

# CHAPTER 1

Thus prophet is sent first to convince and then to comfort, first to discover sin and to reprove for that and then to promise the coming of him who shall take away sin. And this method the blessed Spirit takes in dealing with souls, <sup><B18></sup>John 16:8. He first opens the wound and then applies the healing balm. God had provided (and one would think effectually) for the engaging of Israel to himself by providences and ordinances; but it seems, by the complaints here made of them, that they received the grace of God in both these in vain.

**I.** They were very ungrateful to God for his favours to them, and rendered not again according to the benefit they received (v. 1-5).

**II.** They were very careless and remiss in the observance of his institutions; the priests especially were so, who were in a particular manner charged with them (v. 6-14). And what shall we say of those whom neither providences nor ordinances work upon, and who affront God in those very things wherein they should honour him?

## ~~<B11>~~ MALACHI 1:1-5

### INGRATITUDE OF ISRAEL

The prophecy of this book is entitled, *The burden of the word of the Lord* (v. 1), which intimates,

**1.** That it was of great weight and importance; what the false prophets said was light as the chaff, what the true prophets said was ponderous as the wheat, <sup><B28></sup>Jeremiah 23:28.

**2.** That it ought to be often repeated to them and by them, as the burden of a song.

**3.** That there were those to whom it was a burden and a reproach; they were weary of it, and found themselves so aggrieved by it that they were not able to bear it.

**4.** That to them it would prove a burden indeed, to sink them to the lowest hell, unless they repented.

**5.** That to those who loved it and embraced it, and bade it welcome, though it was a light burden, as our Saviour calls it (<sup>(41B)</sup>Matthew 11:30), yet it was a burden.

This *burden of the word of the Lord* was sent,

- 1.** To Israel, for to them pertained the lively oracles of prophecy as well as those of the written word. Many prophets God had sent to Israel, and now he will try them with one more.
- 2.** *By Malachi, by the hand of Malachi*, as if it were not a message by word of mouth, but a letter put into his hand, for the greater certainty.

In these verses, they are charged with ingratitude, in that they were not duly sensible of God's distinguishing goodness to them; and such a charge as this may well be called a burden, for it is a heavy one.

**I.** God asserts the great kindness he had, and had often expressed, for them (v. 2): *I have loved you, saith the Lord*. Thus abruptly does the sermon begin, as if God intended, whatever reproofs should be given them, to reconcile them to his love, and to take care that they should still have good thoughts of him. *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten*. Thus kindly does the sermon begin. God will have his people satisfied that he loves them and is ever mindful of his love. This is the same with what he said of old to the virgin of Israel, that he might engage her affections to himself (<sup>(29B)</sup>Jeremiah 31:3, 4): *Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love*. In this one word God sums up all his gracious dealings with them; love was the spring of all; he loved them because he would *love them* (<sup>(40B)</sup>Deuteronomy 7:7, 8), loved them in their childhood, (<sup>(31B)</sup>Hosea 11:1. His delight was in them, (<sup>(29B)</sup>Isaiah 62:4. "*I have loved you, but you have not loved me, nor made any suitable returns for my love.*" Note, God's people need to be often reminded of his love to them.

**II.** They question his love, and diminish the instances of it, and seem to quarrel with him for telling them of it: *Yet you say, Wherein hast thou loved us?* As God traces up all his favours to them to the fountain, which was his love, so he traces up all their sins against him to the fountain, which was their contempt of his love. Instead of acknowledging his kindness, and studying what they shall render, they scorn to own that they have been beholden to him, challenge him to produce proofs of his love that are material, and think and speak very slightly of the instances they

have had of his kindness, as if they were so few, so small, as not to be worth taking notice of, and no more than what they had sufficiently made returns for, or at least than he had sufficiently balanced with instances of his wrath. “Have we not been wasted, impoverished, and carried captive; and wherein then *hast thou loved us?*” Note, God justly takes it very ill to have his favours slighted, as not worth speaking of; and it is very absurd for us to ask wherein he has loved us, when, which way soever we look, we meet with the proofs and instances of his love to us.

