

Teaching for 2-27-08

The Lord Whom You Seek

It is the promise of the prophet Malachi: *And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,*” says the LORD of hosts (Malachi 3:1, NKJV).

It is a promise that was fulfilled in the incarnation of the Son of God at His first coming to this earth. It has a future fulfillment for which many are waiting with eager anticipation and greater fervency. Many believers are expressing more often what they are sensing deeply in their spirits—that the Lord is coming soon. However that might look, it is good to always be anticipating His manifest presence in our world.

With all of this anticipation, it is good to pause and ask the question: Who are we really looking for?

Who is the Lord whom you seek?

The Lord of Self-Fulfillment

You do not have to listen long before you hear the voices of those who invite you to believe that God is all about making you happy and self-fulfilled. Many Christian book titles point toward finding fulfillment and happiness—using God as the vehicle to get there. In his book entitled *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down*, Daniel Yankelovitch writes: “In their extreme form the new rules simply turn the old ones on their head, and in place of the old self-denial ethic we find people who refuse to deny anything to themselves—not out of bottomless appetite, but on the strange moral principle that *I have a duty to myself*” (p. xviii).

This certainly applies to much of what we see in the Christian world today. Somehow we have embraced the idea that the Lord whom we seek is a god who will bring us all the fulfillment we need. It is a not-too-subtle trap that much of the church has fallen into. We need to carefully search our own hearts to see if this false doctrine has subtly crept into our thinking about God.

The Handyman Lord

Lisa Otis (wife of George Otis, Jr., director of The Sentinel Group), when speaking of asking God to come in transforming power, asked the simple question, “Do we want Him to come as a handyman or as a lover?” Our tendency is to make God into what we want Him to be for our own personal convenience. We want God to come and fix the awful mess we have gotten ourselves in, treating Him more like the plumber we found in the Yellow Pages. We expect Him to perform a duty that will help us have a less stressful life. But we certainly don’t invite the plumber to stay for dinner and spend the night!

So often that is the way we think of God, whether we are inviting Him into our cities or into a personal situation. *Lord, just come and fix this thing for me.* We might pay Him off with a more regular church attendance for a while—or some other token response on our part. But our

primary concern is for God to rid us of the irritations or difficulties that keep us from cruising along in an enjoyable life.

The Mascot Lord

In his book, *Christ Is ALL!* David Bryant makes the observation that we have made Christ our mascot rather than the royal monarch of our lives. He writes:

In so many of our churches, I fear, Jesus is regularly deployed as our mascot. Once a week on Sunday, for example, we trot Him out to cheer us up, to give us new vigor and vision, to reassure us that we are somebody's. We invite Him to reinforce for us the great things we want to do for God... He lifts our spirits, He resuscitates our souls, He rebuilds our confidence, He gives us reasons to cheer, He confirms for us over and over that all must be well. Oh, we're so proud of Him! We're so happy to be identified with His name... For the rest of the week, He's pretty much relegated to the sidelines. For all practical purposes, we're the ones who call the shots. We implement the plays, scramble for first downs, and improvise in a pinch. Even if we do it in His name, we do it with little reliance on His Person (pgs. 12-14).

The Lord Who is Supreme

We started out looking at the promise of Malachi 3:1, that *the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming...*

Malachi reminds them that the Lord is the One who is like a refiner's fire. He will sit as a refiner to refine the people like gold and silver. In verse 5 the Lord states, So I will come near to you for judgment.

Is this the Lord whom we seek? Is this the One we would welcome into our families, churches, and cities? He is not the Lord of self-fulfillment. He is not the handyman or mascot Lord. Rather, as Paul states in Colossians 1: 15-18: *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

Do we truly seek the Lord for *all* that He is? Can we embrace Christ as the Coming King, Judge, and Refiner? If so, we must prepare our hearts to embrace all of His truth.

Who is the Lord whom we seek?