

Mal. 2:1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment *is* for you.

Mal. 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.

Mal. 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.

The Lord now directs His message specifically to the priests. What is the commandment He is giving? “To give glory unto my name.” The priests had been privileged with a special position before the Lord as mediators between God and men and privileged to serve at “His house” (the tabernacle, and then the temple). Everything connected with the temple was to represent a holy righteous God. God’s name is representative of who He is. Anything done in disobedience to or without reverence for the Almighty brings dishonor to His name. God is very clear in scripture that He does not take such offense lightly.

Ex. 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Lev. 19:12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD.

Deut. 18:20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

The Lord is consistent in declaring consequences for disobedience. In this instance He declares that even their blessings will be cursed. What are the blessings being referenced? In context with verse 3, I would conclude their children.

Psa. 127:3 Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward.

Point is made again that this judgment is being pronounced because the priests did not take to heart the word of God and dishonored His name.

The Hebrew for the word *corrupt* means “to reprove or rebuke.” To “spread dung upon your faces” would seem to be an idiom referencing shame or disapproval since it is being connected to the solemn feasts. It would seem that the Lord is saying that He will remove the people along with their feasts out of the land of Israel once again. If that is the case, this would be referencing the dispersion enforced by the Romans after the time of Christ. Again, why would this be necessary? In rebuke and reproof for their dishonor of the name of God.

It is a sad but significant truth that our lives impact our progeny. The fact that the children of these priests were going to need rebuke would in large part be due to a heritage that dishonored the Lord—a heritage they embraced by how they lived. This in no way means that these future generations are programmed for failure, it’s just according to the natural flow of things. It is more unusual for someone to break from their ungodly heritage than it is for them to follow in the footsteps of the established pattern.

Mal. 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.

Mal. 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 Lord had set apart the tribe of Levi to serve as priests before Him. I would assume the covenant of life and peace being referenced is connected to that ministry. After some word searches, I found that this wording is used in reference to God's blessing on Phineas, Aaron's grandson, for being "zealous for my sake."

Num. 25:11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.

Num. 25:12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:

Num. 25:13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, *even* the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

At this point in their wilderness wanderings, the people had turned to consorting with the daughters of Moab and worshipping Baal. Phineas killed a fellow Israeli and a Midianite woman for openly committing fornication in defiance of God's command. His action was motivated by his fear of the Lord, his recognition of the holiness of the God of Israel and the reverence with which He should be obeyed. Because of his action, God's wrath was appeased; still 24,000 Israelis died that day from plague at the hand of God.

Mal. 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.

Mal. 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.

Phineas was a great example of how a priest should act—in obedience to God without reference to his standing before mankind. He was evidently known as a man of truth and obedience, and his example caused many to turn away from their sin. When a priest speaks, it should be with knowledge and understanding; the people should be able to seek instruction about God's law from him. He has been established as a messenger of Almighty God.

I am reminded that we are a "royal priesthood."

1Pet. 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

As a priest, we should be known for possessing those same traits—obedience, knowledge and understanding of God's word and the ability to instruct others accordingly.

Mal. 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.

Mal. 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 priests to whom Malachi was delivering God's message did not possess those traits. They had become disobedient before God and had caused many to fall from the path of obedience by their example and lack of instruction according to the law. Though they were sons of Levi, they had abused the covenant. Though God would not void His covenant with Levi and would one day once again establish the priesthood in honor before Him (during the millennial kingdom), the sons of Levi would suffer judgment. They would no longer enjoy the respect of the people; they would be despised by them. Their judgment would be in direct proportion to their disobedience. They had blatantly disobeyed God's law and had been partial in their administration of the law. God's law was to be administered without regard for person and with righteousness.

Lev. 19:15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

I can't help but comment on how far from this principle the courts of our land have strayed. Judgments are influenced by wealth, power, fame, and personal agenda more often than not. I can hardly wait to experience the government of righteousness that will be established and enforced by the Lord Jesus on His throne.

Mal. 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?

Malachi continues to declare the truth. I believe the one father being referenced in verse 10 is probably Jacob since he was the chosen son through whom Israel was descended. The more important truth—"one God created us." Despite the beliefs of the gentile nations, there is only "one God," one Creator of mankind. This Creator God chose (from the Hebrew for *created*) the nation of Israel as His special possession among the nations. He also established a special covenant with them.

Ex. 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:

Ex. 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Deut. 11:8 Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it;

Deut. 11:9 And that ye may prolong *your* days in the land, which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

Deut. 11:10 For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, *is* not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst *it* with thy foot, as a garden of herbs:

Deut. 11:11 But the land, whither ye go to possess it, *is* a land of hills and valleys, *and* drinketh water of the rain of heaven:

Deut. 11:12 A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God *are* always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

Deut. 11:13 And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,

Deut. 11:14 That I will give *you* the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.

Deut. 11:15 And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.

Deut. 11:16 Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;

Deut. 11:17 And *then* the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and *lest* ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

Deut. 11:18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

Deut. 11:19 And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Deut. 11:20 And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates:

Deut. 11:21 That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

Deut. 11:22 For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him;

Deut. 11:23 Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves.

Deut. 11:24 Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be.

Deut. 11:25 There shall no man be able to stand before you: *for* the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you.