**III.** He makes it out, beyond contradiction, that he has loved them, loved them in a distinguishing way, which was in a special manner obliging. For proof of this he shows the difference he had made, and would still make, between Jacob and Esau, between Israelites and Edomites. Some read their question, *Wherefore hast thou loved us?* as if they did indeed own that he had loved them, but withal insinuate that there was a reason for it — that he loved them because their father Abraham had loved him, so that it was not a free love, but a love of debt, to which he replies, “*Was not Esau as near akin to Abraham as you are? Was he not Jacob's own brother, his elder brother? And therefore, if there were any right to a recompence for Abraham's love, Esau had it, and yet I hated Esau and loved Jacob.*”

**1.** Let them see what a difference God had made between Jacob and Esau. Esau was Jacob's brother, his twin-brother: “*Yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau, that is, took Jacob into covenant, and entailed the blessing on him and his, but refused and rejected Esau.*” Note, Those that are taken into covenant with God, that have the lively oracles and the means of grace committed to them, have reason to look upon these as tokens of his love. Jacob is loved, for he has these, Esau hated, for he has not. The apostle quotes this (<sup>493</sup>Romans 9:13), and compares it with what the oracle said to Rebecca concerning her twins (<sup>493</sup>Genesis 25:23), *The elder shall serve the younger*, to illustrate the doctrine of God's sovereignty in dispensing his favours; for *may he not do what he will with his own?* Esau was justly hated, but Jacob freely loved; even so, Father, *because it seemed good in thy eyes*, and it is not for us to ask why or wherefore.

**2.** Let them see what he was now doing and would do with them, pursuant to this original difference.

**(1.)** The Edomites shall be made the monuments of God's justice, and he will be glorified in their utter destruction: For *Esau have I hated; I laid his*

*mountains waste*, the mountains of Seir, which were *his heritage*. When all that part of the world was ravaged by the Chaldean army the country of Edom was, among the rest, laid in ruins, and became a habitation *for the dragons of the wilderness*, so perfectly desolate was it; as was foretold, <sup>(2346)</sup>Isaiah 34:6, 11. The Edomites had triumphed in Jerusalem's overthrow (<sup>(3107)</sup>Psalms 137:7), and therefore it was just with God to put the same cup of trembling into their hands. And, though Edom's ruins were last, yet they were lasting, and the desolation perpetual; and in this the difference was made between Jacob and Esau, and is made between the righteous and the wicked, to whom otherwise all things come alike, and there seems to be one event. Jacob's cities are laid waste, but they are rebuilt; Edom's are laid waste, and never rebuilt. The sufferings of the righteous will have an end and will end well; all their grievances will be redressed, and their sorrow turned into joy; but the sufferings of the wicked will be endless and remediless, as Edom's desolations, v. 4. Observe here,

[1.] The vain hopes of the Edomites, that they shall have their ruins repaired as well as Israel, though they had no promise to build their hope upon. They say, "It is true, *we are impoverished*; it is the common chance, and there is no remedy; but *we will return and build the desolate places*; we are resolved we will" (not so much as asking God leave); "*we will* whether he will or no; nay, we will do it in defiance of God's curse, and that sentence pronounced upon Edom (<sup>(2340)</sup>Isaiah 34:10), *From generation to generation it shall lie waste.*" They build presumptuously, as Hiel built Jericho in direct contradiction to the word of God (<sup>(3163)</sup>1 Kings 16:34), and it shall speed accordingly. Note, It is common for those whose hearts are unhumbled under humbling providences to think to make their part good against God himself, and to build, and plant, and flourish again as much as ever, though God has said that they shall be impoverished. But see,

[2.] The dashing of these hopes and the disappointment of them: They say, *We will build*; but what says *the Lord of hosts*? For we are sure his word shall stand, and not theirs; and he says, *First*, Their attempts shall be baffled: *They shall build, but I will throw down*. Note, Those that walk contrary to God will find that he will walk contrary to them; for *who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered*? When the Jews had rejected Christ and his gospel they became Edomites, and this word was fulfilled in them; for when, in the time of the emperor Adrian, they attempted to rebuild Jerusalem, God by earthquakes and eruptions of fire threw down what they built, so that they were forced to quit the enterprise.

