

Honouring the Lord's Table
Malachi 1:6-14

May 3, 2009

- A. Text (spoken by the Israelites in Malachi 1:7)
 - 1. 'The table of the Lord is to be despised'

 - 2. God is not to be taken for granted!

 - 3. God deserves our giving to Him the fullest honour

 - 4. NT worship, though at a new and higher level should not be less full-hearted than OT worship

- B. Dishonouring by Unworthiness I Corinthians 11:27-30
 - 1. does partaking unworthily mean ...
 - a. ... by those who are unbelievers?

 - b. ... by those who are sinful?

 - c. ... by those who are thoughtless?

- C. Dishonouring by Idolatrousness I Corinthians 10:14-21
 - 1. Idolatry and the Christian – what is idolatry?
 - a. the first commandment

 - b. the second commandment

 - 2. the steps for Christians to avoid idolatry

- D. Dishonouring by Attitude Malachi 1:6-14
 - 1. contrast between Israelites and earliest Christians

 - 2. what is your and my attitude this morning?

 - 3. 'Let a man examine himself ...'

—{1}. **Malachi 1:6-14** **Honouring the Lord's Table**

A. Introduction

1. my text today is the words spoken by the people in Malachi 1:7: 'The table of the Lord is to be despised.'
 - a. lest this should ever be our attitude
 - b. but rather that as we gather at the Lord's Table we will do so in a fashion and manner that gives honour to God

2. In one sermon, Rev. John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota said this:—{2}.
 - a. "I've been to church-growth seminars where God is not once mentioned. I've been to lectures and talks on pastoral issues where he is not so much as alluded to. I have read strategies for every kind of recovery under the sun where God is not there. I have talked to students in seminaries who tell me of manifold courses where God is peripheral at best. I have recently read mission statements of major evangelical organizations where God is not even mentioned.
 - b. "I admit freely that I'm on a crusade, and I have one message: God is an important person, and he does not like being taken for granted."
 - c. The Bible puts the same truth in these blunt terms:
 - (A) —for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God— (Exodus 34:14), and,
 - (B) 'I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.' (Isaiah 42:8)

3. God deserves our giving to Him the fullest honour
 - a. In the OT worship, every part was to be to God's glory
 - b. this is shown in the visual aspect of such worship
 - (A) in the framework of the tabernacle and various utensils within were made of acacia, or 'indestructible wood'
 - (B) in the lavish use of gold, silver and precious metals in the construction of both the tabernacle and temple

- (C) in the curtains, the veil, the vestments of the priests
 - (D) in the precious stones representing the twelve tribes on the priest's clothing
 - (E) all these were beautifully made by those whom God had prepared for the task by His Holy Spirit
 - (F) as the children of Korah sang, 'How lovely are Your dwelling places, O LORD of hosts!' (Psalms 84: 1)
 - c. beauty in worship was not just in the visual elements
 - (A) the voice was used: worshippers sang, shouted, prayed and made a joyful noise
 - (B) they clapped – as some of you did last week during the singing of 'Shine, Jesus, Shine' – they danced, and they played all kinds of instruments
 - (C) the odour of incense and the Levitical choir brought the beauty of worship to the nose and the ears
 - (D) the whole body was exercised in worship
 - (E) as David exclaims, 'Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name' (Psalms 103:1)
 - d. now the OT tabernacle and temple have passed away
 - (A) with the sacrifices and ceremonies marking OT worship
 - (B) when our Saviour Fore-runner entered into heaven
 - (C) giving us direct access to our Father God
4. so now our NT worship takes place on a new and higher level
- a. but the NT saint should praise and worship God with the same fullness of heart as the OT saint
 - b. Paul says we should '... be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father' (Ephesians 5:18b-20)
 - c. this kind of worship will honour God at the Lord's Table
5. let us look at some specifics in this matter:
- a. from the Scriptural passages that we have read
 - b. as well as that well known passage from 1 Corinthians 11
 - c. and see how we might dishonour God at the Lord's table
 - (A) dishonouring it by unworthiness
 - (B) dishonouring it by idolatrousness

(C) dishonouring it by attitude

B. Dishonouring by Unworthiness

1 Corinthians 11:27-30

1. 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 (AV) is so familiar: ²⁷ Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily {in an unworthy manner}, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. ²⁹ For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation {‘a judgement’} to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. ³⁰ For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

2. does partaking unworthily mean unbelievers?

a. in the 17th century certain rights and privileges

(A) were restricted to those who were communicants – i.e., those who were granted communion in the C of E

(B) Anthony Collins and the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury

(1) were Deists – believing in an indifferent, hands-off God; not in the self-revealing God of Scripture

(2) but, nevertheless they took communion

(3) so as to safeguard their rights and privileges

b. the nonconformist churches – those not participating in the Anglican communion – e.g., the Puritans, Baptists, Presbyterian, and in the 19th century, the Brethren, Nazarenes, &c.

(A) countered such loose practices

(B) insisted that this was a believer’s ordinance

(C) some ‘policed’ the service to ensure this would be so

(D) and used these verses to support that practice

c. yet such an application of this text is but secondary at best

d. now, that the Lord’s Table is properly for believers, is shown at the start of the church in Acts 2:41-46, ‘So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ... Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, ... with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having

favour with all the people.'

