

“The Greatness of God's Name Among the Nations” (An Exposition of Malachi 1:6-14)¹

Introduction

We have recently started a new sermon series going through the last book of the Old Testament – *Malachi*. This morning we will be continuing our look at Malachi 1:6-14, which began a couple Sundays ago. There is just so much in this passage that we were unable to unpack it all in a single sermon, so we have had to spread it out over at least a couple sermons – this being part 2 (so to speak).

As we saw a couple Sundays ago, here in our text the Lord has much to say to His people and the priests by way of *rebuke* for their handling of the sacrifices at the newly-rebuilt temple. They were worshiping in such a way as to *despise God's name* (v.6) and even *despising God's table* (v.7). How? By offering blind, lame, and sick animals as sacrifices!

But even in the midst of these rebukes, the Lord includes *prophecies of the gospel and of the New Testament age*. For even though His people were despising His name and offering polluted sacrifices, God tells them that a day was coming when His holy name would be **“great among the nations”** (twice in v.11), and when **“in every place incense would be offered”** in His name **“and a pure offering”** (v.11)!

As the Lord Jesus told the woman at the well in John 4:21–24,

“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The worship of God was ultimately never intended to be restricted to one narrow location on the map, nor was it ultimately ever meant to be restricted to any one people. And so now we no longer have an earthly temple, nor the Levitical sacrificial system, because Christ himself is the true Temple, the true Great High Priest, and the true Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world!

The temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifices were ultimately all intended to point forward to the Christ who was yet to come! This helps to explain why the priests' and people's mishandling of the holy things in the temple was so egregious and sinful. In a sense, they were not just despising God's name and His table, but were even despising His Christ!

But now, as Christ told the Samaritan woman at the well, God is seeking those who will worship Him **“in spirit and in truth,”** for that is how He must be worshiped! The unbelieving Jews in Malachi's day were not fearing the Lord as they should have (i.e. **“where is my fear?”** -v.6), and it showed in how they approached the sacrifices in the temple. But there was a day coming (and which now is!) when the name of our **“great King”** who is **“the LORD of hosts”** would **“be feared among the nations”** (v.14)!

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

As we saw a couple Sundays ago when we first looked at this text, things had gotten so bad with the way that the people of Israel were treating the temple and offering polluted or blemished sacrifices that God went so far as to say that it would have been better if someone had simply **“shut the doors,”** so that no one could **'kindle fire on His altar in vain'** (v.10).

That is the context of God's wonderful promise and prophecy of the coming of Christ and the dawn of the New Testament age! God Himself would see to it that there would be true worshipers of Him everywhere, in every place!

He was not beholden to the unbelieving Jews just because He had, in His mercy and kindness, brought it to pass that the temple was rebuilt. Sadly, it did not seem to take very long for many of the people to begin taking God for granted again and treating the temple like a lucky rabbit's foot or something.

The Greatness of God's Name Among the Nations

Starting in v.11 the Lord prophesies through Malachi about the greatness of His name, not just in Israel, but **“among the nations.”** He says that *twice* in v.11!

Now that would have been shocking for the Israelites to hear. It is probably just about impossible for any of us to appreciate just how radical a thing that must have sounded like to the people of Israel in Malachi's day. The Hebrew word that is translated as **“nations”** is *goyim*, which is often used to refer to foreign, heathen nations – Gentiles!

God is telling His people that they (His own covenant people) had been *despising His name* (v.6) in how they went through the motions in worship, but – not to worry – the *Gentiles* all over the world would one day in the not so distant future worship God acceptably through Christ and magnify the greatness of His name **“from the rising of the sun to its setting”** (v.11).

This is a wonderful prophecy of *the spread of the gospel to the very ends of the earth*, and one that had a great many foreshadowings *throughout* the Old Testament!

In Genesis 22:18 God gave Abraham a promise of the Messiah to come, saying, **“and in your offspring shall *all the nations* [same word – *goya*] of the earth be blessed . . .”** (Italics added) As Paul would later say in Galatians 3:16,

“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.”

