

Malachi Chapter 2

Malachi 2:1 "And now, O ye priests, this commandment [is] for you."

This message is addressed specifically to the priests. The priests were to represent God to the people, and the people to God. It appears they had failed to do the job God had for them to do.

Malachi 2:2 "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay [it] to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay [it] to heart."

"I will even send a curse" Failing to render glory to God would result in a curse being sent upon them. This is a fundamental Old Testament theme: blessing for obedience, cursing for disobedience.

"Your blessings": These were not restricted to material blessings only but referred to all the benefits of God's gracious hand, including the blessings pronounced by the priests over the people (Num. 6:23-27).

They were supposed to be God's agents to carry out the spiritual things on this earth. God had given the priests the authority to bless the people, but now their blessing will be turned to a curse. They will be cursed themselves, because of their unfaithfulness to God.

We spoke in the last lesson, how the priesthood was no longer because of a call in their life, but a way of making a living. They did not have their heart in doing the will of God. They were just going through the motions to get what they could for themselves out of it.

Malachi 2:3 "Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, [even] the dung of your solemn feasts; and [one] shall take you away with it."

This very graphic language shows how God viewed unfaithful priests as worthy of the most unthinkable disgrace. As the internal waste of the sacrificial animal was normally carried outside the camp and burned, so the priests would be discarded and suffer humiliation and loss of office. The Lord's purpose in such a warning was to shake them out of their complacency.

God has lost all respect for the priests. He is speaking of them being treated like filth, which they deserve to be treated like.

Malachi 2:4 "And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts."

The priests will know the price of disobedience by bitter experience with the consequences.

God had called the tribe of Levi to work in the temple. The priests and High Priest were to come from this tribe. They were to eat of the offerings of the temple. Their job was to see that the offerings and sacrifices were continued, in the way God would have them done.

Now, the priesthood had become polluted with those who were not called, but seeking a way of making a living. They had broken covenant with God by the way they were performing their duties.

Malachi 2:5 "My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him [for] the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name."

The relationship of God to the priesthood was clearly set forth in the Levitical covenant (Num. 3:44-48; 18:8-24; Deut. 33:8-11). The covenant was one of mutual responsibility, in which God expected reverence for Himself in exchange for life and peace for the priests. Verbally similar to the covenant made with Phinehas relating to the lineage of the High Priest, this covenant was made with Aaron of Levi's line and his descendants.

The Jewish priests of Malachi's day had deceived themselves by claiming the privileges of the covenant, while neglecting the conditions of it, as if God was bound to bless them even while they rejected the obligation to serve Him.

God had promised them life and peace, if they obeyed Him and revered Him. They had broken the covenant. They no longer feared, or revered God.

Malachi 2:6 "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity."

They were the guardian of God's law. They spoke truth. They lived holy before their Lord. The anointing of God was upon the Levite. God spoke to the people through the Urim and Thummim, which the High Priest wore. His job was to keep God's people in right standing with God.

Aaron, unlike the priests of Malachi's time, feared and revered God. Aaron also fulfilled this responsibility and lived the godliness he taught (Lev. 10:9-11).

Malachi 2:7 "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he [is] the messenger of the LORD of hosts."

The priests were the messengers of God in Israel. Not only were they to represent the people to God, but they were also responsible to represent God to the people by teaching the Law of Moses to the nation.

This scripture is speaking of the Lord speaking through the priest's lips. He was an ambassador, or a messenger, to take the message of God to His people. The priests should have never spoken their own words, while they were ministering. The Words of the LORD should be the Words they ministered.

Malachi 2:8 "But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts."

The priests had not lived before the people the holy life that should have been an example for the others. They too, had been involved in idol worship. The poor example they set, had caused others to stumble and fall.

This again, should speak to our leaders in our churches today. They must set an example of holy living. There are some new Christians who need an example to follow.

Malachi 2:9 "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law."

The people had lost respect for them. Their partiality in their judgments had caused the people to actually hate them. They had one set of rules for the people and another for themselves. They were supposed to set a good example for the people, and instead, they were sinners themselves.

The priests of Malachi's day had made a radical departure from God's standard, originally given to Levi, causing others to stumble by their bad example and false interpretation of the law. Consequently, the worst shame and degradation fell upon them.

Verses 10-16: Israel's spiritual leaders committed grievous sins (1:6 – 2:9), leading the people to do the same. They too were violating the requirements of God's law by profaning the institution of the Levitical priesthood. Marrying foreign wives and divorcing the wives of their youth (in verses 13-16).

Malachi 2:10 "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?"

God created all men. Some men had chosen heathen gods. The Jews worshipped the One True God.

God did not want the Hebrews mixing in marriage with the heathen nations around them. The priests had married outside the Hebrews themselves.

Though God is Father of all through creation, the primary focus is directed to God as the Father of Israel as His covenant people (see "father" in 1:6), where this indictment began (also Jer. 2:27).

Malachi 2:11 "Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god."

This key phrase “dealt treacherously”, refers to the violation of God’s will by divorcing Jewish wives and marrying foreign women. God is the Father who gave life to Israel, yet they had, through intermarriage with idol worshipers, introduced division by violating the covenant He made with their fathers to insure the maintenance of a separated people.

It seems that the whole nation had become involved in this treachery. The women of the heathen nations introduced their husbands to the worship of these false gods. God had set His people aside to be a holy nation. They are now mixing with the heathen.

