

FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN: THEOLOGY OF MISSION
IN THE BOOK OF MALACHI

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ABSTRACT As the brilliant and beautiful sunlight at dawn introduces the day and its blessings, the book of Malachi introduces New Testament mission. This paper argues that from the Old Testament, Malachi introduced universal mission which began with the ministry of Christ and will continue to the end of the age. In Malachi can be found the possible origin of the concept of “mission from everywhere to everywhere.” This paper surveyed the concepts of mission in the Old Testament to give a background to Malachi’s message. The missiological interpretation of Malachi 1:11 shows that God unfolded in Malachi, the purpose of mission, the focus of mission, the scope of mission, and the fruit of mission. The understanding of the missionary message of Malachi will be an encouragement to leaders and practitioners of mission to forge ahead with the Great Commission as they receive the prophetic assurance of God’s universal intention for the salvation of mankind. The study will involve a review of some literature on Old Testament concepts of mission, a missiological interpretation of Malachi 1:11, and how Malachi’s message connects New Testament and contemporary practice of missions.

KEY WORDS: Mission, Theology, Universal Missions, The Nations, The Great Commission

Mission in the Old Testament: An Overview

Mission is not an afterthought that just appeared in the New Testament, it is the central theme of the whole Bible (Richardson, 1984). One can begin to trace mission from the Garden of Eden to the dealings of God with the patriarchs and the prophets. All these portray God’s interest in the salvation of people throughout the whole earth. God purposely chose Israel as a nation for the purpose of His mission to other nations. It is argued in this paper that there was no direct missionary engagement in the Old Testament. The closest to missions was the ministry of Jonah, the rests were concepts that find their practical fulfillment in New Testament mission. The missiological message of Malachi which is the center of discussion in this paper serve as a

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harbinger of New Testament Mission to the ends of the earth. Malachi 1:11 seems to be the Old Testament Acts 1:8.

Pre-patriarchal Concept of Mission

Mission did not start with man, it started with God Himself who after man sinned in the garden of Eden, came down looking for him. The first missionary call to a lost sinner was done by God Himself when He called “Adam, where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). This first call did not result in repentance thus, man lost the first opportunity given to him by God for repentance. To demonstrate His love for man that was created in His image, God quickly announced the *proto evangel* as a second and final chance given to man to reconcile with the creator. In Genesis 3:15 God made it clear to the woman that her seed will crush the head of the serpent while he will only strike the heel of the seed of the woman. This is a message of hope fulfilled in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross which later became the core message of all evangelists and missionaries of all times (Ellisen, 1999). The concept of mission can further be seen in the “Table of Nations” found in Genesis 10. After the flood and before the Tower of Babel, God listed the families and nations that descended from Noah. These seventy founders of nations descended from Shem, Ham and Japhet (Table of Nations, 2011). This is important to this study because it shows how God rescued a man and his family and used the family to repopulate the earth for the purpose of fulfilling His redemptive plan.

Furthermore, the concept of mission can be seen in the multiplication of tongues and the scattering of the people of the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter eleven which provides linguistic and ethnic identity of all nations. It is important to note that the division of the earth the scripture mentions in the days when Peleg the son of Eber was born (Genesis 10:25), does not mean the literal division of the earth into continents as some interpret it, but the division of the earth according to linguistic borders or nations and the scattering of them (Table of Nations, 2011). While Genesis eleven shows the scattering of the people, Revelation 7:9 show the gathering of multitudes of people from “...every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne...” These unique events of scattering at Babel and the eschatological gathering before the throne is clear evidence that God has concern for the salvation of the people of the whole world emphasized in Malachi 1:11.

The Patriarchal Promise

Genesis 11:10-26 gave another account of the genealogy of the descendants of Shem with the intention of introducing Abraham. God in His divine purpose and plan

called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. In the Abrahamic blessings, God promised Abraham a land, a great name and that through him, all the families of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). The word families in this passage denotes extended families or ethnic groups. It can also be translated all tribes (or nations) of the earth. The seed of the woman that will crush the head of the serpent (Satan) is the greatest blessing that will come through Abraham to the whole world. Abraham had more than one son, he had Ishmael and other children through Keturah. Isaac among Abraham's children was the child of promise with whom God will fulfill His covenant of blessing to the nations of the earth. The Lord repeated the patriarchal promise to the hearing of Isaac, "...through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 26:2-5). God chose to continue the covenant with Jacob. In Jacob's encounter with God at Bethel, the Lord still repeated the patriarchal promise to him saying, "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your descendants" (Genesis 28:14). Among the twelve sons of Jacob, the blessing (Jesus) was to come through Judah and as a King through the Davidic line. H. Cornel Goerner in his book *All Nations in God's Purpose* said this in connection with this blessing that, "The Messiah will reign over nations, and Israel will be a blessing to them, this is the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant with the patriarchs" (Goerner, 1979, p. 52) The coming of Christ the incarnate Son of God through Abraham and His redemptive work fulfilled this promise of blessing to all nations. Today, the Church through missions has been able to connect the nations with this blessing.

