

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 5TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MALACHI

In Malachi 2, God rebukes the priests and people of Judah for their lack of faithfulness towards their calling, each other, and in their covenants of marriage.

I HAVE LOVED YOU... (MALACHI 2:1-9)

God had already addressed the sins of the priests in chapter 1, and now He warns them of the consequences for dishonoring His name.

- How were they dishonoring God's name?
- They were essentially taking for granted the high calling God had given them as priests and were treating ministry in the temple flippantly and with contempt.
- They saw it as a job, not as an honor or calling.

God warned that He would "curse their blessings" (vs. 2) if they didn't stop their dishonor and start giving God their very best.

- Mal. 3:11 tells us that Israel's crops at that time had already been ruined by devouring insects, and verse 2 suggests that this was divine judgment.
- Since the law of the tithe gave priests a portion of the produce, ruined crops meant empty tables for the priests and their families.

"Offspring" in vs. 3 is literally "seed" in Hebrew, so it seems to be a restatement of God's warning of a curse on the land because of the corruption of the priests.

- God also makes a very graphic (and gross) promise of judgment to the priests to "spread dung" on their faces so they'd be "taken away with it" (vs. 3).
- "Ofal" refers to the intestines of the sacrifices.

After the priests would burn the sacrifices, the "ofal" (which included literal dung) remained and was taken outside the camp and disposed of (Exo. 29:14).

- Contact with the "ofal" (on your face especially!) would make a priest ceremonially unclean and unfit to serve.
- What is God saying? Like the "ofal", the priests would be carried off- removed from office.

This is a warning from God that unholy and blasphemous behavior from those serving in ministry will be judged by humiliation and by God removing them from their positions.

- In our day and age, sex scandals, financial embezzlement, and other unfaithful acts among some members of clergy have led to their public disgrace.
- God expects holiness & reverence in His Church and from those lead in the Church.

Verse 4 essentially is saying that when judgment fell upon the priests they would know that this word was from God and that God was purifying the priesthood so that the institution might continue.

- The Lord then begins to speak of how the first priests, those of the tribe of Levi, actually had respect for the priesthood (vs. 5-7).
- Life and peace were gifts of God's covenant with Levi, and in return the priests were to serve faithfully.

These earlier priests ("Levi") taught the truth, didn't speak falsehood, lived righteous lives, and turned many from sin (vs. 6).

- In fact, the very role of a priest is that they were to guard knowledge and always speak the truth of God's word to the people they're called to serve (vs. 7).
- But these wicked priests were leading others to stumble (vs. 8).

For their unfaithfulness, God caused these priests to be despised and humiliated before all the people (vs. 9).

- People had lost respect for these spiritual leaders and for the office of priest in general.
- From the scandals in the Catholic church to the affairs of well-known TV evangelists, God's judgment on spiritual leaders has led many to lose respect for the church and the office of pastor/priest.

"YOU JUST CAN'T TRUST THE CHURCH!"

1. Countless faithful ministers of the gospel serve selflessly and tirelessly throughout the world- so **let's not condemn all because of some.**
2. Human beings (even spiritual leaders) **WILL** disappoint us, but Jesus never will- so **we must worship HIM, not a pastor or leader!**

PROFANING THE COVENANT (MALACHI 2:10-12)

In vs. 10, Malachi addressed the problem of unfaithful behavior towards others in Judah.

- If in fact they all had "one Father" and were created by the same God, why did were they acting faithless and mistreating one another?

How we love and respect others reveals our level our level of love and respect towards God (1 John 4:20)- how can someone love an invisible God if they hate His visible image? The people of Judah

had also acted faithlessly towards God by apparently divorcing their Jewish wives and marrying pagan women (vs. 11-12).

- It was a great sin because the men were breaking their vows to God and their wives and treating God's covenant as nothing.
- It was an abomination because these men were marrying unbelieving pagans (vs. 11).

The issue here wasn't interracial marriage, but instead unlawful divorce and the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever.

- It was forbidden because of the danger of infecting the person and the nation of Israel with false, pagan religions (Exod. 34:11-16, Deut. 7:3).
- The N.T. also instructs Christians to not become "unequally yoked" in marriage to unbelievers- it's equally as dangerous! (2 Cor. 6:14)

The men that dishonored God by divorcing their Jewish wives and marrying pagan wives would be cut off from the tents of Jacob (vs. 12).

- The phrase "cut off" may mean excommunication, the death penalty (Ex. 31:14), or the disappearance of one's family line from Israel.
- Our willful sin separates us from the blessings and fellowship of God.

A 2ND OFFENSE (MALACHI 2:13-16)

After committing the sin of unlawfully divorcing their wives and marrying pagan women, the men of Judah brought offerings and wept at the altar (vs. 12-13) seeking God's help & blessing.

- Possibly they had the idea that they could sin blatantly and then come to God afterwards and get His forgiveness and endorsement.
- But if they were truly sorry, they would forsake their unbelieving wives and take their true wives back (Ezra 9-10).

True repentance is not just expressing regret, it's taking the necessary action to change.

- We're guilty of hypocrisy whenever we give God an emotional response of regret for sin but fail to obey His word and change our lives.
- These people couldn't figure out why God wouldn't accept their offerings (vs. 13).
- They weren't blessed by God because their lifestyle and behavior was unholy.

Their weeping and emotional displays had gotten them nowhere with God because they had broken their covenant of marriage between their spouse and their God (vs. 14).

- God is the unseen witness at every wedding, and He also witnesses those who aren't married but still live together.
- There will be consequences from the seeds that are planted by those who despise God's laws and the design He's given us for marriage.

In the entire book of Malachi, verse 15 is recognized as the most difficult to translate.

- Most likely this verse is commending those faithful husbands who obeyed the Spirit of God and the Word of God.
- Unlike the men who simply wanted to gratify their sexual hunger, these faithful men wanted to father children who would be godly offspring and devoted to God.

Malachi says to men who desire to be faithful to God and their marriage, "guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless" (vs. 15).

- In our world, there are constant temptations that bombard men that encourage us to be faithless towards our wives.
- We're to "guard ourselves"- our eyes, our minds, our relationships, and our emotions.

Many translations (including the Hebrew) render verse 16 as, "I hate divorce, says the Lord"

- This is the most forceful denunciation of divorce anywhere in Scripture.
- **It doesn't say that God hates divorced people- it says He hates divorce because it brings heartache, wounds, and destruction to society. We should hate divorce too!**

God's original intent for marriage is for one man and one woman to be devoted to each other.

- But because we live in a broken world, God was fully aware that divorce would occur.
- So the Bible speaks of divorce being permissible where the marriage covenant is broken because of sexual sin (Matt. 19:9) or desertion (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Divorce is not, never has been, or never will be God's intention for your marriage.

- Although some situations may call for it, it's to be a **LAST RESORT** permitted only because of **unrepentant sin that might prohibit a marriage to be continue.**
- **It's not to be a "get out of jail free" card for "irreconcilable differences"- when we treat it this way that grieves the heart of God!**

FAITHFULNESS VS. FLAKINESS (PROV. 20:6)

Faithful in our Calling. Faithful in our Relationships.

Faithful in our Obedience to God's Word. Faithful in our Marriage.