

An underwater scene with a blue and green color palette. Sunlight rays filter down from the surface. In the foreground, a scroll with text is unrolled on a rock, with two rolled-up scrolls nearby. A small fish is visible in the background.

DEEP DIVE

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

May 2026 - June 2026

REV. AARIF G. BRADLEY, M. DIV

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LESSON 2

SUNDAY MAY 10, 2026

UNWORTHY WORSHIP

Malachi 1:6–14

KEY VERSE

“A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the LORD Almighty. Malachi 1:6 (NIV)

LESSON AIMS

As a result of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Understand what makes worship unworthy in God’s sight
2. Recognize how spiritual apathy shows up in practice
3. See the connection between reverence for God and the quality of our worship

KEY TERMS

- Honor – Reverence and respect due to God
- Despise – To treat God as unimportant or unworthy of respect
- Defiled – Made unclean; worship that is corrupted by improper attitudes or actions toward God
- Table of the Lord – The altar where sacrifices are offered to God
- Blemished offering – A flawed sacrifice that violates God’s standard of giving Him the best

- Blind / lame sacrifice – Animals with defects offered to God
- Contempt – A disrespectful attitude that treats God’s worship as worthless
- Profane – To treat something sacred as common or ordinary
- Weariness – A tired and indifferent attitude toward worship and serving God

INTRODUCTION

Worship is one of the most misunderstood areas of spiritual life. It is not limited to songs or service, but it is the entirety of one’s life surrendered and submitted to God in every way. In this portion of Malachi, worship has grown cold. Quality worship begins to erode when God is still acknowledged but no longer truly honored, when rituals remain but reverence fades, and when what is offered to God no longer reflects what is true about the character of God.

In Malachi’s day, Israel was still worshiping. The temple still functioned, sacrifices were still being offered, and religious life had not ceased. But beneath the surface, something had collapsed: their worship no longer carried weight. What they offered God revealed that He had become small or otherwise less significant in their eyes. This passage confronts a difficult truth: it is possible to be active in worship and still dishonor God by the quality of what is rendered to Him or what is not rendered to Him at all in worship.

| Analysis of the Biblical Text

A BROKEN UNDERSTANDING OF RELATIONSHIP (MALACHI 1:6)

| KJV

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

| NIV

A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the LORD Almighty. “It is you priests who show contempt for my name. But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’

God begins with a relational comparison: father/son and master/servant. These are not abstract titles; they carry built-in expectations. A son owes honor and a servant owes respect. God's question is not about ignorance but contradiction: if those relationships demand honor among people, why is there no honor given to Him? The issue is not whether Israel recognizes God, but whether they revere Him.

The word "honor" here carries the idea of weight or value. God is essentially asking: "Where is My weight in your life?" The problem is not absence of worship but absence of awe.

THE QUESTION THEY REFUSE TO SEE (MALACHI 1:6-7)

| KJV

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

| NIV

A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the LORD Almighty. "It is you priests who show contempt for my name. But you ask, How have we shown contempt for your name? By offering defiled food on my altar. But you ask, How have we defiled you? By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible.

Their response is subtle but revealing: "How have we shown contempt?" In other words, they are as we are often blind to their own condition. They like us tend to think why would God not be pleased with what we offer Him; shouldn't He receive whatever I give Him?

God answers by pointing to their offerings: they are bringing defiled food on His altar. This refers to sacrifices that are ceremonially unacceptable; animals that are blind, lame, or sick. According to the law, these were not just imperfect offerings, they were forbidden offerings according to Leviticus 22. The key issue is not ignorance but attitude. They are not accidentally dishonoring God. They are redefining what is acceptable to Him based on convenience.

REVEALING THE VALUE PROBLEM (MALACHI 1:8)

| KJV

And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

| NIV

When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you? says the LORD Almighty.

God presses deeper by comparing their worship toward Him with their behavior toward human authority. They would never present a defective gift to a governor or official. Yet they assume God will accept what they would reject for anyone else. Isn't it amazing people will stand when the President of the United States enters the room but will not stand in worship to God? This exposes the real issue that God has become less valuable than human authority in their thinking. Worship is always shaped by value. What we honor, we invest ourselves in; what we minimize, we give leftovers to.

EMPTY RELIGION CANNOT BE HIDDEN (MALACHI 1:9–10)

| KJV

“And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.

Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.”

| NIV

“Now plead with God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?”—says the LORD Almighty. “Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD Almighty, “and I will accept no offering from your hands.”

God then makes a striking statement, He wishes someone would shut the temple doors rather than continue meaningless worship. This is not rejection of worship itself, but rejection of worship without sincerity. God is not interested in participation without devotion and honor. The problem is not that sacrifices are being offered, but that they are being offered without cost, care, or reverence. He even asks whether He would accept such offerings from their hands. This implies that not everything religious is acceptable before Him.

GOD'S NAME WILL NOT BE CHEAPENED (MALACHI 1:11–12)

| KJV

“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.”

| NIV

“My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD Almighty.

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

God declares that His name will be great among the nations, even if His own people dishonor Him. This is a theological turning point; God's glory is not dependent on Israel's faithfulness. The irony is sharp: those who were chosen to honor His name are the very ones treating it as common, while others will one day recognize its greatness. Failure in worship does not diminish God, it exposes the worshiper.

WEARINESS IN WORSHIP (MALACHI 1:13–14)

| KJV

Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the LORD a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.”

| NIV

“And you say, ‘What a burden!’ and you sniff at it contemptuously,” says the LORD Almighty. “When you bring injured, lame or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?” says the LORD.

“Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king,” says the LORD Almighty, “and my name is to be feared among the nations.”

The people go further, treating worship itself as a burden: “What a weariness this is.” What began as dishonor becomes disdain. They are not just offering defective sacrifices; they are resenting the act of worship itself. They promise the best but give the worst, presenting blemished animals while claiming to be sincere in their honor of God. God calls this deception because it is pretend devotion while withholding true honor that is rightfully deserved by God. He closes by declaring judgment on those who treat sacred vows lightly, showing that God takes seriously what people begin to treat casually.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What is revealed about your view of God when obedience feels like a burden instead of a privilege?

| A Closing Thought

Unworthy worship is not primarily about external mistakes; it is about internal valuation. The issue in Malachi is not that Israel stopped worshiping, but that they stopped honoring. When God is no longer seen as weighty, worship becomes negotiable and when He is no longer treasured, offerings become minimal where what is given to God is not the best but what is left. And when reverence fades, religion becomes routine. God does not measure worship by activity, but by honor. What makes worship unworthy is not a lack of effort, but a lack of reverence. The real question Malachi forces us to face is this: Does our worship reflect what we believe God is worth? Because eventually, what we believe about God will show up in what we are willing to give Him and subsequently what we do not give Him. In view of the cross of Calvary in what Jesus has done for us God is indeed worthy of our best and all of our honor for through His son, Jesus, we are saved from eternal damnation.

| Your Life

Examine whether your worship has become convenient rather than costly. Where has devotion become routine instead of reverent? Ask God to help you see Him as truly valuable again in all areas of your life and ensure that your valuation of God becomes evident in your worship.

| Your World!

In a culture that treats almost everything as disposable, worship easily becomes casual and self-centered. But God calls His people to a different posture, one where He is honored as weighty, holy, and worthy in both private devotion and our public worship.



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Restore reverence in our hearts for You. Forgive us where we have given You less than our best or treated Your presence as common. Teach us again to honor You not only with words, but with what we offer, what we sacrifice, and how we live. Let our worship reflect Your true worth.

In Jesus' name, Amen.



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