God's Purpose for the Nation of Israel

The background of the nation of Israel above, reveals that Israel was meant to be a blessing to the nations. God's choice of the nation of Israel out of all nations was purposely for making them His "Treasured possession..., a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This does not mean that God has rejected all other nations for He said in the same passage that, "...the whole earth is mine..." (Exodus 19:5,6). Israel as a priesthood nation were to mediate between God and other nations. If they did this, they would have made the will of God known to the nations. When Gentiles respond to the revelation and righteous character of God, then Israel would have achieved her mediatorial role of making the Gentiles acceptable to God (Goerner, 1979). In continuation of our discussion on Israel's role to the nations, the Lord declared in Numbers 14:21 saying, "...as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord..." This verse shows that God was counting on Israel as a priest- nation to make His glory known throughout all the earth. Israel was created to participate in God's mission of saving and reconciling the nations back to Himself. Steyne (1997) buttressed this point as he said, "Anything less was disobedience and a rejection of

their role as a priest-nation” (p.58). Israel was to be a model to the nations to show them what it meant to be people of God. Unfortunately, what they refused to do as free citizens of their nation, they had to do it as captives in a foreign land when they went to captivity in Babylon. The nations were to know through the nation of Israel that God (YAHWEH) alone is supreme who reigns over kingdoms (Steyne, 1997).

The prayer of king Solomon during the dedication of the Temple helps us to understand clearly the mediatorial role of Israel as a priest nation and helps us to know that Israel was not ignorant of this role. Solomon prayed, “As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but have come from a distant land because of your name....When he comes and pray towards this temple, then hear from heaven your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel” (I Kings 8:41-43). God gave the children of Israel the privilege of being a national priesthood but unfortunately, they declined and preferred Moses and Aaron to represent them. They said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Exodus 20:19). This original purpose of God to make a priesthood nation was delayed until the New Testament times, when the priesthood of all believers was again proclaimed in, I Peter 2:9 (Kaiser, 1991).

The negative attitude of Israel towards reaching the nations grew worse after the Babylonian captivity. This was so because of the hardships they were experiencing politically, economically, and how they were subjugated and oppressed by gentile powers (Malachi 3:14-15). Instead of seeking that the nations be saved, they sought their judgement and destruction by God. They were unable to also fulfill their missionary call to the nations because they saw themselves as superior to the gentiles. Despite the odds, not all was totally a failure when the history of Israel is traced, it would be discovered that their interaction with the nations brought kings like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar etc., to acknowledge the God of heaven. Gentiles like Rahab, Tamar and Ruth became part of the people of God and were ancestors of Christ. The visit of the Queen of Sheba to Israel in the days of Solomon, Jonah’s mission to the Ninevites (Steyne, 1997), and Jewish synagogues scattered all over the Roman Empire show to some extent that Israel reached to the nations (Picirilli, 1986). Apart from Jonah’s ministry, there was no intentionality to reach the Gentiles. Even Jonah had to be forced by God to carry out his mission.

The Prophets and the Nations

When Israel did backslide and began to serve the gods of the nations, God raised up prophets to call them to repentance and to remind them of their missionary and priesthood role to the nations. The prophets spoke about God’s intention to include

