

Squandered Squash and Wasted Watermelon – Malachi 2:11-13

I. Introduction:

- A. A few of you are familiar with the **“God Father”** movies. I won't point any fingers. I can't point any fingers.
1. In the midst of much disturbing material in that series, there was one which particularly bothers me.
 2. The leaders of the Corleone family were outwardly very religious; they were strong Roman Catholics.
 3. At the end of one of the movies, Michael Corleone is standing beside his sister, becoming the Catholic godfather to her child, while at the same time his henchmen were murdering some of his rivals, making him the criminal godfather of that branch of the maffia.
 4. The message conveyed is that very wicked men may be received with approval by the Roman Catholic “church,” if they are generous and outwardly religious.
 5. Let me assure you that Jehovah is not so gracious.
- B. The people of restored Judah were living in the transgression of God's laws.
1. Many were sinning treacherously, abominably and adulterously against their Jewish wives.
 2. Some, especially in leadership positions as we learn from Nehemiah, were putting away their wives to marry the beautiful daughters of local idolaters.
 3. And yet, while doing this, they were still bringing some of their livestock to be sacrificed on the Lord's altar.
 4. Ignoring for a moment, the wretched and unworthy condition of those beasts, those people were pretending to be religious.
 5. To this Malachi responded, *“The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this... and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.”*
 6. It doesn't matter how many crocodile tears are shed...
 7. It doesn't matter if the betrayed wives bathed with tears the sacrifices of their wicked husbands...
 8. The Lord *“regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.”*
- C. Today, there are millions, if not billions, of people throughout the world who believe that if they are sufficiently religious, they are acceptable with God.
1. Some of them think that to be a member of some church is enough to please God.
 2. Others go to greater lengths by attending those churches once in a while, or by tithing.
 3. Being religious means different religious practices to different people.
 4. But the God who rejected the sacrifices of the Jews, has not changed over the years, and is not going to accept the offerings of sinful people today.
 5. Clearly, there are a great many types of sinful sacrifices, all of which will never be regarded by God.
 6. And there are several examples of this in the pages of God's Word, offering to us a variety of lessons.

II. For example, there is the disregarded offering of Adam's son, Cain.

- A. Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. I wonder how this came about?
1. Did Adam tell his sons that in order to have a good diet and a healthy economy the family needed to diversify?
 2. Or was Abel an animal person and that developed into a love for sheep and other animals, while Cain loved the feel of dirt in his hands, marveling at the growth and development of vegetables?
 3. It matters not.
- B. As they had been taught, the day came when it was expected that the boys should make an offering to God.
1. I have no doubt in my mind that Adam had shared with his family the story of his redemption.
 2. He told them about the death of the animals whose skins were given to him and his wife as clothing.
 3. I am sure that he related that blood was essential for atonement and the covering of sin.
 4. And those young men had previously brought their sacrifices to the place God established for His altar.
 5. But perhaps it irked Cain to have to go to his brother, trading some of his tomatoes & potatoes for a sheep.
 6. And then one day, after reasoning with himself that he had brought enough sheep in the past; now he was going to give to God something he himself had grown – some vegetables.

