

## **Not Despising the Table of the Lord** **By Mark Hatfield**

Every Sunday of every week of every year we come together as Christians to surround the table of the Lord in memory of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The prophet Malachi wrote about a time when the people despised the table of the Lord. I believe that we can take some lessons from this table and apply it to the table of the Lord that we surround in the Lord's Supper. Let us read Malachi chapter 1:

**1       The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.**  
**2       "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have You loved us?"**

What is the first thing that God wants His people to know? He said, "I have loved you". I want you to start this day knowing that God loves you. What a slap in the face it would be for us to look up to God and ask, "How have You loved us?" Yet we often do this when we take it for granted that God created us and blesses us in so many ways. He is gracious and patient with us when we fall short of His expectations and glory. So how does God answer this question?

God goes on in the next few verses to explain some of the ways that He had loved Israel but notice what He says in verse 6.

**6       "A son honors {his} father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, "How have we despised Your name?'**

Another question is presented to God in ignorance. The people said, "How have we despised Your name?" Since all have sinned, we must never be so foolish to ask such a question to our holy God. The answer of the Lord was, "You are presenting defiled food upon My altar." Again the people asked, "How have we defiled You?" The reason the Lord gave was because you have said, "The table of the LORD is to be despised." We must be careful not to despise the time that we have around the table. While our purposes at the table of the Lord are different today than what these priests were accomplishing under the old law, nevertheless, God has called us to His table and has given us a specific purpose to serve. While you may not be bringing an animal sacrifice, what is in your heart at this moment? While you may not be burning incense are your prayers and thoughts sincere?

Listen to what the Lord says to these priests and then as priests in the kingdom, let us heed the warning?

**8       "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts.**

**9 "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts.**

It is only by God's grace that we are able to be saved from our sins. We must be sure that we examine ourselves and make sure that our time at the table of the Lord is given its proper significance. Let us remember that the Lord is not merely a governor of a state but He is the ruler of all the earth. Give Him your all.

**10 "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle {fire on} My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you.**

**11 "For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name {will be} great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering {that is} pure; for My name {will be} great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts.**

**12 "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.'**

God would rather His people stay home, than to come to the table and kindle a fire with no meaning behind it. Don't even open the doors to the meeting place if you plan to give half hearted service. All offerings made when we are not dedicated to pleasing the Lord are useless. We are not here for our glory or greatness, but we are here to proclaim the greatness of the name of the Lord and bring Him glory. This is our calling from the rising of the sun to its setting. Since it is a little after 10 in the morning, this becomes a time when we are expected to lift up the name of the Lord.

Once again, the grain offering may be represented by the bread that we partake of under the new law and the incense can be signified by the cup that we drink. Instead of despising the table we need to keep in mind that the fruit of the table is the fruit of the vine that represents our Lord's blood (not an animal sacrifice, but the Lamb of God). The food of the table is the loaf that when we break it we are remembering the body of Jesus that was nailed to the cross for the sins of the world. Don't despise these blessings.

**13 "You also say, "My, how tiresome it is!" And you disdainfully sniff at it," says the LORD of hosts, "and you bring what was taken by robbery and {what is} lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?" says the LORD.**

**14 "But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."**

(NAU)

Because this is a weekly observance, it is likely that our attitude can become like those in service to the Lord so long ago. We might say, "Do we have to observe this every Lord's day?" or "Why do we have to spend so much time around the table?"

A simple answer might be because the Lord spent so much time trying to redeem you and unfold the plan of salvation. If that is not acceptable to you, perhaps you need to search your heart and remember that you were destined to suffer eternally in hell, but God gave His Son to die so that you can spend eternity with Him in the peace that only He can provide.

Let me take this one step further. We may even show up (be present) and never verbalize or express in any way that we are disgruntled with the table of the Lord. But deep down in our spirit we may not be focused on what is most important at this time.

In other words we give the Lord the leftovers of our attention, when we told the Lord we were fixing our eyes on Him who is the author and finisher of our faith. It was through the joy set before Him that He endured the cross and despised the shame. How could we possibly not enjoy rather than endure our time around the table of the Lord or despise the Lord after all that He did for us.

When we became Christians we dedicated ourselves to being a living sacrifice. Let us not be guilty of agreeing to offer the Lord a certain high level of service and then bring Him something less than the best. We must offer every part of our heart, soul, mind and strength at this time and fear the name of the Lord. Otherwise, we may be going through the motions of a ceremony that means nothing more than eating a piece of bread and drinking a cup of grape juice.

It is up to you right now to give your all as we sing, pray and partake of these emblems at the table of the Lord. Come to the table of the Lord in a way that pleases the Lord. Proclaim His name as great. Fear Him. Remember what the Lord has done for you and me.