

The Sun of Righteousness

Malachi 3:13-4:3



Why should we, poor creatures, be concerned about Him, the most perfect? We may, indeed, accept the idea that there is a supreme designer and still say: "So what?" As long as a concept of God does not overpower us, as long as we can say: "So what?" – it is not God that we talk about but something else.

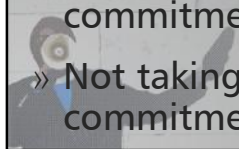
Abraham Heschel

- » Our faith is to be a central, overwhelming truth – not simply faith as one part of 'the modular man' (Toffler)
- » A spirit of nominalism attempts to reduce faith to a bare minimum – what is the minimum amount to be required?



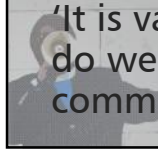
Malachi

- » The book of Malachi addresses the spirit of nominalism
- » 440 BC – time of Nehemiah
- » The people are lax in their commitment to Yahweh
- » Not taking seriously their commitment to the covenant

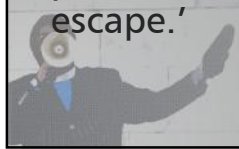


1. A Consideration of Nominalism

You have spoken harsh words against me, says the Lord. Yet you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about



as mourners before the Lord of hosts? Now we count the arrogant happy; evildoers not only prosper, but when they put God to the test they escape.'



Malachi 3:13-15

The Method of Malachi's Argument

1. A Charge – an accusation is made
2. An objection is raised
3. A refutation is made

Malachi 2:8

1. The Charge: "You have robbed God."
2. The objection: "How have we robbed God?"
3. The refutation: "You have not given your tithes and offerings."

Malachi 3:13-15

1. The Charge: "You have spoken harsh words against me." (God)
2. The objection: "How have we spoken against you?" (people)
3. The refutation: "You have said 'It is vain to serve God.'"

- » The people have not given up rather they simply murmur against God
- » Why follow God so seriously? What is the benefit?

In our utilitarian age we measure things by:

- » Production
- » Efficiency
- » Usefulness
- » Everything is a commodity, including religion

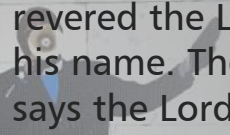
- » God refuses to simply be useful for us
- » God is not a commodity to be used for our advancement
- » He desires "disinterested holiness"

- » Jesus faces the temptation of nominalism in the desert
- » Luke 4:1-13
- » Take the easy way and I will make you king



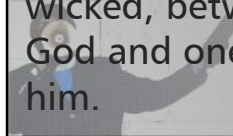
II. Nominalism Versus Faith

Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on his name. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts,



my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them. Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

Malachi 3:16-18

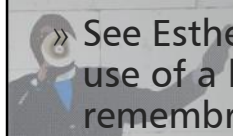


A Position of Faith

- » A second group desire true relationship with God (v16)
- » They listen to God
- » They revere his name and ponder his words (v16b)

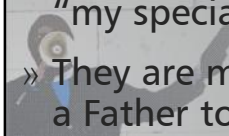


- » Image of a book is used where the names of the faithful are recorded
- » No one who truly knows God will be forgotten by him
- » See Esther 2:23 for a King's use of a book of remembrance



God's Special Possession

- » The prophet intensifies the language of God's love for his own (v17)
- » These faithful ones are "mine", "my special possession"
- » They are my children and I am a Father to them



God's Faithful

» Indeed you will see there is a difference between those who listen to me and those who do not (v18)

» I do care and I am paying attention to your lives

III. True Faith is Motivated by Hope in God

See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for

But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 4:1-3

» We live in light of our destiny/ our hope

» We live in light of the long haul

1. The arrogant will be destroyed like brush is in wild fire (4:1)

» There is an end to evil – God will not be mocked

2. The faithful will know God's blessing (4:2)

» The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings

» Same sun – now not scorching but healing

» Ultimately Zechariah sings in Luke 1:76-79 that Jesus is the 'Sun of righteousness' bringing salvation and life

The result is joy/hope like
calves released from the stall
(4:2b)

» The wicked will be destroyed
as rubble (v3)

» Those who serve the Lord
will be blessed

IV. Conclusion

1. Nominalism – ‘the desire to
be like everybody else’ is not
to be our goal

2. Rather seek an energetic
faith which is committed to
God in a real relationship
and a real hope

3. Recognize what is
essential and keep saying
“yes” to God

» Our end is infinite
meaning, joy and life