Deut. 11:26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

Deut. 11:27 A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:

Deut. 11:28 And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

I thought it was important to see how clearly God had established the blessings that would be associated with their obedience to Him. How foolish they were to ever stray outside those parameters. No wonder it was considered an act against your brother to disregard the covenant, you were directly affecting his blessing. I hadn't really thought about it that way before. I know that our lack of unity in the body of believers has disastrously impacted the effectiveness of our testimony throughout the world, but it has also negatively impacted the blessings that the body could be enjoying through that unity of service and fellowship.

Mal. 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.

Although Malachi's message is to the nation of Israel (all twelve tribes), those of the kingdom of Judah (the southern kingdom) were the primary audience. It was the southern kingdom of Judah that had returned from the Babylonian captivity to reestablish the nation. We do know that the southern kingdom was composed of people from all the tribes. The Chronicler recorded that truth in 2Chronicles 11 regarding the split between the kingdoms of Jereboam (Northern) and Rehoboam (Southern).

2Chr. 11:14 For **the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem:** for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD:

2Chr. 11:16-17a And **after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem,** to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong....

Main point—the people had begun intermarrying with the idol-worshipping women of the heathen nations around them in direct defiance of God's command. Their public disregard of God's commands had again dishonored YHWH. The Hebrew for the word *holiness* makes reference to the *sanctuary* (or temple), and several translations translate it so. To participate in the services of the temple while being intimately connected to idol-worshippers was not only profaning the temple, but also dishonored God as well and was an affront to His holiness. The Lord loved the temple as His chosen dwelling place on earth, and He is also jealous regarding the honor of His name.

1Kings 9:3 And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

Ex. 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Is. 48:11 For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it*: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

Mal. 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.

I think the CJB has the better translation of this verse:

If a man does this and presents an offering to *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*, may *ADONAI* cut him off from the tents of Ya'akov, whether initiator or follower.

In other words, God hates hypocrisy. Again, this brought forth some of the strongest words of condemnation from Jesus during His ministry.

Matt. 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Matt. 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Matt. 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Matt. 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Matt. 23:25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Matt. 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness.

I think the Lord's accusation in verse 13 of Matthew 23 ties directly to the same offense of the priests that Malachi is addressing. I can't help but think of another verse that applies here.

1Sam. 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice**, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

God wants our obedience. He is not impressed with any of our religious rituals; He's looking at our hearts.

1Sam. 16:7 ...for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Mal. 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.

Mal. 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.

It would seem that not only were the men taking wives from idolatrous nations, they were breaking the marriage covenant with their Jewish wives to do so. Sadly, this was not a new transgression in the history of the people.

Interestingly, they recognize that the Lord is not honoring their offerings anymore, and they wonder why not. We are no different than the people to whom Malachi was delivering God's message. It's an amazing thing to me that we are always ready to declare God unfair without regard to whether or not our lives are honoring Him according to His expectation. As long as we are acting according to what we deem acceptable, we seem to think that God should accept us on our terms. We are actually putting ourselves in place of God and placing Him in the position of servant.

Mal. 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.

In context, the question is referencing marriage as God intended.

Gen. 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

God looks upon a married couple as a unified whole. In fact, at marriage it is God who joins us as one, and it is intended to be a union that is not dissolved by man.

Matt. 19:5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

Matt. 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

"Yet had he the residue of the spirit." – This is the hardest phrase to understand, and I don't know Hebrew. The different translations and commentators are quite varied. My logic tells me that since the "he" in the first phrase is a reference to God, then the "he" in the second phrase is also. *Residue* makes reference to "remainder," from a root that means "to swell up." Each person is body, soul and spirit. It's like the Lord is painting a picture of the joining of the two spirits into one, as He preserves the spirit of each individual.

What was God's purpose in making them one flesh to begin with? To produce godly children. God's purpose from the beginning was to have fellowship with mankind. The admonition from the Lord—Guard your spirit, and don't be unfaithful to your wife.

Mal. 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.

YHWH, the self-existent, eternal God, the God of Israel hates divorce. Contrary to the other translations, I think the KJV probably has the right thought according to the context. My thoughts went to the story of Ruth when she asked Boaz to spread his skirt over her—in other words, to marry her as the near kinsman. If spreading the garment is a reference to marriage, then breaking the

marriage—divorce—would in effect be covering violence with that garment since you are tearing apart the flesh that God has joined together.

The prophet's admonition to "heed your spirit" could be taken two ways—

1. Guard and control your heart and stay obedient to the command of the Lord
2. Guard your marriage by refusing to be unfaithful to the union with your wife that God joined together.

Mal. 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?

The Lord is declaring that He is weary with their distortion of His word. As usual, the people claim ignorance of their sin. The Lord, however, has no problem clearly defining their lies:

1. You continue to identify as "good" those that are doing evil before Me.
2. Not only that, you declare that I delight in them.

I'm afraid that sad commentary is very applicable in America today. People who identify themselves as "Christian" and/or as teachers of the Word of God are using scripture to justify sin and those that practice it. The most blatant in their actions are those promoting homosexuality and the "Jesus Seminar types" that undermine the inerrancy of the scripture. Also high on the list is the lack of commitment to marriage among "Christians." I have read several places that the statistics show that the divorce rate among "Christians" is just as high as that of the rest of society. I even read recently that the divorce rate among atheists is much lower than among "Christians." Oh that we would desire His will above all else, and declare His truth clearly as He has revealed it.