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Malachi's Message

By Teresa Hampton

Do you ever get the feeling when reading the books of the prophets that they could be addressing people today? Malachi's message certainly falls in that category.

Malachi wrote that the Israelites had issues with worship (1:13). They said worship was a *weariness* and they sneered at it. God required his people to give of the firstfruits, the best. The animals were to be unblemished, whole, without defect. Instead the Israelites offered sacrifices that were stolen, lame, or sick (7-8). God despised their sacrifices. He said through the prophet, they robbed him in tithes and offerings (3:8). Simply put, they worshiped the way *they* wanted to worship.

Malachi said the Israelites also had issues with marriage. They adjusted the rules of marriage according to their wants. Consequently, divorce was rampant. The prophet told them, *the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence...*" (2:16). He reminded them that the covenant of marriage is witnessed by God (2:14). It is a holy institution (2:11). They had dealt treacherously with their wives.

The obvious conclusion after reading of the book of Malachi is that the Israelites had an overall problem with authority. They disregarded God's authority in worship and the sanctity of marriage instituted by the Creator.

God still has supreme authority in worship. He wants us to worship him the way he directs. His view of giving has not changed. He still wants the best and despises leftovers. Instead of "returning a small portion," we should give cheerfully and liberally off the top of our earnings as we have prospered. Instead of viewing worship as a drudgery or duty like the Israelites, we should bring a spirit of joy and thankfulness for the privilege of being called his children.

God's view of marriage has not changed. Jesus addressed the Jew's practice of divorcing for any reason (Matt. 19:3-9). He reminded them that marriage was not a cultural entity, but a *divine* joining of man and woman which has existed from the beginning and will exist to the end (Gen. 2:18, 24). He said one should not divorce except for fornication.

Malachi's message is as pertinent now as it was in his day. The Lord expects us to deny selfish wants or wishes and yield to his authority in all matters.

Today's Verse: *For I am the Lord, I do not change...Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from my ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you...* (Malachi 3:6-7a)

Today's Challenge: Am I yielding to God's authority in all things?

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