We are warned ourselves if we are Christians, not to be unequally yoked with those of unbelief. This was the very thing that destroyed Solomon's relationship with God. Solomon married women of the heathen nations around them, and they brought idols into God's holy land.

Malachi 2:12 "The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts."

“Cut off”: This common term was generally used for death. Their adulterous actions of divorce and intermarriage disqualified them from participation in the rights and privileges of the community of Israel, so their offerings to God would be rejected.

Look at the seriousness of this in the following Scriptures.

Joshua 23:12-13 "Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, [even] these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:" "Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out [any of] these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you."

It really does not make any difference about their station in life. God will punish them all.

Malachi 2:13 "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth [it] with good will at your hand."

They had not only married heathen women, but they divorced their Hebrew wives. It seems this sin had gone on over and over. Men who are mean to their legitimate wives cannot get their prayers heard. God will not receive anything at their hand, because they have broken His commandments.

Weeping and wailing would achieve nothing because sin had shut the door of access to God. They had violated their marriage vows and the separation from idols as God required. This double disloyalty made their offerings a hypocritical mockery. Since lay people had no access to the altars but the priests did, it was clearly their guilt which was foremost, and their hypocrisy so unacceptable to God.

Malachi 2:14 "Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet [is] she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant."

They are so caught up in this sin, that they do not repent, and ask God what He is displeased with them about. Sin has a way of causing us to have hardened hearts. The more sins we commit, the less guilty we feel.

The Lord is very displeased, that they have left the wives of their youth and married heathen women. God does not like divorce. He will not tolerate divorce for the reason these people got their divorces. Marriage is a covenant with the two partners, but it is also, a covenant with God.

"Wife of thy covenant". The prophet accentuated the iniquity by mentioning the legally binding nature of the marriage contract, a covenant made before God as witness. Wives were married young, sometimes before 15 years of age.

Malachi 2:15 "And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."

God did not want them to marry heathens, because He wanted their children to be Hebrew, as well. Had they followed the leading of the Spirit, they would have remained with their Hebrew wives of their youth.

They listened to the call of their flesh to sin, instead. This is displeasing to God.

Noting God's original institution of marriage (Gen. 2:24), in which He made two into one, Malachi reminded them that God provided only one woman for one man. Though He had the life giving power of the Spirit, and could have made Adam a number of wives, He created only one, to raise up a "godly offspring."

Polygamy, divorce and marriage to idolatrous women are destructive to obtaining the godly remnant in the line of the promised Messiah. Only when both parents remain faithful to their marriage vows can the children be given the security which provides the basis for godly living. Because this foundational divine institution of marriage was being threatened, Malachi urged that no husband act in a treacherous way toward his wife.

Malachi 2:16 "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for [one] covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

The Lord emphasized what He had been saying by this emphatic declaration. In fact, God sees this unwarranted divorce as a gross act of sin which, like blood splattered from a murder victim on the killer, leaves evidence of the evil deed.

The warfare for a man's soul is between the spirit, which wants to obey God, and the flesh which wants to sin.

Galatians 5:17 "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Romans 8:13 "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

From verses 2:17 – 4:6, the denunciation of Israel's sins was followed by a declaration of the judgment on the unrepentant and subsequent blessing on the faithful remnant. (Verse 17), is the introduction to the rest of the book. These faithless, disobedient priests and people had worn out God's patience by their skepticism and self justification, so judgment is on the way.

Malachi 2:17 "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied [him]? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil [is] good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where [is] the God of judgment?"

"Ye have wearied the Lord". Disillusionment followed the rebuilding of the temple. The presence of God had not come to the new temple. They began to live in indifference to God. Calloused and lacking in spiritual discernment, the people persisted in cynical expressions of innocence.

They had rejected all intention of taking right and wrong seriously. So deeply gripped by complacent self righteousness, they had the gall to insolently question the Lord, implying that He seemed to favor the wicked and was unconcerned about the righteous. The prophet faced them with imminent judgment, telling them God was coming, but to refine and purify.

God has lost patience with this evil generation. They say one thing, and do another. This reminds me so much of those who will stand before Jesus on judgment day.

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

You see, it is not what you say with your mouth, but what you believe in your heart that pleases God. They have gone so far into sin, they do not even believe God is coming to judge.

2 Peter 3:3-4 "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts," "And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as [they were] from the beginning of the creation."

God is the all-seeing eye. Nothing escapes Him. He is coming, and He will judge each person on the earth.

Malachi Chapter 2 Questions

1. Who is this addressed to?
2. What was the purpose of the priests?
3. Why is God putting a curse upon them and their blessings?
4. What special privilege had God given the priests?
5. Instead of being a call, the priesthood had become what to them?
6. What does God say, He will do to them in verse 3?
7. God's covenant had been with _____.
8. My covenant was with him of _____ and _____.
9. _____ was found in his mouth.
10. How had God spoken to the people?
11. The priest was an _____, or a _____, to take the message of God to His people.
12. Beside sinning themselves, what had they done?
13. Preachers should set an _____ for others.
14. Why had the people lost respect for them?
15. If God created all men, why did some not get saved?
16. Who had married heathen women?
17. The whole _____ had become involved in this treachery.
18. What hurt Solomon's relationship with God?
19. Who was covering the altar with tears?
20. Why will God not receive their offerings.
21. Why did God not want them to marry heathens?

22. What is the warfare we are in?

23. God has lost _____ with this evil generation.