

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 4TH-5TH // BOOK OF MALACHI

### DISGRACED (MALACHI 2:1-4)

#### LISTEN AND TAKE THIS TO HEART

Malachi was warning the religious leaders of his time to listen to God's warnings and honor His name. If they refuse, God will curse them (destine to fail), even though the curse had already begun. The Bible mentions God enacted curses on people, **but for Him to simply remove Himself from our lives is bad enough.**

#### WE MUST DETERMINE TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT

The people of God were given a choice, but because they were not "taking it to heart" God was not blessing their lives.

- The ministers to the people were also not being blessed because of their poor leadership. Their "blessing" was the ability to be a vocational priest, but the people didn't trust them enough to tithe.

#### A GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION OF REBUKE

The feces of the animals being sacrificed had to be carefully disposed of by the priests. Because of their unfaithfulness, God threatens to "spread animal waste over your faces" and discard them with it. This graphic analogy reminds us that **God will humble the arrogant and that our actions have consequences.**

#### MAKING SURE OUR HEARTS ARE HUMBLE

The waste of the sacrificial animals touching the priests would have made them unclean and unfit to serve, but God assures Malachi's listeners that He will find righteous leaders to serve Him.

- **God is not looking for perfection, but humility. If we live repentant, God will forgive and change us.**

#### WANTING TRUTH (MALACHI 2:5-9)

##### THE COVENANT WITH LEVI

God had promised Jacob's son Levi (Neh. 13, Jer. 33) that his tribe would carry the torch of ministry for the people of God. Through this ministry, the people would receive peace and salvation.

- In response to God's promise of salvation and peace, the priests and people were to live in a relationship with God.

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS

V7 says, "The lips of a priest should guard knowledge." Originally the Levites had **taught biblical truth, spoke righteous words, lived righteous lives, and turned away from sin. Problems arise when we neglect the Bible and righteous living and we compromise our views on sin.**

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF FOLLOWERS OF GOD

V7 also says that the "people should desire instruction..." This means that **we should want to know the truth and desire to live godly lives.**

- **We live in such a culture of offense and selfishness that we have closed our ears to the truth.** We have fallen victim to relativism.

#### "...PARTIALITY IN THEIR INSTRUCTION."

Because the leadership picked and chose what laws of God they wanted to teach and follow, the nation was in chaos and the people had no respect for the office of priest.

- **We've seen this in our day, but we must also look at the good the modern church has done for the world. Also, Jesus is perfect even if people aren't.**

#### WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE

Though spiritual leaders will be judged more harshly for their bad theology (Js. 3:1), all followers of God are responsible for learning the truth and living it out.

- Phil. 2:12 tells us **"to work out [our] own salvation."** This means that **we are all held accountable for our relationship with God.**

#### UNFAITHFUL (MALACHI 2:10-12)

##### HOW WE TREAT OTHERS

Malachi points out that all people are created in the image of God, yet God's people were treating each other "treacherously." When we treat others poorly, it is "profaning" the direction given to God's people.

- **Basically, treating others poorly is like treating God poorly.** Jesus taught this in Mark 12.

#### TREACHEROUS AND DETESTABLE

*Treachery* implies unethical and abusive business practices while *detestable* is related to the breakdown of marriage and family.

- **How we work, treat our spouses, and raise our children show how strong our relationship with God really is.** If these things breakdown, something is wrong.

#### MARRYING OUTSIDE OF THE TRUE FAITH

Malachi mentions that the people had "married daughter[s] of a foreign god" and that profaned the "Lord's sanctuary."

- **This means Christians are to marry other believers.** 2 Cor. 6:14 echoes this. If one is already married, 1 Cor. 7:13 says to stay with a non-believing spouse in hopes they will believe.

#### MALACHI DOESN'T CONDEMN CULTURES

The color of one's skin or where they're from is not a reason to not marry someone. God is completely ok with cross-cultural marriages, but not of differing religions.

- Though I believe most of us don't struggle with racism, we must always be conscious of how we view others!

#### "MAY THE LORD CUT OFF FROM THE TENTS..."

This is in reference to people that disobeyed God's commands to not marry pagans. "Cut off" probably means exactly that; to remove them from the community of God's people.

- **If we choose to disregard God's commands, we should be held accountable by the church and not consider ourselves Christians.**

#### UNFAITHFUL PT. 2 (MALACHI 2:13-16)

##### "THIS IS ANOTHER THING YOU DO"

Malachi said that people were flooding to the altar crying and complaining that God doesn't accept how they live and what they offer to Him.

- **God wasn't honoring their prayers and changing their circumstances because they were not really living in submission to Him (Js. 5:16).**

#### TRUE REPENTANCE

Just like in Malachi's time, many of us still claim to worship and follow God but we're not living dedicated and repentant lives. To **repent** means to **change the way we think and act.**

- A genuine "I'm sorry" to God receives forgiveness, but **we must also turn from evil so our hearts don't become hardened.**

#### UNFAITHFUL TO THE ONES CLOSEST TO US

The selfish tears of God's people were getting them nowhere with Him. Why? They had been unfaithful to God, treated others in the community poorly, and now Malachi mentions they were unfaithful to their spouses.

- V15 mentions that we should be dedicated to one person until death separates us.

#### LET'S WALK CAREFULLY THROUGH THIS

Divorce is a very sensitive and sometimes complicated topic and many people argue over where the lines of breaking a marital covenant lie.

- I personally believe it is safe to say that infidelity, abuse, and chronic addiction are reasons for separation and possibly divorce.

#### GOD HATES DIVORCE, NOT DIVORCEES (V16)

God intended marriage to be permanent from the beginning, but He was also fully aware that divorce would take place in a sinful world.

- **God loves us and hates when we hurt.** Divorce hurts people and this is why He hates the action but not the people involved.

#### WE NEED TO BE DILIGENT IN OUR MARRIAGES

"Watch yourselves carefully" so we don't fall to lust for someone other than our spouse. There are numerous passages in the Bible about how spouses should treat and love each other.

- **Our biggest problem is how flippant we have become about marriage. This is a huge spiritual transaction!**

#### LOOK AT THE BIGGER CONTEXT

1 Jn. 4:20 says that **if we can't love and treat people well that we can see, how can we possibly love a God that we cannot see?**

- Whether we are married in this life or not, all humans are called to be married to God. But, if we can't treat the closest people to us here well, how can we love Him?

#### WATCH YOURSELVES CAREFULLY

- If we are not careful, evil can easily creep into our lives and tear us down bit by bit.
- We must **want to know God's will** for us and be diligent to live righteously.
- We must **quickly identify our struggles and truly repent.**
- We must **love God and others**, giving our best to both of them.

#### A TALE OF TWO LIONS (1 PETER 5:8)

- We must be sober-minded, alert, and on guard because **the devil never sleeps.** He is after us, our families, marriages, and our contentment and peace.
- **God never sleeps either!** We must live close to Him through **prayer, study, meditation and community.**