Secondly, They shall be looked upon by all as abandoned to utter ruin. All that see them shall call them *the border of wickedness*, a sinful nation, incurably so, and therefore *the people against whom the Lord has indignation for ever*. Since their wickedness is such as will never be reformed, their desolations shall be such as are never to be repaired. Against Israel God was a *little displeased* (<sup>315</sup>Zechariah 1:15), but against Edom he has indignation, and will have for ever, for they are *the people of his curse*, <sup>315</sup>Isaiah 34:5.

**(2.)** The Israelites shall be made the monuments of his mercy, and he will be glorified in their salvation, v. 5. “The Edomites shall be stigmatized as a people hated of God, *but your eyes shall see your doubts concerning his love to you for ever silenced; for you shall say, and have cause to say, The Lord is and will be magnified from the border of Israel*, from every part and border of the land of Israel.” The border of Edom is a *border of wickedness*, and therefore the Lord will have *indignation against it for ever; but the border of Israel is a border of holiness, the border of the sanctuary* (<sup>315</sup>Psalms 78:54), and therefore God will make it to appear (though it may for a time lie desolate) that he has mercy in store for it, and thence *he will be magnified*; he will give his people Israel both cause, and hearts, to praise him. When the border of Edom still remains desolate, and the border of Israel is repaired and replenished, then it will appear that God has loved Jacob. Note,

**[1.]** Those who doubt of God's love to his people shall, sooner or later, have convincing and undeniable proofs given them of it: “*your own eyes shall see what you will not believe.*”

**[2.]** Deliverances out of trouble are to be reckoned proofs of God's goodwill to his people, though they may be suffered to fall into trouble, <sup>315</sup>Psalms 34:19.

**[3.]** Distinguishing favours are very obliging. If God rear up again the border of Israel, but leave the border of Edom in ruins, let no Israelite ask, for shame, *Wherein hast thou loved us?*

**[4.]** The dignifying of Israel is the magnifying of the God of Israel, and, one way or other, God will have honour from his professing people.

**[5.]** God's goodness being his glory, when he does us good we must proclaim him great, for that is magnifying him. It is an instance of his

goodness that he has *pleasure in the prosperity of his servants*, and for this those that love his salvation say, *The Lord be magnified*, <sup><4827></sup>Psalm 35:27.

## <sup><3016></sup>MALACHI 1:6-14

### GOD'S REMONSTRANCE WITH THE PRIESTS

The prophet is here, by a special commission, calling the priests to account, though they were themselves appointed judges, to call the people to an account. Let the rulers in the house of God know that there is one above them, who will reckon with them for their mal-administrations. Thus *saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests!* v. 6. God will have a saying to unfaithful ministers; and it concerns those who speak from God to his people to hear and heed what he says to them, that they may *save themselves* in the first place, otherwise how should they help to *save those that hear them*? It is a severe, and no doubt a just reproof, that is here given to the *priests*, for the profanation of the holy things of God, with which they were entrusted; and, if this was the crime of the priests, we have reason to fear the people also were guilty of it: so that what is said to *the priests* is *said to all*, nay, it is *said to us*, who, as Christians, profess ourselves, not only the people of God, but priests to him. Observe here,

**I.** What it was that God expected from them, and with what good reason he expected it (v. 6): *A son honours his father*, because he is his father; nature has written this law in the hearts of children, before God wrote it at Mount Sinai; nay, *a servant*, though his obligation to his master is not natural, but by voluntary compact, yet thinks it his duty to honour him, to be observant of his orders, and true to his interests. Children and servants pay respect to their parents and masters; every one cries out shame on them if they do not, and their own hearts cannot but reproach them too; the order of families is thus kept up, and it is their beauty and advantage. But the priests, who are God's children and his servants, do not fear and honour him. They were *fathers* and *masters* to the people, and expected to be called so (<sup><0789></sup>Judges 18:19, <sup><4227></sup>Matthew 22:7, 10) and to be revered and obeyed as such; but they forgot their Father and Master in heaven, and the duty they owed to him. We may each of us charge upon ourselves what is here charged upon the priests. Note,

1. We are every one of us to look upon God as our Father and Master, and upon ourselves as his children and servants.

2. Our relation to God as our Father and Master strongly obliges us to fear and honour him. If we honour and fear the fathers of our flesh, much more the Father and Master of our spirits, ~~819~~ Hebrews 12:9.