Ultimately the promised offspring or seed of Abraham was *singular*, and this was referring to Christ!

In Isaiah 49:6 it is written of the Messiah who was yet to come:

**“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations [same word - *goyim*],
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”** (italics added)

What a wonderful promise of the spread of the gospel of Christ that we find here in Malachi. And this will by no means be the last such prophecy of Christ that we find in this great book! And think about the implications of what God is saying here. What is the spread of the gospel of Christ to all of the nations on the earth all about? What is its goal? The salvation of sinners by God's grace? Certainly! But there is something even greater and more important at stake – the glory of God!

Look again at v.11, where God says,

“For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.”

The greatness of God's name is the aim, goal, and intended result of the gospel going out to the ends of the earth! As John Piper has said, “Missions exists because worship doesn't.”²

We who believe in Christ are to evangelize the lost, not just so that they may hear and believe unto salvation (as important as that is!), but also that they might come to *worship and glorify the one true and living God!*

The glory of God is the ultimate motive for evangelism and missions. And so there is no such thing as “unsuccessful” evangelism if we are faithfully testifying to Christ and His gospel!

Indeed, even as the very first question and answer of our *Shorter Catechism* tells us, “Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” As the Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:31, **“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”**

And so why should we support foreign (and domestic!) missions? For the glory of God, that **‘from the rising of the sun to its setting God's name might be great among the nations,’** so that they might come to offer up a **“pure offering”** to His name (v.11).

And that will surely come to pass, as Revelation 7:9-12 tells us of that **“great multitude that no one could number”** *from every nation, tribe, people, and language* gathered to worship, standing before the Lamb in white robes, praising God!

Weariness in Worship?

Next God turns our attention back to those in Israel, including the priests, who seemed to be *weary of worshiping and serving the Lord*. This is a theme that we will be seeing again throughout the rest of this short book. In v.12-16 it is written:

“But you profane it when you say that the Lord’s table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.”

2 *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, p.11

Here we see that the blemished offerings were having another bad effect. Not only was God Himself not pleased with them, but (ironically) in many ways the priests came to despise them too!

Why was that? Because it was from the offerings at the temple that the priests obtained their living! Their portion was from the foods offered in the sacrifices! That is why the Lord says (in v.13) “**But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts.**”

The priests were essentially dissatisfied with their pay! And so they found serving God to be a “**weariness**” and “**snorted**” (or turned up their nose) at it. They were like a child refusing to eat his supper because he wants something else instead!

Now let me tell you, if I may, that the ministry of the gospel is hard work. It can be an exhausting work. In fact, if you're doing this job and you aren't at times a bit tired, you're probably not doing it right!

But although a servant of God may at times tire *from* the work, we must never tire *of* the work.

The unbelieving Israelites in Malachi's day tired of worshiping God because they seemed to think that they deserved better from God. They thought that as long as they went through their motions, God was obliged to bless them. And nothing could be further from the truth.

Do you ever find yourself feeling that way? Are you tempted to think “What is the use in trying to serve the Lord and follow in His ways?” (See Malachi 3:14-15.)

Conclusion

Let us never treat God as an idol to be manipulated for our own purposes. Let us, by the grace of God, seek to bless and glorify His name at all times for His steadfast love toward us in Christ!

Let us worship and serve God “**in spirit and in truth**” from the heart, and do so for the glory of His name, not just so that we can get a blessing.

Let us offer unto God pure sacrifices, giving Him our best, rather than *cheating* Him. For He is “**a great King**” and His name “**will be feared among the nations**” (v.14).

If we wait to give our best until we see God's material and worldly blessings, we will have cheated both God and ourselves. For He has already given us His best in sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for our salvation from sin.

And in Christ we have been blessed with “**every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places**” (Ephesians 1:3). If we think on those things – all of the many blessings that we possess in Christ by faith, then we will be fully furnished with causes to praise and glorify our God for His grace!

May the Lord Jesus revive us by the work of His Holy Spirit within us, that we might more and more love the Lord our God because He first loved us; that we might seek to glorify His great name in all things; and that we might fear and worship Him rightly. - Amen