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**“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 1:11).**

## **The Revival of Worship**

**Central Truth:** True worship requires veneration of God.

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**Topic:** Revival; Worship

We are a generation of spectators. We sit before the television and watch someone perform. We go to the ballpark and watch the professionals play. But we do not get into the game.

We must never become spectators in worship. In fact, a spectator in the worship of God does not worship Him. It is only when by attitude and action we respond to the majesty of God that we truly worship Him. We must meditate on Him, seek Him, and respond to Him.

God desires our worship. Jesus said the Father is seeking people to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). If God desires and looks for people to worship Him, worship must mean a lot to God as well as to us.

A church need not be large to be a worship center for the Lord. She need not have a large staff or professionally trained leadership. But she must have a heart that hungers and thirsts for God, a spirit that stands in awe of God, and a will that submits humbly to God.

The prophet Malachi was the last writer of our Old Testament Scriptures. He lived in a time when the worship of God was perverted by a lack of reverence. In his book we learn how to recognize perverted worship and how to revive worship in our day.

## **I. WORSHIP CAN BE PERVERTED (Malachi 1:6-10)**

To pervert a thing is to turn it from what is right, natural, or true. It is to corrupt by misuse what is otherwise good and clean. It corrupts what is good, and debases what is holy. What could be worse than to prostitute the worship of our thrice holy God? And yet, the worship of God can be—and sometimes is—perverted. Malachi shows how it happens.

**A. Worship is perverted by an irreverent attitude toward God** (verse 6). Malachi points out that a son honors his father and a servant honors his master. God is our Father and He is our Master. How much greater honor and reverence should be shown to Him!

God is dishonored by disinterest in church, as when the youth play or the adults go to sleep. God is dishonored by distraction, as when other people get our attention and we think of them rather than thinking of God. God is dishonored by rebellion, as when a person does not receive the Word of God or respond to the call of God. Some things that pass for worship today are not a part of true worship at all. Check your heart concerning your experience of worship in your church.

**B. Worship is perverted by irreverent leaders in worship.** Malachi accused the priests of dishonoring the name of God by their actions in worship (verse 6). That problem was not only in ancient times; it exists today. Ministers despise the name of God if they use their position to promote their own popularity. They defame the name of God if they use their ministry for profit, as the “health and wealth” proponents commonly do. And they despise the name of God if leading worship is only a performance as an actor or entertainer on the stage. God deserves better than that. He is God!

**C. Worship is perverted by inferior offerings to God** (verses 7, 8). Malachi accused his peers of giving God the leftovers after they had kept the best for themselves. The bread offered on His altars was defiled. The animals offered to Him were crippled, blind, or sickly. What an insult to God! It indicated that He deserved no better

“Offer that to the governor to pay your taxes,” the prophet challenged. “Will he receive it?” Yet their offerings and taxes showed more fear of the governor than of God. Whom do you fear more, God or the Internal Revenue Service? Do you give God tithes plus free-will offerings, or just a tip from what is left over? Are other things more urgent or important to you? Do you use the offerings which should go to God to purchase items for yourself or to pay for a vacation? Inferior offerings pervert the worship of God.

**D. Selfish prayers pervert the worship of God** (verse 9). “Why pray for God to be gracious to you and show mercy upon you when you treat Him with such contempt?” the prophet asked. God says, “It 'would be better for

you to shut the doors to the temple and offer no sacrifice to Me than to do as you are doing” (verse 10).

Prayer is not based on our merit but on God's grace. However, God will not hear us if we ask Him to bless us while we are living in willful sin. The prayer, “Lord, bless me in spite of . . .,” is an insult to God. Willful sin is met by certain judgment, and no sacrifice can change that (Hebrews 10:26, 27). Read Isaiah 1:11-20 and note God's rejection of the finest ritual of worship when the heart is not in a spirit of worship.

Be careful that you do not pervert the worship of God by your attitudes or actions.

## II. WORSHIP CAN BE REVIVED (Malachi 1:11-14)

Hope is not gone. An irreverent and backslidden people whose worship of God is perverted can renew their covenant and revive their worship. The prophet Malachi points out five things necessary to a revival of true worship.

**A. Respect the name of God** (verse 11). From the furthest point in the east to the furthest point in the west, from morning until night, God's name will be honored. That is the first step in a revival of worship. You cannot use God's name in oaths though the week and in prayer on Sunday and engage in pure worship. Be careful about your vows. Be careful about the slang use of God's name in cursing. Be sure that the name of God is always used in reverence when it comes from your lips. God said you shall not take His name lightly—emptily, as if of no import (Exodus 20:7).

**B. Revere the person of God** (verse 11). His name is great among those who trust Him now. It will be honored even among the heathen in time to come. Fragrant sacrifices and pure gifts will be offered to Him among the nations.

No wonder the psalmist urged, “*O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God*” (Psalm 95:6, 7). To reverence God is to worship Him. A careless attitude toward the person of God will cut the life from acts of worship. But to stand in awe of Him is to prepare the heart to worship Him.

**C. Recognize the greatness of God** (verse 11). He is God over the whole universe. Nations are subject to Him. He is so much greater than all the nations that they are as a drop in a bucket or as the fine dust that settles on the balance scales (Isaiah 40:15). He is King of kings (Revelation 19:16). He sets up and puts down kings. He controls their thoughts and directs them to do His will. Recognize the greatness of God and you will worship before Him.

**D. Repent of the neglect of God** (verses 12-14). Wrong attitudes toward the rituals of worship are wrong attitudes toward God. The attitude must be changed first. To look on the worship of God (or the church of God) as of no real value is to reject God. To think attendance and involvement in His worship is of little importance is to sin against God. Repentance would include a renewal of interest in the worship services of your church. It would require proper offerings to the Lord. It would encompass reverent acts toward God both in the church and outside. Such repentance is essential to a revival of true worship.

**E. Reverence the majesty of God** (verse 14). He said, *“I am a great King . . . , and my name is dreadful among the heathen.”* If the heathen fear the name of the Lord, how much more should His dear children reverence His majesty? He is awesome. He is to be revered.

True worship is never dull and dispirited. It is full of life, fraught with meaning, and vibrant with inspiration. Today's secular, sensual, and self-centered society is in conflict with a true spiritual worship of God. Revival of worship takes desire and effort on our part. It is very personal since it is centered in a personal relationship with God. Jesus said, *“I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”* (Revelation 3:20). He waits to receive your worship.