3. It is a thing to be justly complained of, and lamented, that God is so little feared and honoured even by those that own him for their Father and Master. *Where is his honour? Where is his fear?*

## II. What the contempt was which the priests put upon God.

1. This is that, in general, which is charged upon them: —

(1.) They despised God's name; their familiarity with it, as priests, bred contempt of it, and served them only to gain a veneration by it for themselves and their own name, while God's name was of small account with them. God's name is all that whereby he has made himself known — his word and ordinances; these they had low thoughts of, and vilified that which it was their business to magnify; and no wonder that when they despised it themselves they did that which made it despicable to others, causing even the *sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred*, as Eli's sons did.

(2.) They *profaned* God's name, v. 12. They *polluted* it, v. 7. They not only made no account of sacred things, but they made an ill use of them, and perverted them to the service of the worst and vilest purposes — their own pride, covetousness, and luxury. There cannot be a greater provocation to God than the profanation of his name; for it is holy and reverend. His purity cannot be polluted by us, for he is unspotted, but his name may be profaned; and nothing profanes it more than the misconduct of priests, whose business it is to do honour to it. This is the general charge exhibited against them. To this they plead *Not guilty*, and challenge God to prove it upon them, and to make good the charge, which added daring impudence to their daring impiety: *You say, Wherein have we despised thy name?* (v. 6), and *wherein have we polluted thee?* v. 7. It is common with proud sinners, when they are reprov'd, to stand thus upon their own justification. These priests had most horridly profaned sacred things, and yet, like the *adulterous woman*, they said that they had *done no wickedness*; they were so inobservant of themselves that they remembered not or reflected not upon their own acts, or they were so ignorant of the divine law that they

thought there was no harm in them, and that what they did could not be construed into despising God's name, or they were so atheistical as to imagine that though they knew their own guilt yet God did not, or they were so scornful in their conduct towards God and his prophets that they took a pride in bantering a serious and just reproof, and turning it off with a jest. They either laugh at the reproof, as those that despise it, and harden their hearts against it, or they laugh it off, as those that resolve they will not be touched by it, or will not seem to be so. Which way soever we take it, their defence was their offence, and, in justifying themselves, their own tongues condemned them, and their saying, *Wherein have we despised thy name?* proved them proud and perverse. Had they asked this question with a humble desire to be told more particularly wherein they had offended, it would have been an evidence of their repentance, and would have given hopes of their reformation; but to ask it thus in disdain and defiance of the word of God argues their hearts *fully set in them to do evil*. Note, Sinners ruin themselves by studying to baffle their own convictions; but they will find it *hard to kick against the pricks*.

**2.** Justly might they have been convicted and condemned upon the general charge, and their plea thrown out as frivolous; but God will not only overcome, but will be clear, will be justified when he judges, and therefore he shows them very particularly wherein they had despised his name, and what the contempt was that they cast upon him. As formerly, when he charged them with idolatry, so now, when he charges them with profaneness, he bids them *see their way in the valley and know what they have done*, ~~2423~~ Jeremiah 2:23.

**(1.)** They despised God's name in what they said, in the low opinion they had of his institutions: "*You say in your hearts, and perhaps speak it out when you priests get together over your cups. out of the hearing of the people, The table of the Lord is contemptible*" (v. 7), and again (v. 12), "*You say, The table of the Lord is polluted; it is to be no more regarded than any other table.*" Either the table in the temple, on which the show-bread was placed, is that which they reflect upon (not understanding the mystery of it, they despised it as an insignificant thing), or rather the altar of burnt-offerings is here called the table, for there God, and his priests, and his people, did, as it were, feast together upon the sacrifices, in token of friendship. This they thought was contemptible. Formerly, in the days of superstition, it was thought contemptible in comparison with the idolatrous alters that the heathen had, and was set aside to make room for