7. Perhaps he thought, *“God must love my veggies as much as I do.”*
 8. *“But unto Cain and to his offering (the Lord) had not respect.”*
 9. In this situation, Cain squandered his squash and wasted his watermelons.
- C. Of course, none of us can know exactly what was in the heart of Cain when he approached God’s altar.
1. But studying the context, I think that perhaps we can make some reasonable assumptions.
 2. As I have said, I believe that **Cain knew** what **God expected** in the way of a proper sacrifice.
 - a. *“Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).*
 - b. *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” (Leviticus 17:11).*
 3. On this day, in this case, Cain either rejected the instruction he had received, or he rationalized it away.
 4. In other words, the offering he presented that day came out of his **self-will** mixed with a bit of **pride**.
 5. The Lord disregarded Cain’s offering, because God knew what was in the man’s heart, and because it was contrary to the Lord’s revealed will.
- D. But let’s give Cain the benefit of the doubt.
1. Let’s say that Adam’s instructions were not well given. Let’s say that Adam taught his sons poorly.
 2. We don’t know the age of the two boys, but let’s say they were in their early twenties.
 3. This was apparently his first sacrificial offence; never had he made this *“mistake”* before.
 4. It might be **argued** that God should have given Cain **some slack**; some **grace**.
- E. May I point out **that** is exactly what **the Lord did**.
1. God didn’t dispatch His death angel to kill Cain.
 2. He didn’t send a lightning bolt out of the blue sky to strike down that prenatal idolater.
 3. The Lord simply ignored or disregarded the vegetables on His altar.
 4. He gave the young man time to consider, reflect and repent of the offering he had prepared.
 5. Perhaps, in the past, the Lord Himself had ignited the fire under the splayed and filleted sheep, but on this occasion He did nothing to the offering of Cain.
 6. In some fashion it was clear to both boys that God was not delighted with squash and watermelon.
- F. And that brought out more of the sin which was resident in Cain’s heart.
1. *“And Cain as very wrath, and his countenance fell.”*
 2. His **pride** was crushed. His **wisdom** was thwarted. His **self-will** was rendered impotent before God.
 3. I can’t say that Abel didn’t rub it in, taunting and teasing just a bit. They certain had a little *“talk.”*
 4. But the wickedness within Cain exploded, and he *“rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”*
 5. He was a child of his father, the devil, and *“the lusts of his father he committed.”*
 6. *“He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth.”*
- G. The point is, God has His rules when it comes to the offerings He is willing to accept.
1. If there is no blood, there will never be an atonement.
 2. And since the day of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not the blood of the grape, the blood of the turnip, the blood of the bullock or the blood of the sheep that God requires.
 3. There is only one kind of blood accepted by the Lord: the blood which Christ shed on Calvary.
 4. *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Peter 1:18-19).*
- H. God disregarded the sacrifices of the priests in Malachi’s day just as He had disregarded the sacrifice of Cain.

III. There is another disregarded offering which we see in the life of Israel's first king.

- A. **I Samuel 13** tells us that Saul had finished his first year as king, and was well into his second year, when the Philistines attacked once again.
1. Saul and his son Jonathan had three thousand men, when the Philistines appeared with an army like the sand of the sea, augmented by horsemen and chariots.
 2. *"When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits,"* and some of the men were even deserting.
 3. Samuel, had sent a message to Saul telling him to wait for his arrival at Gilgal.
 - a. One of God's greatest prophets was going to come and make things right, probably by offering to God some sort of sacrifice.
 - b. Samuel said he would be there in a few days and the blessing of the Lord would once again lead Israel to victory.
 4. Well as the Bible says, Saul *"tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him."*
 - a. *And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, & peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.*
 - b. *And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.*
 - c. *And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;*
 - d. *Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering."*
- B. At first glance, what Saul did appears to be **logical** and **spiritual**, but in reality it was **self-willed** and **wicked**.
1. Again, we might give him the benefit of the doubt, pointing out that his army was deserting him, and he needed to do something religious to hold them together.
 2. His intelligence reports were describing a huge Philistine army just over the ridge to the west, ready to sweep down on him. Something need to be done quickly.
 3. God's prophet had promised to come to him there in the Jordan valley, but most likely he would have had to come through the enemies lines to reach him, and he may have been killed or captured.
 4. Saul needed the blessing of the Lord, and apparently there were no priests available offer any sacrifices and to provoke the Lord's grace.
 5. *"I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering."*
- C. While not actually employing the word, God **"disregarded"** Saul's offering that day.
1. *"And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee" (I Samuel 13:14).*
 2. Some good piece of livestock was slain for no purpose, because God's rules were not being obeyed.
 3. It doesn't matter how the circumstances made that sacrifice expedient, our God lives above circumstances.
 4. In fact God creates and controls circumstances.
 5. That seven day delay in Samuel's arrival was a divine test for the heart of King Saul.
 6. His echocardiogram failed, and he was found unfit for office.
- D. There are millions of Americans who, **like Cain**, try to sacrifice offerings of their own choosing.
1. And there are others who, **like Saul**, attempt to become their own priests in order to call down the blessing of the Lord.
 2. But for troubled sinners today, there is only one sacrifice for sin; there is but one offering established by the Lord to procure God's blessing and peace.
 3. Furthermore, there is only one priest authorized to make that sacrifice, and it is not me or you.