the Gentiles to become the people of God. This inclusion of the Gentiles into the family of God Paul called a mystery which was hidden but revealed to the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:1-6). The concept of mission in the prophets is clearly seen in the Messianic expectation proclaimed by the prophets. This expectation was initially seen by the Jews as the restoration of the splendor of the Davidic kingdom. The prophet Isaiah dismissed that as a wishful thinking of the people when he proclaimed his Messianic messages. The prophet Isaiah pointed them to a hope that rested upon God's historic dealings with His people (Bromiley, G.W. 1992, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* Vol. III). Bromiley added, "The combination of the kingship ideology and this new perspective, the belief in the advent of the Messiah as divinely appointed Savior of the world was born." The Messianic expectation poetry in Isaiah clearly explains the mission (42:1-4), the call (49:1-6), the obedience (50:4-9) and suffering (52:13-53:12) of the Messiah referred to as the "Servant" in the passages. Most of the scriptural references in the prophets have to do with the nations coming to know the power and glory of God which is a concept of mission. The prophet Jeremiah said to God, "...to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, our fathers possessed nothing but false gods, worthless idols that did them no good. Therefore, I will teach them this time...my power and might. They will know that my name is the Lord" (Jeremiah 16:19-21). Jeremiah's message makes it clear that God will show mercy on the Gentiles and open their eyes and understanding to see the foolishness of serving idols. This understanding will make some of them turn to the Lord. Jeremiah emphasizes "the end of the earth" to show the global scope of God's intention to reach out to the nations. In addition to this, Habakkuk rightly predicted that, "...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" Hab. 2:14 (Thomson, 1992).

In the great missionary passage of Isaiah 66:17-23, God, after expressing His disappointment with the children of Israel, promised to "gather all nations and tongues" who will come and see His glory. Isaiah in the same passage points out that, after punishing Israel, God will scatter the survivors to the nations; "to Tarshish, to the Libyans, to Tubal and Greece." They will now be missionaries to the "distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory." They will be there to preach and proclaim God's glory until they bring their "brothers" to the holy mountain. The brothers here could be fellow Jews or fellow mankind. God probably used the word "brothers" so that the children of Israel will see the Gentiles as their fellow brothers. Among those that will be brought, the Lord said, "I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites." That means they were not originally qualified for these levels of ministry, so their selection is purely by grace. This relates more to the Gentiles becoming instruments in the hands of the Lord (The NIV Full-Life Study Bible. Com-

mentary on Jer. 16:19-21). Isaiah concluded by saying, "...all mankind will come and bow down before me..." This will come to pass because of missionary efforts to the nations. To buttress this point, Zechariah said "...many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to see the Almighty God and to entreat Him (Zechariah 2:11). With this missionary vision, God called on Israel to enlarge her tents with the promise that she would "spread out to the right and the left" and "their descendants will dispossess nations..." (Isaiah 54:3). On this verse, the Full-Life Study Bible commented that "your descendants will dispossess nations" may refer to the faithful believers among the Jews who spread the gospel of Christ to many nations during New Testament times. Malachi as the last writing prophet of the Old Testament Canon sums up by saying, "my name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun" (Malachi 1:11). With the increase in global missionary enterprise, this generation has begun to witness the fulfillment of these Old Testament prophecies.

The Concept of Mission in the Psalms

The book of Psalms has a lot of passages that have concepts of mission, notable ones are the royal and messianic psalms. Example of Psalm 2: 8 "... I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." Even though this royal psalm initially referred to the kings of Israel, it also points to Christ whose kingdom will be worldwide in its extent. This kingdom can be seen in two ways "present" and "future." The kingdom of God presently is in the hearts of men as Jesus taught His disciples to pray "...thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). This kingdom of Christ is the type that can only be expanded through evangelism and missionary activities. The futuristic kingdom is the physical millennial reign of Christ on earth (Peters, 1984). The Psalmist went on to say that "Envoys will come from Egypt; Cush will submit herself to God" (Psalms 68:31). The nations so mentioned stand for the Gentiles who did not fear the Lord now submitting to God. The Psalmist also envisioned the ends of the earth turning to God and families and nations bowing down before Him. This depicts the worship of God in different parts of the world that will be brought about through global evangelization.

In Psalm 67:1-2 the writer prayed to God for blessings upon His people so that the nations will know the ways of the Lord and His "salvation among all nations." The greatest blessing that can be poured upon the people of God that will bring about the knowledge of God and salvation is that of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Psalmist went on to say, "may the people praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you" (v. 5). This can only be brought about through the accomplishment of the missionary mandate (Kaiser, 1999). Furthermore, God created the heavens and the earth and as such, according to the Psalmist "all nations you have made will come

and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name” (Psalm 86:9). All nations here, pictures the heathen from different linguistic background, tribes, races, and ethnic groups.

In summary, the concept of mission in the Old Testament is seen in three stages. The first is the patriarchal promise “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Secondly, Israel as a priesthood nation supposed to be an immediate blessing to the nations through their missionary efforts before the coming of the Messiah but they failed, and thirdly, is the prophetic utterances of God’s intention to save the Gentiles which includes the Messianic expectation (Peters, 1984). Most important to this study is Malachi’s proclamation in (1:11).

