

PARK HEIGHTS CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Thus Saith the Lord

REALLY?

By Jeff Sweeten

As Malachi shouldered the “burden of the word of the Lord” (Malachi 1:1), Israel was girding up for battle. Not a physical battle, but a barrage of excuses lofted from ramparts of pride. The worst part for Malachi may have been his embarrassment at the excuses his people offered to defend their rejection of God, which were so off-the-charts silly that it would have been hilarious had it not been so soul-damning sad. All one can say is: “Really?”

The first rattle out of the box, Malachi fielded a whopper: Israel’s flawed sacrifices, a tradition that began with Cain and Abel. One obeyed God or didn’t; Abel did (Hebrews 11:4), Cain didn’t (1 John 3:12). So, in the dying throes of God’s divinely chosen people, Malachi offered constructive criticism.

“Where is My reverence?” God asked through the prophet, because “you offer defiled food on My altar” (1:6-7). The response? “In what way have we despised Your name?” (v. 7). Their retort is so insulting it borders mockery! It is incredulous that those who gave it could be serious, like they were oblivious! Really? Malachi comes out of the corner swinging for the fence. “And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?” (v. 8). It’s like explaining addition to an algebra student. Really?

So, in classic form, Malachi gives them a practical application. “Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” (v. 8). Ha! This is so elementary it’s omitted from “Sacrifices for Dummies.”

The point is this: sin is “not-smart” (that’s “stupid,” for those who are more jaded). You cannot sin with impunity; “...and be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). “God is not mocked” (Galatians 6:7) and to think He doesn’t see right down to your very soul, who you are and what you are, is a classic case of “not-smart.” Do you really think you can offer that excuse? Really? Those absurd rationalizations used to justify poor behavior (as if anyone really buys into them!) will not pass muster in Judgment.

Be advised, the best course of action is to repent and submit, because “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

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