

# Malachi

## Lesson 1: Introduction

### 1:1

#### 1:1

- The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi

## The Author

- His name:
  - Malachi: Messenger of the Lord
  - Seems to have a spiritual significance because messengers is a big theme in this book: referring to both the Christ, and His forerunner (2:7, 3:1)
  - Some argue whether Malachi is a proper noun, or a form of title instead.
- No other bibliographical information

## Date

- We do not know exactly when this prophecy was written, but the contents and Jewish tradition can give us a good idea.
  - The Jewish canon accribes to being the last book written.
  - It is clearly post exile, by contents.
    - 1:8 speaks about Judah paying tribute to a governor. The word “governor” is the word “pehâ”, which is a a clear reference to the Persian governors. That term is only used of foreign rulers, usually of Mesopotamic origin. This gives evidence that it was during Judah’s submission to the Persian empire.
    - It speaks of priestly services and sacrifices, so it was certainly written after the reconstruction of the temple.
    - The contents deal with the same sins and problems spoken of in Ezra and Nehemiah.
      - Corrupt priests
      - Withholding tithes
      - Divorce
      - Mixed marriages
- All that being said, scholars place this book around 430 BC.
  - There is some disagreement on whether it is before, during, or after the life of Nehemiah.
  - That difference is not of any consequence (that I know of), and will not affect our understanding of the message.
  - I don’t know of how it makes a difference to understanding the message either way.

# Historical Context

- The history leading up to Malachi
  - Abraham
    - God calls Abraham to sojourn in Canaan and gives him three promises.
      1. Nation
      2. Land
      3. Blessing
  - Egypt
    - Because of a famine, Abraham's descendants move to Egypt, stay there for 400 years, and grow into a nation of people.
    - They become slaves to Egypt.
    - God sends Moses to deliver them from Egypt and take them to the Promised Land.
  - Traveling to the Promised Land
    - On the way, they stop at Mt. Sinai and receive the Law.
    - The Law included the moral laws, the tabernacle, priests, and sacrifices.
    - Upon their first arrival, they don't have faith that God can bring them into the land, and they are cursed to wander for forty years.
    - Finally they arrive at the border of the Promised Land once more.
  - Conquering the Promised Land
    - Joshua leads the people to conquer the natives.
    - They live in the land with judges.
  - The kingdom
    - Eventually they receive kings to rule over them.
    - The second king, David, is promised that his heir would rule on his throne forever.
    - The kingdom splits in half. Israel on the north, and Judah on the south.
    - Israel is conquered and taken into captivity by Assyria.
    - 100 years later, Judah is conquered and taken into captivity by Babylon.
  - Captivity
    - Judean captivity lasted seventy years.
    - During this captivity, the Babylonians were conquered by Persia.
  - The return from captivity.
    - The Persians send the Jews back to their Promised Land.
    - With Ezra's help, they rebuild the temple (516 BC).
    - With Nehemiah's help, they rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
    - After all of this, the book of Malachi was written (430 BC).
- The Jewish mindset
  - Religion:
    - No more idolatry:
      - They were sent into Babylonian captivity for worshipping false gods. There they got their fill of idolatry.
      - The only Jews who returned were those who didn't want to worship idols.
      - Idolatry, in the traditional sense, was never a problem for the Jews again.
    - Restored Yahweh worship:
      - They were excited to return and worship Yahweh properly again. They rebuilt the temple, and restored the priesthood and sacrifices.
      - They properly limited their worship of Yahweh to the temple. They never returned to worshipping Yahweh on the high places.

- After their return they had been worshipping Yahweh “correctly”.
- God:
  - Having been back several generations, they were disappointed with how insignificant their nation still was.
    - Their temple was small and plain.
    - They had to submit to foreign rule and pay tribute.
    - They were threatened by the neighboring nations.
    - They were waiting for the Christ and His kingdom much longer than they anticipated.
  - This led them to being disappointed with God.
    - They felt He didn’t love them (1:2).
    - They felt He had abandoned them (2:13).
    - They felt like He was being unfair by not sufficiently rewarding them for their “faithful” service (2:17, 3:14-15).
- Practice:
  - Their disillusioned sentiments of God led to bad practice.
    - Heartless worship (1:7-8, 12-13, 3:8).
    - Corrupt priests (2:2, 8)
    - Disobedient people (2:11, 14)
  - So even though they had fixed all the external things, they were still struggling internally.

