Malachi 2.1-9

450 yrs B4 Coming Jesus: Judea returned from Exile: Temple/Sacrifices

Priests & families fed w Meat off Altar > Sacrifice for their Stomachs

Law gave Priests a Tithe of Produce, Ruined Crops = Empty Tables

Saw as Job, Not Ministry > Please themselves, Not to Glorify the Lord

Blue Light Special @Temple: bring Sick, Lame, Blind Animals gonna Die

1.14 the Lord says, "Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished" ***Bait & Switch***

Priests & People Celebrating Discounts and Short-cuts > User-Friendly

“Like people, like priests” No Ministry rises Higher than its Leaders

“it shall be like people, like priest; I will punish them for their ways and repay them for their deeds” Hosea 4.9

God gave them High Calling treating Temple Ministry with Contempt

1.6 If I am a master, where is my fear?... O priests, who despise my name

2.1 "And now, O priests, this command is for you"/ HOW Relate to us??

Priest > Stands between God and man – Intercede, Offer Sacrifice

OT priesthood NOW ENDED 1.10 Oh that there were 1 among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain!

God used Roman Army / Gen Titus to SHUT Door of Temple in 70 AD

Nation: No King, Few Prophets, Many Priests > Religious Ritual > Jesus

Christian Leaders can Fail or Succeed > See Example of BOTH in Text

1. Five Failures of Leadership

1) Failure to Hear the Word of God > v. 2 “If you will not listen”

Two Responsibilities of OT priests? > Sacrifice AND Teaching Scriptures

read the sacred page and hear nothing from God > desperate for PRAYER

U can't herald what U don't hear > God must Speak to Us > Others

they have turned from the way > set out in the word of God.

Taught own thoughts by their own feelings by their own so-called insights.

Defined by own Values - Priorities – Attitudes > No Accountability to God

Hebrew for turning is Active, Deliberate, Not Accident, Turned away.

Bible is Standard to know God's Will & Hold Leaders Accountable

Voice of God in Scripture may be drowned out by other voices

God WARNED: "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord God, "when I will send a famine on the land — not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. Amos 8.11

2) Failure to Have a Heart for God's Glory

v. 2 "If you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the Lord of hosts

Issue does Your Heart have a burden to see God Glorified?

Does glory of God come before approval & praise of People?

Does it come before professional advancement?

Does it come before financial reward & material comfort?

Does we return to God like Needle of Compass / Weather Vane in Storm

Do we glorify God in private & public?

3) Turning Aside from the Ways of God

Lives fell short of Standards of Truth > supposed Model what we Teach

v. 8: "You have turned aside from the way . . . "

v. 9 "you have not kept my ways . . . "

Widespread Sexual & Financial Failure Among Pastors

It is a morbid and depressing fact that when it comes to adultery, there are too many casualties among pastors... No area, no country, no denomination is immune. The damage done in each case is irreparable: the breakdown, as far as ministry is concerned, final Samuel Logan

4) Show Partiality in Teaching

9: U not walked in my ways but have shown partiality in your instruction."

Priests treating Word of God same way were treating Sacrifices of God They give God the

Sacrifices that will leave you with the most Money.

They give people the Teaching that will bring in the most Money.

Paul to Timothy. Time will come when men will not put up with sound Doctrine. Instead to suit their own desires. They will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching is want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

5) Cause Many to Stumble v. 8 "You have caused many to stumble."

Are sins of Church Leaders more Grievous than Sins of others? YES!

Sin itself may be NO Worse > evil compounded by Public Responsibility

Moral collapse of the ministry is not the worst priestly failure.

Far more devastating for the church long term is the doctrinal defection

After Great Awakening New Eng 1740s: Pastors rejected Authority Bible

Charles Chauncy, Boston Congregationalist > Unitarianism/Universalism

Theology sung by John Lennon – Imagine No Heaven, No Hell, No Bible

200yrs+ Terrible Fruit: Churches NoRepentance, NoFaith, No Salvation

1000's pastors Drifted Away from Authority & Sufficiency of Scripture

Better if Chas Chauncy had only committed adultery! Right/Wrong/God

Liberal Theology – Unitarian/UCC – Rejection of God, Scripture, Faith

Don't be misled! The pastoral scandals of our day are not the greatest danger to the church. The great danger is the minimizing of deep spiritual commitment to doctrinal, biblical truth.

God's Reaction: Very Severe > Ldrs face STRICTER Judgment

2If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.

Covenant > Binding Relationship btwn 2 parties – Used by God // Lawyer

God was King – Determined TERMS – Based on LOVE for People

Covenant College - "bond in blood sovereignly administered"

Blessing > OBEY / Cursing > DISOBEY – Priests Disobeyed God

Choose Leaders > Church, Gov't, School IMMORAL

IMMORALITY becomes Publicly Accepted STANDARD for Kids

When the priests sin, they cause many to stumble.

v. 3 Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. 4So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the Lord of hosts.

Now what has made God so Angry? Rubbing Dung in Face = Anger

God: "You're treating Me w Disrespect, so I'll treat you like Garbage!"

