

Malachi 4:2-3

"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD Almighty."

Our study in Malachi has presented to us the contrast between those who biblically fear the Lord and those who claim fidelity to God but show by their hearts and actions their distrust of God's promises and sovereignty. What makes the difference in whether we choose to be those who fear God or those who do not? It is the question about how our ethics (what we do) is changed by our theology (what we believe). While the decisions we make in the 21st century are certainly different, the decisions faced by Malachi's generation and the decision about how our faith will align with our practice have not changed one bit.

Jesus dealt with the disconnection people have between theology and ethics. In Luke 6:46, Jesus asked, *"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"* Usually our focus is on correct knowledge, but knowledge without a correct response produces the same result as not even having the knowledge. This highlights the struggle of Malachi speaking to Israel and realizing on a heart level we are no better. Just like Israel, we need to reset our hearts, reboot our worship and renew our relationship with the Father — our theme through this Old Testament book.

Malachi's view of those who fear the Lord are the people whose character has been shaped by a daily walk with Him and whose very thoughts are of Him. They would not be like the priests of Malachi's day, who would ask "what's in it for me, right now?" This is the sickness of the Church today, where our eyes are more focused on the numbers in attendance than we are on the amount of Christ likeness that is in our own heart. Is our priority duty or is it discipleship? When we examine our lives, does the priority of our hearts put us on the wrong side of the anticipated Day of the Lord?

Do not let Malachi be a "one and done" study, relegated to the intellectual storehouse of biblical knowledge accumulated in your Christian experience. The call for continual renewal and sanctification is the lifework of those who pursue Jesus Christ, a call to examine and test ourselves regarding how we see our relationship with God. Do we tremble at the prospect of dishonoring Him by not trusting His promises or by living in disobedience to His commands? May we be a part of the remnant which Malachi tells are, *"those who feared the LORD, talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored His name."* (Malachi 3:16)