



"THE DAY IS COMING ..."

Why worship God? People can (and do) worship all kinds of things – people, pleasures, possessions. Why God?

In Islam, the answer would be: "God is great, so He deserves it." But the Bible gives an additional answer: we worship God because He is *good* – a goodness shown in what He *has* done, and what He is *going* to do.

And that's the point Malachi makes in the final chapter of his book:

Malachi 4

In this passage, Malachi predicts the coming of the Sun of Righteousness (Jesus Himself), and, heralding the way, Elijah (John the Baptist). But what Malachi didn't know was that Jesus was going to make 2 appearances – first as Saviour, then as King – thus giving us the chance to turn to Him.

What does this tell us about worship? We can look forward to the blessings of Jesus' second coming, while knowing the blessings of His first – and that can make us want to worship.

In particular, we can know 3 things:

1) We Can Know Light. In vs2, Malachi says: "The Sun of Righteousness will rise ..." When Kellie and I had been going out a while, I decided it would be really cool if we were to watch the sunrise together. So early one morning I gave her a knock, we headed off for a country park, and found a spot on a

hill. And there we sat, arms round each other, no doubt looking very romantic when in fact we were desperate to keep warm, and we watched the sunrise – an unforgettable experience.

What does Malachi have in mind when he compares Jesus to a sunrise? Perhaps it's:

- **Light where there was darkness.** We all experience dark times in our lives, sometimes inner darkness. But Jesus can bring light, even to the darkest of times.
- **Hope where there was despair.** In many cultures darkness is associated with hopelessness and fear. But in Jesus we can find the courage to overcome.
- **Warmth where there was cold.** The world can be a cold, harsh place, and so can our own hearts. But in Jesus that coldness and harshness can begin to melt away.
- **Life where there was death.** Every spring we are reminded that the sun has the power to generate life. And so can Jesus, even when a person is dead inside.
- **Today where there was yesterday.** Watching a sunrise is like watching God create the world, all over again. And Jesus has the power to re-create it, too.

So why do we worship? Because ultimately, Jesus is going to fill this world with light. But there's a sense in which we can know that light right here, right now – if we want it.

2) We Can Know Healing. "With healing in His wings," Malachi says next. So what does *that* mean? Well, the Hebrew word for 'wing', *kanaph*, can also mean 'edge', as in the hem of a *tallit*, a kind of shawl worn by Jewish men when they pray. A *tallit* is a symbol of God's holiness; it has 4 corners with a tassel on each, representing the 4 letters of God's name (*Y, H, V, H*). Rabbis after the time of Malachi interpreted this to be referring to the Messiah. They also concluded that He would be so powerful He would be able to heal people with the edges of His prayer-shawl.

Fast-forward some 400 years, and there's this woman suffering from internal haemorrhaging (Mark 5:24-34). She's spent a fortune on cures that haven't worked, and then she hears about Jesus. So, she follows Him through the crowd, and when she thinks no-one is watching, she reaches out and touches ...

The edge of His prayer-shawl.

And Jesus heals her.

Now ultimately Malachi is looking forward to the second coming of Jesus, because on that day, we're all going to be healed (in the resurrection). But there's a sense in which Jesus heals now, too. Not every ailment we might suffer from – though He can, and sometimes does. But the 'inner us', the

healing of hearts and minds and lives – that’s what Malachi is really talking about. And that’s something we can experience right here, right now.

So, why do we worship? Because Jesus has the power to restore the world, and restore us, too. Not just in the future, but in the present; not just tomorrow, but today.

3) We Can Know Joy. “And you will leap like calves released from the stall ...” (vs2-3). Malachi is saying that, because of Jesus, we can all dance for joy – we can all have a stomp on the devil’s head! When Jesus returns, yes – but in the meantime, too.

Now this can come as a culture-shock to some, because if we’re honest, we don’t do dancing; don’t do excitement; don’t do joy (not when it comes to Jesus, anyway). Not because we can’t, but because we don’t want to.

Why is this? Many moons ago, when I took on the role of pastor here, I was adamant I was not doing youth-work. I’d been working with young people for nigh-on a decade, and that was enough for me! Or so I thought. But strangely enough, God had other ideas. And there were times when I really resented that, but as I look back I realise He was teaching me a very valuable lesson:

Sometimes, I take myself *way* too seriously.

How many of us ‘hold in’ our excitement about Jesus because we take ourselves too seriously? Or we’ve convinced ourselves “It’s not my thing” or “It’s not my personality-type” when what we really mean is “I’m scared of what the people around me might think”? John Piper puts it this way: “There’s a calf inside of all of us” – and Jesus came to set it free. That’s why the Bible refers to singing and dancing and making noise as if they’re compulsory activities in God’s kingdom. They will be!

So, why do we worship? Because one day Jesus is going to fill this world with joy. But again, there’s a sense in which we can know that joy right here, right now – if we want it.

The Final Word

Sometimes, worshipping God can be tough. In fact, we might not even *feel* like worshipping, sometimes. Instead, we might feel like moaning, crying, or even shouting at God (let’s face it, every child shouts at their parents, at some point). That’s why it’s vital to remember what He’s done, and what He’s going to do; that whatever negative situations we may be experiencing, ‘this’ is not the final word.

So, where do we need the Sun of Righteousness to shine, in our own lives? Where do we need His healing? And where do we need His joy?

Where do we need Jesus?