

Monday, December 30

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Malachi 1:1 - 2:17

1 **1** This is the message that the LORD gave to Israel through the prophet Malachi. **2** “I have always loved you,” says the LORD . But you retort, “Really? How have you loved us?” And the LORD replies, “This is how I showed my love for you: I loved your ancestor Jacob, **3** but I rejected his brother, Esau, and devastated his hill country. I turned Esau’s inheritance into a desert for jackals.” **4** Esau’s descendants in Edom may say, “We have been shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins.” But the LORD of Heaven’s Armies replies, “They may try to rebuild, but I will demolish them again. Their country will be known as ‘The Land of Wickedness,’ and their people will be called ‘The People with Whom the LORD Is Forever Angry.’ **5** When you see the destruction for yourselves, you will say, ‘Truly, the LORD ’s greatness reaches far beyond Israel’s borders!’” **6** The LORD of Heaven’s Armies says to the priests: “A son honors his father, and a servant respects his master. If I am your father and master, where are the honor and respect I deserve? You have shown contempt for my name! “But you ask, ‘How have we ever shown contempt for your name?’ **7** “You have shown contempt by offering defiled sacrifices on my altar. “Then you ask, ‘How have we defiled the sacrifices?’ ” “You defile them by saying the altar of the LORD deserves no respect. **8** When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn’t that wrong? And isn’t it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is!” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. **9** “Go ahead, beg God to be merciful to you! But when you bring that kind of offering, why should he show you any favor at all?” asks the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. **10** “How I wish one of you would shut the Temple doors so that these worthless sacrifices could not be offered! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “and I will not accept your offerings. **11** But my name is honored by people of other nations from morning till night. All around the world they offer sweet incense and pure offerings in honor of my name. For my name is great among the nations,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. **12** “But you dishonor my name with your actions. By bringing contemptible food, you are saying it’s all right to defile the Lord’s table. **13** You say, ‘It’s too hard to serve the LORD,’ and you turn up your noses at my commands,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “Think of it! Animals that are stolen and crippled and sick are being presented as offerings! Should I accept from you such offerings as these?” asks the LORD . **14** “Cursed is the cheat who promises to give a fine ram from his flock

but then sacrifices a defective one to the Lord. For I am a great king,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “and my name is feared among the nations!

2 **1** “Listen, you priests—this command is for you! **2** Listen to me and make up your minds to honor my name,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “or I will bring a terrible curse against you. I will curse even the blessings you receive. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you have not taken my warning to heart. **3** I will punish your descendants and splatter your faces with the manure from your festival sacrifices, and I will throw you on the manure pile. **4** Then at last you will know it was I who sent you this warning so that my covenant with the Levites can continue,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. **5** “The purpose of my covenant with the Levites was to bring life and peace, and that is what I gave them. This required reverence from them, and they greatly revered me and stood in awe of my name. **6** They passed on to the people the truth of the instructions they received from me. They did not lie or cheat; they walked with me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin. **7** “The words of a priest’s lips should preserve knowledge of God, and people should go to him for instruction, for the priest is the messenger of the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. **8** But you priests have left God’s paths. Your instructions have caused many to stumble into sin. You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Levites,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. **9** “So I have made you despised and humiliated in the eyes of all the people. For you have not obeyed me but have shown favoritism in the way you carry out my instructions.” **10** Are we not all children of the same Father? Are we not all created by the same God? Then why do we betray each other, violating the covenant of our ancestors? **11** Judah has been unfaithful, and a detestable thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. The men of Judah have defiled the LORD’s beloved sanctuary by marrying women who worship idols. **12** May the LORD cut off from the nation of Israel every last man who has done this and yet brings an offering to the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. **13** Here is another thing you do. You cover the LORD’s altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings and doesn’t accept them with pleasure. **14** You cry out, “Why doesn’t the LORD accept my worship?” I’ll tell you why! Because the LORD witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows. **15** Didn’t the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. **16** “For I hate divorce!” says the LORD, the God of Israel. “To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.” **17** You have wearied the LORD with your words. “How have we wearied him?” you ask. You have wearied him by saying that all who do evil are good

in the LORD 's sight, and he is pleased with them. You have wearied him by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

Revelation 21:1 - 27

21 **1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. **2** And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. **4** He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." **5** And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." **6** And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. **7** All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. **8** "But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." **9** Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." **10** So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. **11** It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal. **12** The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. **13** There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west. **14** The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. **15** The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. **16** When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles. **17** Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel). **18** The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. **19** The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, **20** the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. **21** The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate

from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass. **22** I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. **23** And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. **24** The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. **25** Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. **26** And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. **27** Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Psalm 149:1 - 9

149 **1** Praise the LORD ! Sing to the LORD a new song. Sing his praises in the assembly of the faithful. **2** O Israel, rejoice in your Maker. O people of Jerusalem, exult in your King. **3** Praise his name with dancing, accompanied by tambourine and harp. **4** For the LORD delights in his people; he crowns the humble with victory. **5** Let the faithful rejoice that he honors them. Let them sing for joy as they lie on their beds. **6** Let the praises of God be in their mouths, and a sharp sword in their hands— **7** to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, **8** to bind their kings with shackles and their leaders with iron chains, **9** to execute the judgment written against them. This is the glorious privilege of his faithful ones. Praise the LORD !

Proverbs 31:10 - 24

31 **10** Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is more precious than rubies. **11** Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life. **12** She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. **13** She finds wool and flax and busily spins it. **14** She is like a merchant's ship, bringing her food from afar. **15** She gets up before dawn to prepare breakfast for her household and plan the day's work for her servant girls. **16** She goes to inspect a field and buys it; with her earnings she plants a vineyard. **17** She is energetic and strong, a hard worker. **18** She makes sure her dealings are profitable; her lamp burns late into the night. **19** Her hands are busy spinning thread, her fingers twisting fiber. **20** She extends a helping hand to the poor and opens her arms to the needy. **21** She has no fear of winter for her household, for everyone has warm clothes. **22** She makes her own bedspreads. She dresses in fine linen and purple gowns. **23** Her husband is well known at the city gates, where he sits with

the other civic leaders. **24** She makes belted linen garments and sashes to sell to the merchants.