Malachi and Missions

Malachi, the author of his book was the last of the writing prophets of Israel and wrote the last book of the Old Testament canon. Nothing is known about the author of the book of Malachi except that he identified himself by name as the author of his book (1:11). However, some scholars take the word “Malachi” not as a proper name but a common noun and thus renders it “my messenger” (Harrison, 1991, p. 958), and the prophecy is taken as an anonymous composition. Malachi lived in a day of moral decline and social ills. He preached his message with full Messianic expectation. His audience were the remnant of Israel after the rebuilding of the temple c. 516 B.C. Because it was a day of social and moral decline, he was found addressing both the people and the priests for they had all backslide (Geisler, 1985). Malachi prophesied around Palestine since his message centers around the temple in Jerusalem. The purpose of the message was to rebuke social and moral decay, thus warning the backslidden remnant to return to true faith in God. He insisted that one cannot serve God unless he is sincere and pure. God will use His hand to purge His people of their sins (Geisler, 1985).

Malachi encountered a very poor response to his message. When he pointed out these things such as the offering of the diseased animals to God (1:8), the sinfulness of the priests and their mixed marriages (2:11), their response always was “wherein have we offended the Lord?” In 3:14-15, the children of Israel felt they are now righteous since they do not practice idolatry and felt that God must bless them. They began to compare themselves with the ungodly that are prospering in their own ways and concluded that “...it is vain to serve God” (3:14). “They did not first consider their motives for serving God and their heart condition which was not pleasing to God” (Harrison, 1991, p. 956).

The Missiological Interpretation of Malachi 1:11

The economic hardship and persistent opposition Israelites were experiencing closed their eyes so that they could not see or remember the love of God towards them (1:2). God's response to them was a reference to their brothers the Edomites who went to Babylonian captivity and never returned to their land (1:3). God related to Israel as a father relates to his son and expected them to have reciprocated with reverential obedience (1:6). Instead, they show contempt to God by their polluted sacrifices which belittled God. "Food" or "Bread" referred to in the passage was a reference to offering presented to God. The term "polluted" or contaminated used in Malachi is the term used in Isaiah 59:3 and Lamentation 4:14, to refer to hands or garments defiled with blood (Wolf, 1979, p. 67).

The offerings offered to the Lord by the children of Israel in the days of Malachi were polluted because blind and lame animals were offered, which Deuteronomy 15:21 condemned. Despite the indictments, the children of Israel kept asking "wherein have we offended the Lord?" God's response to them was a challenge to try offering such to their governor whether he will be impressed. The Jews dishonored and belittled God and therefore, in (1:10), He even chose that the temple gates be shut so that the abominable sacrifices could stop. This shutting up of the gates to Israel was to open the gates to the Gentiles who will present to Him "pure incense" and "offerings" (Wolf, 1979, p. 69). Malachi 1:11 our text read thus, *"My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name because my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord Almighty"* (Malachi 1:11). The immediate context of the passage as seen above shows how God loves Israel (1:2) but instead of loving Him, she in turn decided to dishonor Him (1:6), especially with their offerings and sacrifices. The crippled and diseased animals they offered on His altar turned out to be an insult to Him. God at this moment was tired with the useless sacrifices and offerings and set out to close the Levitical sacrifices and throw out His arms to the Gentiles who will present to Him "Pure incense" (1:11). This will in turn honor His name. To back up the claim above, Jerome H. Smith commented on this verse saying, "As the preceding verse was a prediction of the abolition of the Levitical priesthood, so this is a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles, and the spiritual priesthood of the gospel times. As none but priests of Aaron's race might burn incense before Jehovah, a total change of the external administration of the sacred ordinances is evidently predicted" (Smith, 1992, p. 1024)

Some scholars have attempted to solve the controversial aspect of this verse as to whether the message of 1:11 is futuristic or present. Miles Bennett in his commentary on "Hosea-Malachi," in Broadman Bible Commentary said that the verb "shall be"

