

Shut the Doors, Keep Out the People

Scripture Reading — Malachi 1:10-14

Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar!
— Malachi 1:10

How horrible that God wanted his own temple doors closed! This is one of the strongest biblical warnings about worship. If our worship isn't -really about loving and honoring God, it won't do any good to go through the motions.

The Israelites thought their worship was about God. They came to the temple to win God's favor and seek God's help—wasn't that all about God?

Many people of many religions, including many Christians, approach worship the same way. Often they are very concerned about the manner of worship. "We have to get this right," they think, "or God will be upset with us, won't answer our prayers, and might bring bad things upon us." Unfortunately they don't realize their thinking and their efforts are not *really* about God. If we worship that way, it is really about us—what we can get for ourselves from God.

God, of course, sees through to our selfish motives. He knows that such worship is not worship at all; it's only an attempt to manipulate him. When God says that his "name is to be feared among the nations," he wants us to be awestruck by his love for us—so awestruck that we cannot help praising him. That's the kind of fear—that is, awe, wonder, and amazement at God's great love—that should engage our worship.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, we are your temple. We are humbled that you would love us so much to save us and to honor us with the constant presence of your Spirit. We stand in awe of you! Amen.

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