a new-fashioned one (~~1764~~2 Kings 16:14, 15); now it is thought contemptible in comparison with their own tables, and those of their great men: *The fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible*. Those who served at the altar were to live upon the altar; but they complained that they lived poorly and meanly, and that it was not worth while to attend the service of the altar for the fruit and meat of it, for it was very ordinary and always the same again; they had no dainties, no varieties, no nice dishes. Nay, that part of the sacrifices which was given to God, the blood and the fat, they looked upon with contempt, as not worthy the multitude of laws God had made about it; they asked, "What need is there of so much ado about burning the fat and pouring out the blood?" Note, Those greatly profane and pollute God's name who despise the business of religion, though it is very honourable, as not worth taking pains in, and the advantages of religion, though highly valuable, as not worth taking pains for. Those who live in a careless neglect of holy ordinances, who come to them and attend on them irreverently, and go away from them never the better and under no concern, do in effect say, "*The table of the Lord is contemptible*; there is neither virtue nor value in it, neither credit nor comfort from it."

(2.) They despised God's name in what they did, which was of a piece with what they said, and flowed from it; corrupt principles and notions are roots of bitterness, which bear the gall and wormwood of corrupt practices. They looked upon the table and altar of the Lord as contemptible, and then,

[1.] They thought any thing would serve for a sacrifice, though ever so coarse and mean, and were so far from bringing the best, as they ought to have done, that they picked out the worst they had, which was fit neither for the market nor for their own tables, and offered that at God's altar. With every sacrifice they were to bring a meat-offering of *fine flour mingled with oil*; but they brought *polluted bread* (v. 7), coarse bread, servants' bread, perhaps it was dry and mouldy, or made of the refuse of the wheat, which they thought good enough to be burnt upon the altar; for had it been better they would have said, *To what purpose is this waste?* And as to the beasts they offered, though the law was express that what was offered in sacrifice should not have a blemish, yet they brought *the blind, and the lame, and the sick* (v. 8), and again (v. 13), *the torn, and the lame, and the sick*, that was ready to die of itself. They looked no further than the burning of the sacrifice, and they pleaded that it was a pity to burn it if it was good for any thing else. The people were so far convinced of

their duty that they would bring sacrifices; they durst not wholly omit the duty, but they brought vain oblations, mocked God, and deceived themselves, by bringing the worst they had; and the priests, who should have taught them better, accepted the gifts brought to the altar and offered them up there, because, if they should refuse them, the people would bring none at all, and then they would lose their perquisites; and therefore, having more regard to their own profit than to God's honour, they accepted that which they knew he would not accept. Some make v. 8 to be a continuation of what the priests profanely said v. 7, *You say to the people, If you offer the blind for sacrifice, it is not evil; or the lame and the sick, it is not evil.* Note, It is a very evil thing, whether men think so or no, to offer the blind and the lame, the torn and the sick, in sacrifice to God. If we worship God ignorantly, and without understanding, we bring the blind for sacrifice; if we do it carelessly, and without consideration, if we are cold, and dull, and dead, in it, we bring the sick; if we rest in the bodily exercise, and do not make heart-work of it, we bring the *lame*; and, if we suffer vain thoughts and distractions to lodge within us, we bring the torn. *And is not this evil?* Is it not a great affront to God and a great wrong and injury to our own souls? Do not our books tell us, nay, do not our own hearts tell us, that *this is evil?* for God, who is the best, ought to be served with the best we have.

[2.] They would do no more of their work than what they were paid for. The priests would offer the sacrifices that were brought to the altar, because they had their share of them; but as for any other service of the temple, that had not a particular fee belonging to it, they would not stir a step, nor lend a hand, to it; and this was the general temper of them, v. 10. There is not a man among the priests that would *shut the doors, or kindle a fire, for nought.* If he were required to do the smallest piece of service, he would ask, how shall I be paid for it? They would do nothing *gratis*, but were all for what they could get, *every one for his gain, from his quarter,*  Isaiah 56:11. Note, Though God has given order that his servants be well paid in this world, yet those are no acceptable servants to him who are mercenary, and would never do the work but for the wages.