which some scholars use to give the verse a futuristic outlook in their interpretation usually is italicized in the King James Version which means it is lacking in the original manuscript. He went further to say that the verse "...is most naturally understood here as present" (Vol. VII 1792). Bennett pictures the statement "from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great" to mean the universal worship of idols by the heathen which he says "whose sincerity and zeal in the worship of these gods is contrasted with the slovenly indifference of the Jerusalem priests (Bennett, 1792). Arguably, with the command of God to Israel against idolatry, it is difficult to believe that a Hebrew prophet could advocate heathen idolatry and set it on the same level with the worship of YAHWEH (Pussey, E. B., *The Minor Prophets* A Commentary, II, 1978). Bennett went on to clarify that the prophet did not intend to praise heathen worship, but to use this as an illustration to shame the leaders of his own people in order to challenge them to greater devotion to God. Charles M. Laymon in "Malachi" *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, 1971 ed., shares the same opinion with Bennett by saying that the prophet is "simply shaming Jews (sic) and in doing so he seems to be commending aliens." On the same line, Donald Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, "Malachi" *The Eerdmans Bible Commentary*, 1970., added by saying, In the prophet's days the very Gentiles were offering worship which was more sincere than that in Jerusalem." They further concluded that: "The verse has also been understood as applying to the future, whether of the acceptance of Israel's religion by the nations, or of the universal response to the Gospel, or the Lord's Supper.

Commenting on the phrase "incense and pure offering" to be offered as stated in the verse, J.D. Douglas, "Malachi" *The New Bible Dictionary*, 1962., wrote, "This does not refer to the offerings which the heathen nations bring to their gods, nor does it refer to the sacrifice of the mass, but to the time when the true gospel will be spread throughout the world and the true God worshiped by all the people." Incense and pure offering of Malachi 1:11 can neatly connect Jesus' teaching on true worship in the Gospel of John when He told the Samaritan woman, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (John 4:21). Jesus was prophetically telling the woman that it is time that God will launch a universal worship instead of localizing it to Jerusalem which agrees with Malachi's universal claim. Jesus went further to tell the woman that now is the time when the true worshipers will worship the Father in truth and Spirit and not in traditional, legalistic, and ritualistic manner for "God is a Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24). Any true and spiritual worship is "pure incense and offering."

On the honor of the name of the Lord in the verse, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch in *Commentary on the Old Testament X "Minor Prophets"* 1989., wrote that, the name

of God is only great among the Gentiles, when Jehovah has proved Himself to be Great..." This claim can be proved by referring to the encounter of Pharaoh of Egypt and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon with the power of God. When Nebuchadnezzar came back from his seven years of punishment, he acknowledged God by saying, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven..." (Daniel 4:37). On Malachi 1:11, Keil and Delitzsch (1989) further stated that, "consequently, we must understand the words prophetically as relating to that spread of the Kingdom of God among all nations, with which the worship of the true God would commence in every place." In Malachi 1:11, we can see the purpose, focus, scope, and fruit of mission discussed below.

The Glory of God: The Purpose of Mission

The purpose of mission is to glorify the Lord as Malachi rightly proclaimed, "My name will be great..." The Lord is glorified when His name is honored. God specifically in the decalogue instructed the people of God not to "take His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7) which shows that He is concerned about the glory of His name. The worship of idols, sin, and wickedness dishonor Him. The greatness of name of the Lord and its glory came out more clearly at the instance of the call of Moses at the burning bush when God introduced Himself to Moses by His personal name "I AM WHO I AM." He is self-existent, and do not depend on anybody or anything, but all things live and survive by and through Him. Paul captures this concept well when he said, "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Interestingly, the introduction of this eternal and revered name is in connection with His mission in the exodus from Egypt. The I AM sent Moses on a mission that will eventually bring glory to His great name. The name of the Lord is to be revered and honored by (both Jews and Gentiles); frivolous use of the name is prohibited. On the misuse of the name of the Lord, Charles Ryrie commenting on Deuteronomy 5:11 in Ryrie Study Bible said, "misuse for wrong purposes, such as manipulation or magic or selfish desires. This can even be done when we pray." The glory of the Great Name of God is clearly projected at the dedication of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem (I Kings 5:3-5). Note the repeated emphasis "for the name of the LORD" in the passage. We need to note that in the dedication prayer, Solomon anticipated the temple to attract people from all nations when he mentioned "foreigners who will come from distant lands" (I Kings 8:41). In my opinion, the inclusion of the Gentiles in this prayer anticipates a global impact of the gospel. To the covenant people of God, He said to Israel, "If my people, who are called by my name..." (2 Chronicles 7:14). The name of the LORD becomes the identity of the people of God. Honoring this Great Name guarantees their continual relationship with Him.

