

BIBLE STUDY HANDOUT

Malachi 1:6-14 — Temple, Sacrifice, Priests and Today

I. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MALACHI

- Malachi prophesies after Israel had returned from Babylonian exile under Nebuchadnezzar II.
- The Temple was rebuilt under **Zerubbabel** – Ezra 3:8, Ezra 5:1-2, Haggai 1:1, 12-14, Zechariah 4:6-9 (construction of the physical temple).
- Spiritual renewal occurred under **Ezra** – Ezra 7:10, Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah 8.
- **Nehemiah** oversaw the rebuilding of the walls and gates that had remained broken although the temple was rebuilt (Nehemiah 1-6).
- The Israelites are now back in Jerusalem where temple services had resumed to include sacrifices.
- Religion now exists again in full form but spiritually the people were indifferent, cynical, weary, half-hearted, and casual concerning things that were holy and sacred.
- Exile clearly had not transformed their hearts. So they restore the structure and acts of worship without restoring the true heart of worship.

Notes

II. THE TEMPLE: CENTER OF GOD'S PRESENCE

The Temple represented a number of things:

- God's dwelling among His covenant people; Holiness; Atonement; Mediation between God and sinners.
- God issues the decree for the construction of a Temple in Exodus 25:8.
- The Temple communicated the holiness of God, the sinful nature of humanity, and the reality that in order to reconcile God with sinful humanity mediation and sacrifice had to be made according to God's prescribed means.
- **The Tabernacle:** A portable sanctuary established under Moses (Exodus 25-31, 35-40).
- **The Temple:** David asked to build it, but Solomon completed it (Davidic Covenant). It followed the same basic structure but was permanent.

III. THE TEMPLE STRUCTURE

- **Outer court:** Where ordinary Israelites entered to bring sacrifices, offerings, prayers, and acts of worship.
- **Brazen Altar:** Made of wood and overlaid with bronze. Blood sacrifices were made here to atone for sin; sin required death. Once consecrated, everything that touched it became holy.
- **The Bronze Laver:** Where priests washed before entering the tabernacle so they would not die. Nobody was to approach holy things in a casual dirty means.
- **Inner court (Holy Place):** Sanctuary for priests only. Contains the **Golden Lampstand** (divine illumination), **Table of Showbread** (covenant fellowship), and **Altar of Incense** (prayer/intercession).
- **The Veil:** Separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies; a symbol of separation from God due to sin.
- **The Holy of Holies:** Most sacred place. Contains the **Ark of the Covenant** and the **Mercy Seat** (God's throne). Only the High Priest could enter once per year on the Day of Atonement.

IV. THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM

Instituted by God to communicate holiness, the penalty of sin, and substitutionary atonement.

- **Burnt Offering (Lev 1):** Voluntary atonement; substitute for the person's life. Must be without disease, deformity, defect or injury. God demanded perfection because it symbolized holiness and worth.
- **Grain Offering (Lev 2):** Voluntary; thanksgiving and dedication.
- **Peace Offering (Lev 3):** Voluntary; fellowship and covenant peace.
- **Sin Offering (Lev 4):** Mandatory; for known and unintentional sins.

- **Guilt Offering (Lev 5):** Required for violating holy things; included 20% compensation to priests.

In Malachi, the people were sifting through and keeping healthy animals for themselves, giving God what cost them the very least.

Notes

V. ROLES OF THE PRIEST & THE PEOPLE

- **Priests:** Responsible for inspecting sacrifices, teaching law, and guarding holiness. In Malachi, they permitted the corruption and allowed dishonoring God to become normal.
- **People:** Supposed to bring worthy offerings and obey. They placed holiness solely on the priest while maintaining compromise in their own hearts.

Notes

VI. JESUS & THE TEMPLE

- Jesus was the true Temple: The meeting place between God and humanity.
- The true unblemished and unspotted sacrifice.
- The Great High Priest and ONLY mediator between God and man.
- Through Jesus the veil of the Temple is torn (Matthew 27:50-51).

VII. THE CHURCH AS GOD'S TEMPLE

There is **NOTHING** holy about things. The building has no standing power; **you and I are the temple** (1 Cor 3:16)!

What is our sacrifice now?

- **Our bodies:** Romans 12:1; total devotion and stewardship.
- **Our praise:** Hebrews 13:15.

■ **Our generosity:** Philippians 4:18.

■ **Brokenness and repentance:** Psalm 51:17.

Reflection Notes