

How Have We Despised Your Name? **Malachi 1:6-2:2**

Introduction

Throughout their history, Israel many times despised their covenant with God in one of two ways. Often, the people despised God by simply turning to worship idols. Other times, as here in the time of Malachi, they despised God's covenant by how they kept the rites of the covenant. Their defiled worship of Yahweh in fact was another way of despising Him. Israel here has become more like Edom (cf. 1:2-3, Gen. 25:34) than a true Israel.

Summary of the Text

God begins to bring charges against the priests. Honor is due to the Lord of hosts because He is the great King over all the earth (Ps. 47:2), but His priests despise His name. Because of this, the Lord says to them that He has no pleasure in them.

A – God makes clear that honor is due to Him, yet the priests despise His name (v. 6).

B – They offer defiled sacrifices (v. 7-8).

C – Would God be pleased? They vainly light up the altar (v. 9-10a)?

D – God has no pleasure in them nor accepts their offering (v. 10b).

C¹ – Pure offerings will be given in every place to God's name, which will be great among the nations (v. 11).

B¹ – But the priests profane His name, knowingly giving defiled offerings (vs. 12-14).

A¹ – Because of the priests' profane hearts, their due is cursed blessings (2:1-2).

Chiasms are a literary device common in Scripture. A passage will have parallel sections from the outside that lead to a center point. Chiasms are a device used to draw the reader's attention to that point, much like any of a number of devices in paintings used to draw the viewer's eye to a particular feature. When we come across a chiasm, what are we to do with it? If we see it and find the pattern compelling, we should meditate on it. What is important about the thing highlighted? We should not think, again as with a good painting, that the highlighted feature is the only thing we are to look at, or even that it is always the most important. But if we believe that Scripture is inspired and God is the Master Craftsman, we should take note of what He highlights. If we take the passage in the structure above, the center is God's statement that He has no pleasure in the priests (or, presumably, the people as a whole) in v. 10. This is a smarting blow after God's first statement in the book (1:2). "I have loved you...I have no pleasure in you." The reasons for this are found in the surrounding verses.

Sacrificial Bribery

Animal sacrifices were intended as a substitute for the offerer. A blemished animal cannot be a substitute because it looks too much like the sinner instead of pointing to the Messiah. But the priests were bringing blind, lame, sick, and stolen offerings (vs. 8, 13-14). This shows Israel's wrong belief regarding the sacrifices (and ultimately of grace). The only reason to bring a blemished sacrifice would be because they first intended to bribe or appease God. Then, like any deal-maker, they tried to cheapen the bribe. "How little can we give and still incur God's favor?" This is a pagan view of God. It is like Ananias and Sapphira

(Acts 5) who sold their land and pretended to give all the profits to the infant Church while secretly holding some back. For worshippers, this view of God is a denial and rejection of His grace, an unbelief in what He has said – “I have loved you” (1:2). Defiled or irreverent worship is the fruit of despising the grace of God.

God addresses the priests, the clergy, those who were responsible to teach the people the law and lead them in right worship. Instead, they were bringing and allowing corrupt sacrifices, all the while complaining that God’s table (i.e., the portion the priests would eat) was contemptible, turning up their noses at it. The priests complained that God wasn’t providing well for them, but the poor fruit was the result of their own disobedience. Of course, there is plenty of application here for all of us who are a part of the priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9, Rev. 1:6). How often do we complain at God’s providence while clinging to the disobedience that brings such providences?

Great Among the Nations

God says that His name will be great among the nations (vs. 11, 14). Israel’s temple was supposed to be a house of prayer for all nations (Is. 56:7, Matt. 21:13), but the priests instead were defiling God’s house and profaning His name. It is this sort of feigned observance of the law that Paul condemns in the Jews, saying it blasphemes God’s name among the nations (Rom. 2:23-24). God questions whether any of the priests would protect the temple from false worship, and says He would not accept their offering (v. 10). Instead, He will look for a pure offering from among the Gentiles (v. 11). This would have been a great offense to the Jews, as it was also in the days of the apostles.

Despising God’s Name

False worship is God’s answer to the priests’ question: “In what way have we despised your name?” (v. 6). God’s name is to be honored among His people. The 3rd Commandment (Ex. 20:7) is not primarily about using “God” flippantly (though that certainly is included). If God’s name is upon you, if you have been marked as His, then you bear His name. The question is, do you bear it in a way that gives Him honor, or do you bear it in a way that despises it? Hypocrisy, irreverent worship, holding back from God—all of these things cause God’s name to be despised. It is no wonder that the Church has no authority in our culture today. Christians bear the name of Christ vainly by our hypocritical, unholy, and irreverent lives and worship. We think we can appease God by speaking some Christian-ese and going to church and then He’ll leave us alone for the rest of the week. But God is concerned that we give glory to His name, not just outwardly, but in the heart (2:1-2). And when we refuse, the blessings of God’s covenant are turned to curses.

Conclusion

When we try to bribe God, or when we bring to Him worship or sacrifices for show, He finds no pleasure in us. We do not draw near to Him, but rather keep Him at a distance. When we come to Him bringing our whole selves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), coming to Him by faith, coming to Him in Christ, He is well-pleased (Matt. 3). Worship the Father—with heart, soul, mind, and strength—not to manipulate Him, but because you believe that He sent His Son to die for you because of His great love with which He loved you (Eph. 2:4).