In the Psalms, the great name of the Lord is praised and honored. And there are passages that express trust in this Great Name. David in Psalm 8:1 sang about the glory and majesty of the name of the Lord in heaven and on earth. This great name is to be trusted more than military might (Psalm 20:7). David invited the nation of Israel to “ascribe glory due the name of the Lord” (Psalm 29:2), the people of God are to “sing the glory of His name” (Psalm 66:2). In relation to mission in the Old Testament, God is called upon to forgive the sins of Israel and to defend the integrity of His name before the nations. The Psalmist argued, that if God does not do so, the nations will have the cause to question His people, “where is their God?” (Psalm 79:9-10). The Psalmist also warned against syncretism as he insisted that glory should be ascribed to the name of the Lord alone (Psalm 115:1), which resonated with the concerns of the prophets about Honor to the Great Name of God.

The prophets also shared the concern about the honor of the name of the LORD as Isaiah prophesied, “I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or praise to idols” (42:8). The glory of the name of the Lord cannot be shared with men or idols- this glory is exclusively His. With this understanding, Isaiah sang, “... your name and renown are the desire of our hearts” (26:8). In relation to mission, Isaiah wrote, “like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name” (63:14). Jeremiah while interceding for Israel called on God to intervene and save His people for the sake of His name (14:7). Ezekiel also prayed the Lord to preserve the nation of Israel for the sake of His name (20:9,14 and 22). What God told Moses underscores his desire for His name to be honored and glorified through mission. He said, “But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord” (Exodus 14:4,17) Through mission God demonstrates His power over demons, sicknesses, false gods, and His name is glorified. The Psalmist said, “Praise to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen and Amen” (72:19). Human beings in rebellion, have tried to instead of making the name of the Lord great, they seek to make their name(s) great. This originated from the tower of Babel, the incident which represents the origin of rebellion, idolatry, and false religion. Instead of seeking to glorify the name of the Lord in obedience to God’s command to “multiply and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28), they decided to build a tower to “make our name great” (Genesis 11:4). This is manifested today in empire building in the name of ministry.

It is important to conclude the discussion on the glory of God in the prophets with emphasis on Malachi. A. E. Hill commented that “Malachi preached to a diverse audience. His sermons were directed to the disillusioned, the cynical, the callous, the dishonest, the apathetic, the doubting, the skeptical and the outright wicked in

postexilic Judah” (Hill, 2012, p. 525). These were people who broke covenant with God, with their wives and offered detestable sacrifices which God hated. Hope was not all lost in Israel as there were still a few remnants that feared the Lord (Malachi 3:16-17; 4:1,2) of whom the “scroll of remembrance was written” in the presence of the Lord, and for the remnant, “the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.” This also may have futuristic implication either in the ministry of the Messiah, mission to the nations, or in the millennium.

The most important passage on the glory and honor of God’s name in the New Testament that connects with mission is Matthew 6:9-10. In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus began by establishing the Father-son relationship between a believer and his heavenly Father. Jesus affirmed the third commandment (Exodus 20:7) in the Decalogue that the name of the Lord be honored, by praying, “Hallowed be thy Name” (KJV) or “your name be honored as holy” (NIV). Jesus Himself in his ministry and mission honored the Father and this honor can be found in the lives and faithful service of the apostles and early disciples of Christ. The New Testament concept of the kingdom is both present and futuristic. The kingdom that the disciples of Christ are to pray for to come is the present kingdom which is manifested in the expansion of the gospel through the mission of the church while expecting the eschatological Kingdom. The will of the Lord to be done in earth as it is done in heaven is only possible when non-believers receive the gospel and are saved and grow in discipleship. Then, as salt and light to the world, they do the will of the Father here on earth. Believers taste as salt and shine as light in creation care, obedience to constituted authority, loving their neighbors, truthfulness and prudence in the management of resources, faithfulness in public service, Christian social services etc.

In summary, the call of Israel as a nation was primarily to glorify God and to be a channel for the fulfillment of His salvific plan for mankind. When Israel failed to glorify Him, He allowed them to be taken to captivity to Babylon. After the Babylonian captivity, they still were not glorifying Him as such He opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles who will glorify Him. God is dishonored when men that were created in His own image and likeness turn around to worship what He has created or their similitude or when they invent religions as means of reaching Him. False religions and cults are disgusting to God. Satan is the archenemy of God; God is angry with people who worship Satan and his demons. God is honored when men turn from idols to serve the living God (I Thessalonians 1:9). -

The Nations: The Focus of Mission

The Nations is an important theme in the book of Malachi as it relates to the glory of God. The Hebrew word *gō'ē* (Zodhites, 2008, p. 1797) translated nations in Malachi 1:11,14; 3:12 means “Gentile, heathen, nation, people” (Zodhites, 2008, p.

