

Post-Exile Prophets
WARNING TO THE PRIESTS

Friday, October 3
Reading: Malachi 2:1-9

Malachi 2:8 *But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi," says the LORD Almighty.*

The priests were important leaders in Israel. They were responsible for offering the sacrifices that covered the sins of the people. They were also to be examples of godly living for the people. Finally, they were to teach the people the law of God. As Malachi continues to record God's warning, we see that the priests of his day failed at all three duties.

Chapter 1 has already condemned the priests for offering defiled sacrifices of blind, lame, and diseased animals. This made them unacceptable to God. God tells the priests that He will smear the dung of these sacrifices on their face (2:3). The dung of the sacrifices was supposed to be carried outside the city and burned. God states that because of their callous treatment in offering God defiled offerings, they might as well be carried away with the dung! They were a disgrace and unworthy of serving in the temple.

Instead of being an example to the people, they had "turned from the way...violated the covenant with Levi" (2:8), and "not followed My ways" (2:9). They were just going through the motions. Their service with "lip service" without a true heart for God. They had turned away from the covenant God made with the tribe of Levi to represent the people before God and represent God to the people.

Lastly, their teaching of God's Word was faulty and "caused many to stumble" (2:8). Through their violations of God's law and disobedient practices, the people learned that God was not that important. They even twisted the law for their own advantage (2:9). And the people followed the bad example of their "spiritual" leaders.

God gives them the ultimate warning: "If you do not listen and if you do not resolve to honor My name, I will send a curse on you" (2:2). One of the duties of the priests was to bless the people. The priestly blessing is given in Numbers 6:24-26

The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you;
The LORD turn His face toward you and give you peace.

But says instead of blessing the people, these priests would be a curse (2:2) and instead of being respected, they would be "despised and humiliated before all the people" (2:9).

The word "resolve" in 2:2 means 'to lay it to heart.' These priests had no shame or regret for their actions. Their hearts were unmoved by God's warning. Sadly, many people sit in church every week and hear the Word of God faithfully proclaimed and yet their hearts are unchanged. Their life is focused on their own will instead of God's will. How do you respond to God's Word? When was the last time the Word of God provoked you to change some part of your life?