

The Autopsy of Dead Religion: Insincere Worship

Malachi 1:6-14

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November 27, 2022 a.m.

Introduction: The body was delivered to the morgue, where the medical examiner was asked to determine the COD – the cause of death. Seeking to rule out foul play or possible suicide, an autopsy is performed to try & pinpoint why this relatively young man was now cold & lifeless, lying on the stainless steel table in a frigid laboratory. With many T.V. shows portraying such an event (NCIS, CSI, etc.) such scenes can readily come to our minds. The examination of this corpse will not only determine just why this person died, it may lead to the preserving of the lives of many others. If the cause of death is some contagious disease or perhaps an inherited genetic condition, the autopsy may well prove to be life-saving for others. The Book of Malachi is an autopsy of another sort. It is the examination of a dead religion, brought on by spiritual disease. The prophet takes pains to examine minutely the causes & signs of a lifeless religion. By reviewing the autopsy report of Malachi in these 4 short chapters we can learn not only what causes this death in religion, but find a cure – or the antidote – for religious formalism. This autopsy report takes the shape of 7 charges against Israel. There is God’s affirmation (or the charge), Israel’s disputation (or defense), followed by God’s refutation. In this first chapter there is the charge of **ingratitude** (or insensitivity to grace) & the charge of **insincerity** (or insincere worship). This morning we will consider the second charge against Israel. Here we see that insincere worship is marked by a lack of honor for God. Ask yourself this question, “Do I truly honor God – not just on Sunday while at church – but in my everyday life?”

I. The requirement of honor (:6)

[What is honor? As a noun: “high regard or great respect given, received, or enjoyed.”

As a verb: “to respect greatly; regard highly; to esteem.” What or who we honor reveals that which we value & consider important. In what relationships do we expect or should we see honor? Compare Memorial Day, God & Country Day, Veterans’ Day, etc.]

A. Honor is required of a son for his *father*.

1. The **exhortation** of honor:

a. In the O.T. > Exodus 20:12 – the 5th commandment.

b. In the N.T. > Ephesians 6:1-2 – the 1st commandment with promise.

2. The **expectation** of honor:

a. A penalty for disobedience > Leviticus 20:9.

b. An assumption of obedience > Hebrews 12:9.

3. The **exception** of honor (rather than the rule today, it is the exception):

a. A sign of the last days > II Timothy 3:1-2.

b. A symptom of rebellion > Romans 1:30.

B. Honor is required of a servant for his *master*.

1. Such honor is **commanded** - I Timothy 6:1-2 (& cf. Ephesians 6:5-9).

2. Such honor is **commended** - Matthew 25:14-23.

3. Such honor is **un-common** today?

C. Honor is required of a saint for his *God*.

1. The **command** - Exodus 20:3-11.

2. The **commitment** - Deuteronomy 6:1-5.

3. The **consequence** - I Samuel 2:30.

II. The **refusal** of honor (:6-14) [“*despise*” – to think lightly of, or, to make light of]

- A. By one's **attitude**: What we *think* (:6-7)
 - 1. Out of ignorance? Not **thinking** that they did not honor God?
 - 2. Out of apathy? Not **caring** that they did not honor God?
- B. By one's **affirmation**: What we *say* (:7 & :13)
 - 1. “*The table of the Lord is contemptible*” (:7) [“worthless”]
 - 2. “*Behold what a weariness is it*” (:13) [“burdensome” – heart not in it]
- C. By one's **action**: What we *do* (:7-14)
 - 1. The offering of polluted **sacrifices** (:7-8 & :13).
 - a. The reason: they offered blind & lame animals (see Deuteronomy 15:21).
 - b. The response (of God): Would your governor be pleased with such sacrifices?
 - 2. The offering of powerless **supplications** (:9).
 - a. Attempt > to “soften God up.”
 - b. Answer > God will not hear.
 - 3. The offering of partial **surrender** (:10).
 - a. No sacrifice is better than insincere offerings.
 - b. “On the modern scene, there is nothing automatically praiseworthy about opening the church doors every Sunday. Going through the motions of an empty ritual will not please God any more than the perverted worship of Malachi’s contemporaries. One wonders how many churches deserve to stay open, based on the genuine worship & education carried on within their doors” (Wolf).
 - 4. The offering of profane **statements** (:11-12).
 - a. Israel’s charges.
 - b. Gentiles’ contrast.

III. The **rendering** of honor (:6 & :14)

- A. To God as our **Father** (:6)
 - 1. We owe Him our **love**.
 - 2. We ought to render a *loving surrender* (cf. Psalm 40:8 & John 14:20-21).
- B. To God as our **Master** (:6)
 - 1. We owe Him our **labor**.
 - 2. We ought to render a *lasting service* (Give Him the glory – Matthew 5:16; Give Him our best > the best of our schedule, service, & substance).
- C. To God as our **King** (:14)
 - 1. We owe Him our **loyalty**.
 - 2. We ought to render a *living sacrifice* (cf. Romans 12:1-2).

Conclusion: If your worship was put under the microscope of the Holy Spirit, what would be found? Is your worship that which truly honors God? If you are not saved, you are in rebellion against God & unable to honor Him. Why not surrender your heart to Him today, acknowledge your sin & need of salvation? Repent of your sins & in faith call upon Christ to save your soul. Then, & then only will you be able to honor God. Remember His Word, “...*them that honour Me I will honour, & they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed*” (I Samuel 2:30b). If you are saved, is God receiving honor from you? Are you honoring Him today as your Father, your Master, and your King? Does God deserve any less respect or honor than what we expect from our children? Or what we expect from employees for their boss? When we fail to honor God – as an individual, family, or church – we fail to receive His blessings & enjoy His power upon our lives. Again I ask, “Do you truly honor God, not just Sunday, but in your everyday life?”