1797) through whom God will be glorified. God began His salvific program by calling one man (Abraham) through whom He raised one nation (Israel) for the purpose of His mission to the nations and the worship of God. The worship of God, which was supposed to be universal, was localized among the Israelites. This sentiment was expressed by the Babylonian captives as the Psalmist wrote in 137:4 saying, "How can we sing the song of the Lord while in foreign land?" The Jews felt that the worship of God was exclusively theirs and could not be shared with the nations (Wolf, 1979). The nations were the Gentiles that did not know or fear God, who were engaged in vain worship of idols. This lack of knowledge of God, the prophet Isaiah called "darkness" and "shadow of death." The prophecy of the light shining in dark areas in Isaiah 9:2 shows that the Gentiles living in darkness will see the light and come and embrace it hence the faith will move from a national religion of the Jews to a universal one (Richardson, 1984).

The focus of the mission of God on the nations is clearly seen in the Great Commission which is congruent with Malachi's prophecy of the glory of the Lord among the nations. Matthew 28:18-20 is a command to disciple "all the nations" all the *panta ta ethne*. Pratt, Zane et al argue that "the word *ethne* mean far more than political countries. It refers to people groups identified by language, culture, common history, or anything else that gives a group of people a sense of "us" as opposed to "them" (Pratt et al, 2014, p. 57). Globally, there are approximately 12,000 ethnolinguistic people and about 30,000 dialects (Johnstone and Mandryk, 2001, p. 1). Focus on the nations as in Malachi became prominent in missions after the presentation of Ralph D. Winter at Lausanne Congress on World Missions in 1974 where he argued for "people group thinking" (Pratt, et al, 2014, p. 23). Talking of biblical nations for example, in Kaduna State, Nigeria where I came from, there are over 50 tribes, each of them is a nation and should be a focus of missions if yet unreached. John piper reinforces the argument about the need to target biblical nations with the gospel when he said, "the task of missions may not be merely to win as many individuals as possible from the most responsive people groups of the world but rather, to win individuals from all the people groups of the world" (Piper, 2010, p. 179). Ott, Craig et al., in *Encountering Theology of Mission* added, "Mission cannot rest until the gospel of the kingdom has been brought to people of every nation, ethnic group, language, and social standing" (Ott, et al, 2010, p. 105). This claim agrees with Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to the nations, and then the end will come."

From the launching of missions to the Gentiles when the Church in Antioch send Barnabas and Saul, to Modern Missions beginning with William Carey, to Indigenous mission movement, and to contemporary virtual or online missions, the na-

tions have been impacted with the gospel in fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy "My name shall be great among the nations." Though the task of world evangelization is still far from being completed, the final fulfillment will be at the throne as John in Revelation describes it, "After this I looked and before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'" God's focus is the nations. Let us key into His agenda in fulfillment of the Great Commission mandate.

From the Rising to the Setting of the Sun: The Scope of Mission

The focus of mission to the nations and the global scope of missions are interconnected. God's expanded salvific mission to the Gentiles had universal intent as can be seen in Malachi 1:11. The rising of the sun and its setting does not imply from morning to evening. If it means that, then what of the nights? It simply points to the global scope of missions. There are parallel passages in Psalms and Isaiah when compared with the passage in Malachi that will give us better understanding of the phrase. The Psalmist said, "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised" (113:3). The mention of the "place where it sets" shows that the writer is having the ends of the earth in mind. In Isaiah 45:6, the same phrase was repeated. He mentioned "the rising of the sun to the place of its setting," here also like in the Psalm above, the end of the earth is implied. More specifically, Isaiah mentioned the "west" in 59:19, which proves that he had the ends of the earth in mind. In the Jewish religion which Malachi was addressing, worship was localized to Judea and more specifically, to the Temple in Jerusalem as observed above. The message of Malachi 1:11 shows that God intends to move His worship from the geographical location of Jerusalem or Judea where Jews gather to worship, to include other parts of the earth among the nations. Gentiles like the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39) do not have to go to the Temple in Jerusalem for our worship to be acceptable. We can worship the Father in our contexts and cultures provided we do not violate the core teaching of scripture and this applies to peoples from other nations and continents of the earth.