[3.] Their work was a perfect drudgery to them (v. 13): *You said also, Behold, what a weariness is it!* Both priests and people were of this mind, that they thought God imposed too hard a task upon them; the people grudged the charge of providing the sacrifice and the priests grudged the pains of offering it; they thought the feasts of the Lord came too thick, and

they were forced to attend too often, and too long, in the courts of the Lord; the priests thought it a severe penance imposed upon them to purify themselves as was required when they attended the altar and ate of the holy things; they thought the duty of their office toilsome and troublesome, and *snuffed at it* as unreasonable, and bearing hard upon them; they did it, but it was grudgingly and with reluctance. God speaks of it, in justification of his law, that he had not *made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense,* <sup><283></sup> Isaiah 43:23. *Wherein have I wearied thee?* <sup><306></sup> Micah 6:3. But their own wicked hearts made it a weariness; and they were, as Doeg, *detained before the Lord*; they would rather have been any where else. Note, Those are highly injurious, both to God and themselves, who are weary of his service and worship, and snuff at it.

**III.** Observe how God expostulates and reasons the case with them, for their conviction and humiliation.

**1.** Would they, durst they, affront an earthly prince thus? “You offer to God *the lame and the sick; offer it now unto thy governor* (v. 8), either as tribute or as a present, when thou art entreating his favour, or in gratitude for some favour received; *will he be pleased with thee?* Or, rather, will he not take himself to be affronted by it?” Note, Those who are careless and irreverent in the duties of religious worship should consider what a shame it is to offer that to their God which they would scorn to offer to their governor, to be more observant of the laws of breeding and good manners than of the laws of religion, and more afraid of being rude than of being profane.

**2.** Could they imagine that such sacrifices as these would be pleasing to God, or answer the end of sacrifices? “*Should I accept this at your hand, saith the Lord?* v. 13. Have you any reason to think I should either not discern or not resent the affront, that I should connive at the violation of my own laws? No (v. 10); *I have no pleasure in you, and therefore, I will not accept an offering, such an offering, at your hand.*” If God has no pleasure in the person, if the person be not in a justified state, if he be not sanctified, God will not accept the offering. God had respect to Abel first and then to his sacrifice. Note, In order to our acceptance with God it is not enough to do that which, for the matter of it, is good, but we must do it from a right principle, in a right manner, and for a right end. It was the ancient rule laid down (<sup><107></sup>Genesis 4:7), *If thou doest well, shalt thou not*

*be accepted?* Now, if we be not accepted of God, in vain do we worship him; it is all lost labour; nay, we are all undone, for ever undone, if we come short of God's acceptance. Those therefore make a bad bargain for themselves who, to save charges in their religion, miss all the ends of it, and, by thinking to go the nearest way to work, bring nothing to pass. Those who make it the top of their ambition, as we all ought to do, *whether present or absent, to be accepted of the Lord*, will not dare to bring the *torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice*.

**3.** How could they expect to prevail with God in their intercessions for the people when they thus affronted God in their sacrifices? So some understand v. 9, as spoken ironically, “*And now if you will do the duty of priests, and stand in the gap to turn away the judgments of God that you see ready to pour in upon us, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us, and to our land which is almost eaten up with locusts and caterpillars,*” as appears <sup>381</sup>Malachi 3:11. “Try now what interest you have at the throne of grace; improve it for the removing of this plague, for *it has been by your means*; you have provoked God to send it. But as you go on thus to profane his sacred things *will he regard your persons or your prayers?* No, you cannot prevail with him to command it away.” For, *if we regard iniquity in our hearts, God will not hear us*, either for ourselves or for others.

**4.** Had God deserved this at their hands? No, he had provided comfortably for them, and had given them such encouragement in their work as might have engaged them to do it cheerfully and well; so some understand v. 10, “*Who is there among you that shall shut a door, or kindle a fire, for nought?* No, God does not expect you should serve him for nothing; you are well paid for it, and shall be so; not a cup of cold water, given for the honour of God, shall *lose its reward*.” Note, The consideration of our constant receivings from God, and the present rewards of obedience in obedience, very much aggravates our slothfulness and niggardliness in our returns of duty to God.

**IV.** He calls them to repentance for their profanations of his holy name. So we may understand v. 9, “*Now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us*. Humble yourselves for your sin, cry mightily to God for pardon, and make up in the faith and fervency of your prayers what has been wanting in the worth and value of your sacrifices; for all the rebukes of Providence we are under *are by your means*.” Note, Those who have by

their sins helped to kindle a fire are highly concerned by their repentance, prayers, and the personal reformation, to help to quench it. We must see how much God's judgments are by our means, and be awakened thereby to be earnest with him to return in mercy; and, if we take not this course, how can we think he should regard our persons?

