

Teach us to worship You as our great King.

Keep our hearts from becoming cold toward sacred things.

Do not allow prayer to become meaningless repetition.

Do not allow Scripture to become ordinary to us.

Do not allow worship to become merely routine.

Do not allow service to become something we despise.

Give us hearts that delight in honoring Your name.

Search us and reveal any area where we are offering You less than wholehearted devotion.

Restore our gratitude.

Renew our reverence.

Deepen our worship.

May Your name be great in our homes, our churches, our communities, and throughout the nations.

May our lives demonstrate that You are worthy of our very best.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“For I am a great King,” says the Lord of hosts, “and My name is to be feared among the nations.” — Malachi 1:14

Central Truth

God's love deserves our gratitude, God's holiness deserves our reverence, and God's greatness deserves our wholehearted worship.

Malachi 1 in One Sentence

The great King who faithfully loves His people refuses empty worship and calls them to honor His name by giving Him their sincere and wholehearted devotion.