4. There are no black-robed, or even purple-robed men, who are authorized to accept your offerings on behalf of the Lord.
 5. There are no organizations, whether religious like some denomination, medical like the Shriners Hospital, or social like the Freemasons, who can receive your gifts and offerings to pass on to the Lord.
- E. In miraculous fashion, Christ Jesus is both the sacrifice and the priest who presented the blood to the Father.
1. The **Book of Hebrews** spends several chapters establishing that Christ is God's only and greatest priest.
 2. In the will of the Father, *"it behoved (Christ Jesus) to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful & faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."*
 3. Christ *"gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father"* (**Galatians 1:4**).
 4. He *"gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, & purify unto himself a peculiar people."*
- F. Saul's sacrifice was disregarded because he usurped the priest's office.

IV. Among several other examples of disregarded offerings, let's consider the one found in Isaiah.

- A. Please join me in looking at **Isaiah 1:10**.
1. *"Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."*
 - a. Have you ever heard someone call the United States *"Sodom and Gomorrah?"*
 - b. There is good reason, because our society is becoming more and more like those cities of the plain.
 - c. And there is Biblical precedence, because **Isaiah** is condemning Israel in this scripture, not the cities destroyed by God more than a thousand years earlier.
 2. *"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, & the fat of fed beasts; & I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats."*
 - a. *When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?*
 - b. *Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. "*
 - c. *"Vain oblations"* refers to empty, useless sacrifices and other religious rites.
 - d. Even Israel's solemn church services were disregarded by the Lord.
 3. *"Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them."*
 - a. *And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."*
 - b. We will return to God's statement *"I am weary to bear them"* in tonight's message.
 - c. The point is: all of Israel's religious rites, ritual and rigamarole were pointless.
 - d. They were more than pointless and waste, they was sinful in themselves.
- B. From there the great Old Testament evangelist moves into the gospel.
1. *"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil."*
 2. The holy God is not going to accept the **self-will offerings** of Cain nor the **priestless offerings** of Saul.
 3. And the Lord certainly isn't interested in **any of the sacrifices** of pride-filled and wicked **sinner**s.
 4. **Proverbs 15:8** says, *"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,"* Mr. Godfather.
 5. **Jeremiah** declared to Israel, *"Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins."*
 - a. *Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.*
 - b. *When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence."*

- C. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross, is all that is necessary to save the worst of all sinners, whoever that might be.
1. Isaiah went on after saying, *“Wash you, make you clean.”*
 2. *“Come now, and let us reason together; saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”*
 3. If that sinner refuses to accept and utilize God’s gift of repentance, the Lord will not save him.
 4. And if that sinner refuses to put his faith and trust in the work of the Saviour, then God is not going to thrust Himself down upon the man and save his unwilling soul.
- D. **Luke 13** describes a scene in which, *“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.*
- a. *And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?*
 - b. *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
 - c. *Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?*
 - d. *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*
- E. The people and priests of Isaiah’s and Malachi’s days were as religious as they had ever been.
1. They were *“going to church”* and offering their sacrifices, as unacceptable as they were.
 2. But they were continuing in their sins and adding to them on a regular basis.
 3. The omniscient God, of course, was well aware of it all.
 4. And this is the reason He said through Malachi, *“Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved,6 and hath married the daughter of a strange god.*
 - a. *The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.*
 - b. *And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.”*
- F. Disregarded sacrifices are a real problem.
1. And what are the sacrifices that **you** have **been offering** to God?
 2. Have they been anything short of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ?
 3. Have you been trying to give to God offerings of your own design, and have you been presenting them in your own name and upon your own righteousness?
 4. I can assure you that they have been, and will continue to be, disregarded.
- G. There is only one sacrifice capable of covering our sins – the shed blood of the Son of God.
1. In humble acknowledgment of your sinful condition before the Lord and trust the sacrifice which Christ Jesus made on Calvary.
 2. *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*
 - a. *“Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:*
 - b. *But this man (the Lord Jesus Christ), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.*
 - c. *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”*
 3. If your trust for salvation and deliverance from sin is not squarely placed on Jesus Christ and His sacrifice you have no hope before God.
 4. The Lord disregards every other kind of sacrifice.
 5. I plead with you, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”*