The Great Commission in the Gospels and Acts emphasized the interconnectedness of the concept of nations and the ends of the earth. Both Matthew (28:19) and Luke (24:47) emphasized "all nations," that means all nations and people groups of the earth should be reached with the gospel. Mark specifically mentioned "all the world" (Mark 16:15) which agrees with Malachi's scope of mission. In Acts, Luke gave both the scope and the progression of gospel proclamation to be "...in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8b). Luke here

intends that the Gospel will move both progressively and simultaneously till it reaches its global extent. Reaching the nations means reaching the ends of the earth and reaching the ends of the earth means reaching all the nations. Thus, Christopher J.H. Wright's statement "Mission is the global outreach of a global God" (Wright, 2006, p. 24), confirms the claims of Malachi 1:11.

Incense and Pure Offering in Every Place: The Fruit of Mission

The discussion of Jesus with the Samaritan woman reveals that the Jews insistence on the place of worship to be Jerusalem, was problematic to the Samaritans who insisted on worship on Mount Gerizim. While Jews and Samaritans were having conflict on the location of where worship should take place, Jesus revealed that worship will not be localized in the temple in Jerusalem or in Mount Gerizim, in fact it will not require a place for "in every place," men shall worship God as Malachi predicted. The practice of missions fulfills Malachi's vision of worship in every place as the gospel has been proclaimed and churches planted in several nations of the earth among different people groups. As emphasized above, the task is yet unfinished. New Testament worship happens in every available place and in the hearts of men. Worship can take place in a Church building, in a house, a bedroom, coffee shop, restroom, in a car, plane, ship, online, on the road, in the market and everywhere. Apostle Paul in his message on Mars Hill in Athens made the Greeks to know that God who made the heavens and the earth cannot be confined to a place of worship built by human beings for He fills everywhere, and by Him all living things survive (Acts 17: 24-28).

The prophecy of Malachi anticipated incense and pure offering to be offered to God from the Gentiles. The sacrifices of the Gentiles to their idols do not please God and cannot be the pure offering Malachi is referring to. Jesus' discourse with the Samaritan woman about the inbreaking of a dispensation of true worshipers that will "worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23) which will take place among believing Jews and Gentiles fulfills Malachi's prophecy. Early Christian leaders interpreted this pure incense and offering to mean the eucharist. For example, Cyril commenting on Malachi 1:11, said, "The old priesthood and the old sacrifice have been superseded by the new priesthood that offers the spiritual and "bloodless" sacrifice of the eucharist" (O'keefe, 1996, p. 148). The early Christians had already made the connection between the incense and pure offering from the Gentiles with the worship in truth and spirit as Cyril added, "The new priests will be 'celebrants of worship in the Spirit'" (O'keefe, 1996, p. 148). I do not agree that the Lord was limiting "incense and pure offering" to the eucharist. If the worship Jesus was advocating fulfills Malachi, then this reference will be of true and sincere worship that emanates from holy hearts dedicated to God from every nation and people group. Paul advocated for this kind of worship when he said, "... I urge you brothers... to offer your bodies

as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1). These sacrifices are fitting to God instead of the sacrifices of food and blood of animals for “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24).

Conclusion

This paper surveyed the concepts of mission in the Old Testament and established God’s purpose for Israel in relation to the nations. Israel abdicated her responsibility hence, God reached out to the nations. The uniqueness of missions that makes Malachi different is that the Psalms and the prophets advocated centripetal approach to the Gentiles while Malachi is centrifugal in outlook. Worship that will please God is to be pure, in every place, among the nations. This serves as harbinger for New Testament missions to the end of the ages. I want to see the fulfillment of Malachi 1:11 in three stages, 1. The scattering of the Diaspora Jews among the nations that brought the knowledge of the God of Israel closer to the Gentiles. 2. Pentecost became a watershed in this fulfillment where Jews from different nations all over the Roman empire converged in Jerusalem, received the Gospel, and now as Temples of the Holy Spirit went back to every Gentile nation they represented as missionaries. 3. The Church at Antioch, where the mission to the Gentiles was launched (Acts 13:1-3). The interesting thing about Antioch is that under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, a Gentile church send out Jewish missionaries to pioneer a Gentile missionary movement. I am convinced that Malachi’s proclamation of acceptable worship among the Gentiles “in every place” and its global extent is a proclamation of mission from “everywhere to everywhere.” For mission to have global impact as proclaimed by the prophet, it cannot be one directional from the west to other parts of the world for “... the missionary movement and action are multidirectional, multinational, multiethnic, intercultural, and interreligious” (Cardoza-Orlandi, and Gonzalez, 2013, p. 434). This is the new outlook of mission in a globalized world.

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