

## **LOVE AND GRACE IN MALACHI**

### **2: THE NAME OF THE KING. 1: 9 – 14**

V 1 – 8; Questions & Answers; with overarching message of love and grace for these are God's covenant people, chosen and loved by Him. Puritan pastor & theologian John Owen (1616-1683) a chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, explained love in a Christian fellowship: 'the church is like a bundle of sticks; some long, some short, some straight, some bent, some fat, some thin. We have different interests, personalities, backgrounds, spheres of life. What do you do if you want to carry a bundle of sticks of different shapes and sizes? You bind them together in a bundle. One piece of rope makes the task straightforward. So too in the church of Christ. There is only one thing which will hold together such diverse groupings of people – and so Paul says: *put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony* (Col. 3: 14). If we would grow in love and grace then learn what love and grace means. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

***v2; I have loved you, says the Lord. But you say, how have you loved us?*** --- God speaks to his people who are enveloped in the doubt of cynicism. The message of his love meets moral barriers and complacency in temple worship. Of course, that is OT and we live in a spiritual enlightened age!! Seventy years ago, A W Tozer: "I wonder if there was ever a time when true spiritual worship was at a lower ebb. To great sections of the church the art of worship has been lost entirely, and in its place has come that strange and foreign thing called the 'program'. This word has been borrowed from the stage and applied with sad wisdom to the type of public service which now passes for worship among us".<sup>1</sup> In **v9**, the prophet ironically stirs the evil priests to try and appease God by offering polluted sacrifices but not changing their wickedness. Their sacrifices, prayers, mediatorial work continued full of pollution, contamination, an abomination to a Holy and righteous God. Love and grace in such a performance seems impossible. **v10**; a doomsday rocket!! The absence of the Presence. *O that there were one among you who would shut the doors* and stop the useless Temple service. The temple services are a charade made useless by the wickedness of priests and people. Many Jews seemed pleased to have such priests but the Lord of the Temple will not accept offerings from their hands. Such a wish implies a threat and the Temple doors were effectively closed in 70 AD by the invading Roman armies. Later replaced by a heathen temple; 'The army had no more people to slay or to plunder because there remained none to be the objects of their fury'.<sup>2</sup> ... *shut the doors, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on MY altar*. Sixty years ago, J I Packer: "The present state of our churches makes it hard to doubt that God has begun to forsake us in these days, as a judgment for our irreverent disregard of His written Word".<sup>3</sup> C H Spurgeon: 'The Downgrade Controversy'. The loss of the historic conviction that what the Scripture says, God says, depicts the frightening silence of the Bible in today's church; for this has weakened Protestant church life. It has undermined preaching and undercut teaching; weakened faith, discouraged lay Bible reading and hidden Christ from view. Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984);

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<sup>1</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, Christian Publications, MCMXLV111, 9

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Jewish War*, V11, 1, 1,

<sup>3</sup> J I Packer, *God Has Spoken*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1966, 42

the New Testament Jesus is no longer the Christ who is “there”. The historical Jesus is inaccessible to us, and “Christ” exists only as a legendary and symbolic figure in Christian minds, like Robin Hood. Scepticism shouts, demands that sin and God are outmoded!! **Amos 8: 11 & 12.**

**V11:** an amazing comparison with Israel for from the rising to the setting of the sun, Gentile nations magnify God’s name in their worship. A pointed contrast with the profanity of Hebrew worship conducted by the current priests. The ignorant Gentiles acknowledged the God of creation but Israel was bored. Note, V11: For; an unexpected and startling acclaim of God’s triumph for He will raise up true worshippers to His name among the nations; *in every place incense will be offered to my name;* **Exodus 19: 5 & 6, 1 Peter 2: 9, Ephesians 2: 14.** No pollution & three times; *my name,* for he is: *the Lord of hosts.* His name, His identity and character; the revelation of His Word, is the only way people will be brought to the Lord and His salvation. The role of Israel was always with the nations in view; but Israel nearly always rejected that role; cf. Jonah. His **NAME** among the Gentiles; Acts 8: 30 – 39, went on his way rejoicing. Plus Psalm 67.

**V12 – 14:** the days of Jesus saw history repeated. Gentiles were excluded from worship in the Temple for the court of the Gentiles had become commercialised with foreign money exchanged and sacrificial animals sold. Mark 11: 17; My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations; cf. Isaiah 56: 7. How much do we deserve judgment?

**V13:** tired and weary of worship; so much else to do! ‘I’m trying to find myself; my identity’; Genesis 19: 11, Exodus 7: 18, Isaiah 1: 14. Today’s emphasis on changing one’s appearance; finding inner self; surgical mutilation. God was not recognised as King and no sense of divine majesty; cf. v8. Society regards our human existence as anthropocentric, not theocentric and this norm determines suburban worship, so our whole being is awry. The unbeliever cannot find his true identity for he has denied its essential nature. The condemnation of death and judgment is the destiny of rebellion against God’s love and grace. We do not have the will nor ability to atone for our failure. How wonderful that God planned the operations of his grace before creation and before time. He intended to display His nature as grace, in creation.

**V6:** O priests who despise **MY NAME.** But you say, How have we despised **YOUR NAME?**

**V11:** For **MY NAME** will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. **V14:** For I am a great King, says the Lord of Hosts, and **MY NAME** will be feared among the nations. To know **the Name** is to know the **Person.** --- Jacob wrestling with God; *what is your name?* There is no reply; **Genesis 32: 29;** – *And he blessed him there.*

**Matthew 1: 21:** ... *you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*

‘The whole of the Christian life is centred on Jesus Christ. Like Paul, the contemporary Christian can say: *To me to live is Christ.* But often, in Christian experience, we are tempted to look elsewhere for direction, example, counsel and guidance. We lose sight of the fact that everything we need to live the Christian life is to be found exclusively in Christ’. (Sinclair Ferguson).