

HOT BUTTON TOPICS
(Close to the heart of our God)
JANUARY 13, 2008

Introduction –

It's a presidential election year, and I admit it, it excites me. A week ago Thursday found me checking my TV for the Iowa Caucus results, and this past Tuesday found me once again captivated by the w process being played out in New Hampshire – the country's first primary. Already we've had different winners in each state for both parties. It will be interesting to see who ultimately gets their party's nomination.

According to World News Tonight, the buzzword for this campaign is “*change*”. They went on to say, that that's kind of funny as that seems to be the buzzword every time. Americans want change! So the politicians promise it, though rarely delivering.

Likewise, in the church, God is doing some marvelous “new things”, and we better be ready for change! However, some of the main “**Hot Button Topics for 2008**” are the same topics that have been around for years, even centuries. Obviously though, they are **near and dear to the heart of God**. Hear today God's word to us. Like last week's word it is critical to our moving forward in all that God has for us.

“YOU WILL ARISE AND HAVE COMPASSION ON ZION, FOR IT IS TIME TO SHOW FAVOR TO HER; THE APPOINTED TIME HAS COME” – PSALMS 102:13

1.

Mal. 1:6-8 – “*The Lord Almighty says, **where are the honor and respect I deserve? You have despised my name!** But you ask, ‘How have we ever despised Your name?’ ‘You have despised my name 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. When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animal that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to you governor, and see how pleased he is!*’ says the Lord Almighty.

Discussion –

- Obviously, we don't offer animal sacrifices any more; so how does this point apply to us? (Hint: Who & what is the sacrifice acceptable to God today? Romans 12:1)

2.

Mal. 2:14-16a – “*You cry out, ‘Why has the Lord abandoned us?’ I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the **vows you and your wife made to each other on your wedding day** when you were young. But you have been disloyal to her, though she remained your faithful companion, the wife of our marriage vows. 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 yourself; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. **“For I hate divorce!”** says the Lord.*

Discussion –

- Why does God feel so strongly about marriage?
- How is it true that a church is only as strong as it's marriages?
- It says, “God hates divorce”. How do we minister that in this day and age?
- What is the by-product of a godly union?

3.

Mal. 3:8-10 – **“Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me!”** But you ask, “What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?” **“You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,”** says the Lord Almighty, **“I will open the window of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you!”**

Discussion –

- Isn’t “tithing” part of the Old Testament Law? If so, why should it apply to us?
- How does the New Testament treat tithing as simply the “starting point”?

4.

Mal. 3:13-15 – **“You have said terrible things about me,”** says the Lord. But you say, “What do you mean? How have we spoken against you?” **“You have said, ‘What’s the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying His commands or by trying to show the Lord Almighty that we are sorry for our sins? From now on we will say, ‘Blessed are the arrogant’ For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them go free of harm.”**

Psalms 73:2-3,16-17 – **“But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked ... When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.”**

2 Cor 4:17-18 – **“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far out weighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”**

Discussion –

- How and why is it offensive to God when we complain that we’re no better off than those who don’t know Him?
- How and why is this a “trust issue”?
- How does having an “eternal perspective” help?