- e. the Lord's Table is a feast of remembrance for the elect
3. does partaking unworthily mean being a sinful participant?
 - a. to this table a person may come at times
 - (A) doubting and full of a sense of sin
 - (B) recognizing their own unworthiness
 - (C) and fear to take communion
 - b. neither is that what is in the apostle's mind in this passage
 - c. but in this manner, none of us is worthy; all are sinners
 - (A) the exhortation to examine ourselves is appropriate
 - (B) not to keep the child of God from participating
 - (C) but rather in sorrow, confessing his or her sin, and then rejoicing in partaking, that through Christ's death on the cross, that sin has been forgiven and is cleansed
 4. no, partaking unworthily means a thoughtless participant
 - a. that is at whom these verses are directed, 1 Corinthians 11:20-21 – 'Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.'
 - (A) this is not forbidding the practice, which some of you may have had, that after a supper with Christian friends, you have held a communion service
 - (B) what was wrong here, was that the believers had mixed together the profane and the sacred without thought
 - b. the other signs of thoughtlessness in 1 Corinthians 11 are
 - (A) the lack of unity they showed, and,
 - (B) the lack of love for those who were poor
 - (C) a pagan observed the protestations of love at the Table of the Lord; two days later saw some of them quarrel and turned from them, saying, 'I confess that your religion may be good, your devotion good, your profession good; but your hospitality is nothing, that you do not give two days lodging to your God.'^{3}.

(D) honouring God at the Lord's Table means thoughtful, united, loving worship; let's examine ourselves on this

C. Dishonouring by Idolatrousness 1 Corinthians 10:14-21

1. Idolatry and the Christian?

- a. can the Christian be idolatrous?
- b. yes, for verse 14 tells us to flee from idolatry
- c. what is idolatry? ... idolatry having an idol
- d. what is an idol?
- e. most of you will give the correct answer to that question
- f. or at least half of the correct answer
- g. 'an idol is anything that comes between you and God'
- h. that is the first commandment, and it is applicable to the Christian today as it was to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before Me."' (Exodus 20:2-3)
- i. the LORD God Almighty, God our Father, as made known to us in the Son of God by the Holy Spirit of God, He and only He is to be our object of worship
- j. and any thing and any person who usurps that position which is due to God and to God alone, is an idol

2. but there is a second part to that answer

- a. there is the second commandment: 'You shall not make for yourself an idol {'graven image'}, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me' (Exodus 20:4-5)
- b. 'Well,' you may say, 'I don't have any graven images!'
- c. but wait a moment; here, in this bag, is a graven image
 - (A) consider it for a moment as a representation of God
 - (B) it is not particularly attractive; in fact, it is grotesque
 - (C) in fact, it is demeaning and belittling to God

- (D) and, nothing shows this more strongly that the fact that I can toss this back in the bag when I am done
 - d. the second part of that answer for the Christian is that an idol is anything that I worship that is less than the Lord God who reveals Himself in His word, the Bible
 - e. in 'Your God is Too Small,'^{4}. J. B. Philips lists a dozen inadequate images of God the Christian can worship
 - (A) Resident Policemen – equating our conscience to God
 - (B) Parental Hangover – likened to an inadequate father
 - (C) Grand Old Man – wise in the past, inadequate for today
 - (D) Meek-and-Mild – soft, sentimental, wooly, ineffective
 - (E) Absolute Perfection – only accepting the 100% perfect
 - (F) Heavenly Bosom – an escape from all life's hardships
 - (G) God-in-a-Box – who supports our own doctrinal position
 - (H) Managing Director – of universe, too big for an individual
 - (I) Second-Hand God – as portrayed in/by (even 'Christian') books (as "Shack" and "Left Behind"), media, teachers
 - (J) Perennial Grievance – explicitly or implicitly blaming God for our undeserved treatment – a Disappointment
 - (K) Pale Galilean – a negative God, marked by prohibitions
 - (L) Projected Image – merely scaled-up images of ourselves
 - f. these are the idols, the false worship we need to avoid
3. John Piper cites two errors the Corinthian Christians made:^{5}.
- a. one, they saw the Lord's Supper as a 'sacramental antidote' to any poison they ingested by eating at feasts to idols
 - b. two, they missed that the fellowship in sharing Christ's life would empower them in the fight against all idolatry
 - c. to honour the Lord's Table, we need to
 - (A) ensure that it is God alone that we worship
 - (B) ensure that it is the God of the Bible that we worship

- D. Dishonouring by Attitude Malachi 1:6-14
1. when Paul was writing that section in 1 Corinthians 10
 - a. 'You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (1 Corinthians 10:21)
 - b. the Holy Spirit had put into his mind the very same phrase, 'the table of the Lord' which we read in Malachi 1:7, 12 – "*You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.'* ... But you are profaning it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.'" (Malachi 1:12)
 - c. Do you remember how those earliest Christians celebrated the Lord's Table? – '*... devoting themselves ... with one mind ... with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God*'
 2. what a contrast in attitude between those early Christians
 - a. and these Israelites of Malachi's time:
 - b. the sacrifice was to be as perfect as humanly possible for it was a picture of God's perfect lamb; yet their attitude was that anything was good enough for burning on the altar
 - c. at other times, the sons of Eli didn't like the way God had given for the food they were to have and they decided that they would take the best parts which belonged to God
 - d. God has a description for these and other attitudes of worship that were dishonouring: '*... this people draw near with their words And honour Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,*' (Isaiah 29:13)
 - e. worship and thankfulness from our very heart is what will honour the Lord's Table in this opportunity for worship
- E. May we seek to honour the Lord at His table provided for our remembrance of Him this morning.

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RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
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2. Quoted in an article, *The Art of Positive and Negative Preaching*, by Craig Brian Larson in Leadership Magazine - Kerux illustration #3090
3. Biblical Museum, editor James Comper Gray, *infra* 1 Corinthians 10:21-23.
4. *Your God is Too Small* by J. B. Phillips © 1952 The Epworth Press
5. Adapted from *Idolatry, The Lord's Supper And The Body Of Christ*, by John Piper, Kerux sermons #3937