

Names of God from the Bible

44 – The Refiner

All God's Names are eternal names – so He is still The Refiner for us today.

Reading: Malachi 3:1-5

What is life really all about? What are we supposed to do on earth? Is there more to life than what we see?

Is there more to life than being born, going to school, leaving school or university (after achieving some qualifications), getting a job (hopefully getting increasingly well-paid), being married, having children, seeing them do exactly the same thing and then producing grandchildren for us to enjoy and hand back at the end of the day?

Is there more to life than physical strength or beauty, amassing wealth, toys or property? Is there more to life than being the world's best, the world's strongest, fastest, richest, or the world's most clever or popular? Why do we place such a high value on these things, particularly when so few of us will ever reach those accolades?

Why isn't life easy? Why does it seem so much more difficult for me than other people? Why is health and financial security so important? Why is it that we add years to our lives but not life to our years?

Let's face it – life is hard. We all face challenges and we either get better or bitter.

If there is no God and everything happens by chance, I have to accept my lot and get on with life without purpose, meaning or hope for anything better.

On the other hand, if there is a God, why is there so much suffering? Christians and those without a faith all seem to suffer the same things: car accidents, earthquakes, redundancy, unemployment, financial crises, sickness, cancer and the death of loved ones. No one seems immune to these. So what is going on?

The answer is, of course, a lot is going on. First, Christians understand that there are two spiritual forces at work. The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The Kingdom of Light and the kingdom of darkness – good and evil. Consequently, there are a lot of things that go wrong in the world that can only be understood as having been initiated by Satan and his forces.

Secondly, Christians understand that, as human beings, we have a bias towards doing wrong. We don't need to teach our children to be disobedient; that happens naturally. As parents, we spend a lot of time trying to show them a better way. We acknowledge that deep down we are all selfish people. We want to try and preserve our own security and happiness, even if it is at the expense of others.

However, Christians recognise that there is another reason for some of the challenges we face. God created us to have a loving relationship with Him. Most of us prefer to live our lives our way and maintain what we consider to be control of our lives and destiny. God, on the other hand, wants and created us to be like Him, to be like Jesus – God incarnate – God in human form, whom we celebrate at Christmas.

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Since most of us start our Christian walk by asking God to forgive us for making such a mess of our lives, and to come and save us (from ourselves and the results of our selfishness and self-centredness), it is quite obvious that we need to change if we are to reflect any of Jesus' character and lifestyle. Our lives need refining.

A refiner of gold or silver was the picture that Malachi gave the people of Israel. God wants to refine us so we reflect His glory. To refine gold or silver, the ore is heated and the metal that runs out is collected. That base liquid is then heated repeatedly so that, as the impurities reach the surface, they are removed. The process continues until the operator can see their face reflected in the molten metal.

God will continue to present us with challenges that draw us closer and closer to Him so that eventually we think, act and live like Jesus would, in our position.

What does that name mean for us today

It explains why we face so many challenges. God will bring me into situations to challenge me to adjust my lifestyle so that I will reflect His Son, Jesus Christ, more and more.

Prayer

Father, I acknowledge that I am not the person I long to be. Thank You that I can trust You as my Refiner to produce a character that increasingly reflects Jesus. Amen.

Additional Readings

- Luke 22: 24 – 34
- 1 Peter 1:3-25
- 1 Corinthians 3:10-20

Questions

1. What do you think God's purpose is in refining us?
2. Has God revealed Himself in this way to you? How and when?
3. How does Jesus fulfil that name?