**V.** He declares his resolution both to secure the glory of his own name and to reckon with those who profane it. Those who put contempt upon God and religion, and think to run down sacred things, let them know,

**1.** That they shall not gain their point. God will magnify his law and make it honourable, though they vilify it and make it contemptible; for (v. 11) *from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles*. It might be said, "If these are not the worshippers whom God will accept, then he has no worshippers." As if he must make the best of their service, or else he would have no service done him; and then *what will he do for his great name?* But let him alone for that; *though Israel be not faithful, be not gathered*, yet God will be *glorious*. Though these priests provoke him to take down the ceremonial economy, and to abolish that *law of commandments*, which *could not make the comers thereunto perfect*, yet he will be no loser by that, at the long run; for,

**(1.)** Instead of those carnal ordinances, which they profaned, a spiritual way of worship shall be introduced and established: *Incense shall be offered to God's name* (which signifies prayer and praise, <sup><410></sup>Psalm 141:2; <sup><400></sup>Revelation 8:3), instead of the blood and fat of bulls and goats. And it shall be a *pure offering*, refined, not only from the corruptions that were in the priests' practice, but from the mere bodily exercise that was in the institutions themselves, which are called *carnal ordinances*, *imposed till the time of reformation*, <sup><300></sup>Hebrews 9:10. When the hour came in which *the true worshippers worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth*, then this *incense* was *offered*, even this *pure offering*.

**(2.)** Instead of his being worshipped and served among the Jews only, a small people in a corner of the world, he will be served and worshipped in all places, *from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same; in every place*, in every part of the world, *incense shall be offered to his name*; nations shall be discipled, and shall speak of the wonderful works of God, and have them spoken to them in their own language. This is a

plain prediction of that great revolution in the kingdom of grace by which the Gentiles, who had been *strangers and foreigners*, came to be *fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God*, and as welcome to the throne of grace as ever the Jews had been. It is twice said (for the thing was certain), *My name shall be great among the Gentiles*, whereas hitherto in Judah only he was *known*, and *his name was great*, <sup><981></sup>Psalm 76:1. God's name shall be declared to them, the declaration of it shall be received and believed, and there shall be those among the Gentiles who shall magnify and glorify the name of God better than ever the Jews had done, even the priests themselves.

**2.** That they shall not go unpunished, v. 14. Here is the doom of those who do like these priests, for the sentence on them is a sentence on all such. Observe,

**(1.)** The description of profane and careless worshippers. They are such as *vow and sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt thing* when they have *in their flock a male*. They have of the best, wherewith to serve and honour him, so bountiful has been in his gifts to them, but they put him off with the worst, and think that good enough for him, so ungrateful are they in their returns to him. This was the fault of the people, but the priests connived at it, and indulged them in it. We find a distinction in the law which allowed *that to be offered for a free-will offering which would not be accepted for a vow*, <sup><822></sup>Leviticus 22:23. But the priests would accept it, though God would not, pretending to be more indulgent than he was, for which he will give them no thanks another day.

**(2.)** The character given of such worshippers. They are *deceivers*; they deal falsely and fraudulently with God; they play the hypocrite with him; they pretend to honour him, in making the vow, but, when it comes to be performed, they put an affront upon him, to such a degree that it would have been *better not to have vowed than to vow and thus to pay*; but let not such be themselves deceived, for *God is not mocked*. Those who think to put a cheat upon God will prove, in the end, to have put a damning cheat upon their own souls. Hypocrites are deceivers, and they will prove self-deceivers, and so self-destroyers.

**(3.)** The doom passed upon them: They are *cursed*; they expect a blessing, but will meet with a curse, the tokens of God's wrath, according to the judgment written.

(4.) The reason of this doom: “*For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and therefore will reckon with those who deal with me but as a man like themselves; my name is dreadful among the heathen, and therefore I will not bear that it should be contemptible among my own people.*” The heathen paid more respect to their gods, though idols, than the Jews did to theirs, though the only true and living God. Note, The consideration of God's universal dominion, and the universal acknowledgment of it, should restrain us from all irreverence in his service.