“The leader who philanders has broken a trust placed in him by a wide community—trust in his vision, reliability, wisdom, and veracity & the essence of leadership is that trust. So a leader who violates trust in a fundamental and public manner is no longer a leader” David Neff

Too MANY victims of Priestly Failure > Hypocrisy of Christian Leaders Hypocrisy -

Expediency – Inconsistency - Worldliness - Partiality - Greed Cowardice - Pettiness - Harshness – Insensitivity > Doubt, REJECT X!

God saying: “I hate priestly hypocrisy 10,000 X’s More than You Do!”

God will Smear Dung on Face every Pastor/Leader forsakes His Glory

What a tragedy it would be this morning if anyone here is turning away from God & his glory because of the hypocrisy of some Leader!

"Don't let the hypocritical Christian leaders of your past drag you with them to destruction."

2. The Savior who Leads Leaders

Who are priests today? NT never uses term priest = pastor or elder

No official priesthood in the New Testament church.

Jesus Christ ONLY Sinless, Forever, Sacrifice Priest > Direct to God

Today if find Xtian Clergy call Selves PRIEST Huge Misunderstanding

God sent Son to offer Once-for-All Sacrifice for our Sin

Roman Catholic > priest very important > mass is Real Sacrifice

bread & wine transubstantiated into literal body & blood of X

“accident of appearance” – not look, smell, taste like flesh/blood

Mass > Christ offered up to God for the forgiveness of sins

Repeated Sacrifice in church requires official priesthood to perform

RC priest offers sacrifices just like OT priest offers animal sacrifices

NT calls Whole Church Holy Priesthood / Royal Priesthood 1 Peter 2

John: Christ made church a kingdom, priests to God (Rev 1.6)

Christ opened way for all to come directly to God through him

We walk w Christ—priest & sacrifice—right into Holiest Place

No official priesthood in NT church > No church leaders called priests

Glory of Priestly Success / All Xtians are kingdom of priests to God

The Tree of a Successful Ministry of the Word

Malachi's vision of Glory of Priestly Success // a Tree

deep root - strong trunk - broad branches - life-giving fruit: **ROOT**

So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may hold, says the LORD of hosts. My covenant with him was a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him, that he might fear; and he feared me, he stood in awe of my name.
Levi = Son of Jacob from whom all Priests > Sons of Aaron

Covenant btwn God & Ministers of Word > part of Law of Moses

v. 5: "My covenant with him was covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him [note God's initiative!], that he might fear [God's aim!]; and he feared me, and stood in awe of my name."

This is Root of all success in Ministry of Word without exception.

When the root is bad, everything will be bad.

Deep Root planted for Ministry of Word when man trembles before God

Stands in awe of his name, and has a heart for his glory.

There is absolutely no spiritual success without this root.

TRUNK = strong commitment to defend/proclaim truth of God's Word

v. 6 "True instruction was in his mouth"

v. 7 "The lips of a priest should guard knowledge [that's where I get the idea of defending the truth, protecting it from distortion and misuse]—he should guard knowledge—and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."

NOT just Lawyer defending his Case > Herald w Message from God

Trunk STRONG because Word is from GOD Not from man

v. 2 true minister of the Word listens to God.

v. 9 true minister of the Word refuses to Adjust message to show partiality

Root = Reverence for Glory of God/ Trunk = Faithfulness to Word of God

BRANCHES = Piety & Holiness Leader > personal life, devotion to God NO successful ministry of the Word without piety and righteousness.

v. 6 "No wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness."

v. 9 "You have not kept my ways."

True Servant of God Walks with God > pursues peace & stands upright Transparent - Straightforward – Faithful - Pure - Peaceable

Root = Devotion for Glory of God / Trunk = Faithfulness to Word of God Branches = Holiness in Presence of God / Fruit = Ministry of the Word

FRUIT = Many people are saved v. 6 "He turned many from iniquity"

Last Contrast > Clearest of All v. 6 "He turned many from iniquity"

v. 8 "You have caused many to stumble by your instruction"

What is the motive for this book?

Why God lay this burden upon Malachi's shoulders?

Why warning about God's Wrath > Because God LOVED them!

God's love so Reduced to Little thing > Easily flicked to the Edge of Life

At Same Time – People Very Religious – Attend Temple - Lots Sacrifices

He Loved them - Wanted them - wanted their Fellowship, their Company

Not Love to let child Do whatever that child wants.

Sign of lack of Love > Sign of Parent who does not care.

God gives Tough Love to his Children in Malachi

Life characterized by Peace & Uprightness > Impact Infinite & Eternal Jesus Christ > Great and Final Prophet, Priest, and King

Jesus Christ who Faithfully showed what God is like

Psalm 86 // Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. // **Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.** // Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day. // **Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.** //For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. // **Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace.** // In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me. // **There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.** // All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. // **For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.** // Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. // **I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.** // For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. // **O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.** // But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. // **Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant,** //

and save the son of your maidservant. Show me a sign of your favor, // **that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me. Amen and Amen.**