## The Message

- The overall theme: Honoring God so that we may be acceptable to Him.

### • Verses:

- 1:6: *“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then **if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect.**” says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests **who despise My name.** But you say, ‘How have we despised Your name.*
- 1:9-10: *“But now will you not **entreat God’s favor,** that He may be gracious to us? **With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?**” says the Lord of hosts. “Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! **I am not pleased with you,**” says the Lord of hosts, **“nor will I accept** an offering from you.*
- 1:11: *For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, **My name will be great among the nations,** and in every place **incense is going to be offered to My name,** and a grain offering that is pure; **for My name will be great among the nations,**” says the Lord of hosts*
- 1:13: *You also say, “My, how tiresome it is!” And you disdainfully sniff at it,” says the Lord of hosts, “and you bring what was taken by robbery and what is lame or sick; so you bring the offering! **Should I receive that from your hand?**”*
- 1:14: *“But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King,” says the Lord of hosts **“and My name is feared among the nations.”***
- 2:1: *“And now this commandment is for you, O priests. If you do not listen, and **if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,**” says the Lord of hosts, “then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because **you are not taking it to heart.**”*
- 2:5: *“My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and **I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name.**”*

- 2:13: *“This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because **He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.***
  - 2:17: *You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, “How have we wearied Him?” In that you say, **“Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them,”** or, “Where is the God of justice?”*
  - 3:3-4: *He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, **so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord** as in the days of old and as in former years.*
  - 3:5: *“Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and **I will be a swift witness against** the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and **those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,**” says the Lord of hosts.*
  - 3:13-15: *“**Your words have been arrogant against Me,**” says the Lord. “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You. You have said, **‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge,** and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts? So now **we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.***
  - 3:16-18: ***Then those who feared the Lord** spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him **for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. “They will be Mine,”** says the Lord of hosts, “on the day that I prepare **My own possession,** and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.” **So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.***
  - 4:2: *“But for **you who fear My name,** the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.*
- Message for the original audience:
    - They were very religious, but they lost their love for God.
    - Therefore they were no longer honoring Him in their worship or personal obedience.
    - Because of this, they were not acceptable to God in spite of all their religion.
    - This message is meant to expose the corruption in their heartless worship and the hypocrisy in their inconsistent obedience so that they could once again fear the Lord, offer pleasing worship and obedience, and be accepted by God.
  - Message for us:
    - We might be very religious, but it’s easy for us to lose our love for God.
    - Without love, we fail to honor God with sincere worship and genuine obedience. Instead we offer rote meaningless compliance to rules. God does not accept this.
    - This message can expose the corruption in our hearts, and corruption in our worship and personal lives so that we may repent, return to our first love, offer meaningful worship and obedience, and be accepted by God.

## Lesson 2: God Loves Judah

# 1:2-5: God Loves Judah

- 1:2

- \* Question & Answer #1

- God: I have loved you.
- Judah: How have you loved us?

- Why does Judah feel unloved?

- Judah had returned to the Promised Land from Babylonian captivity about 200 years prior.
- They rebuilt the temple, rebuilt the walls, and rebuilt their lives.
- However, things were not what they wanted them to be, nor as good as they anticipated:
  - The temple was smaller.
  - They had no king.
  - They were subject to the Persian empire.
  - They were threatened by neighboring nations.
- Since God wasn't doing all that they hoped and desired, they began to assume that He didn't really love them after all.

- 1:3-4:

- God's answer:

- God makes a comparison between Judah to Edom to help prove to the Jewish nation that He does in fact love them.
- Names:
  - Jacob = father of the nation of Judah
  - Esau = the father of the nation of Edom
  - So what God says about Jacob is what he says about Judah, and what He says about Esau is what He is saying about Edom.
- History:
  - Jacob and Esau, being sons of Isaac, were both descendants of Abraham and the promises.
  - However, God rejected Esau, and chose Jacob to inherit the promises.
  - Jacob becomes the father of Judah, and Esau becomes the father of Edom.
  - Judah inherits the Promised Land and becomes a dominant world force.
  - Edom inhabits a portion of land to the south.
  - Both nations become evil and are destroyed by the Babylonians in the sixth century.
  - The Jews are taken into Babylonian captivity for 70 years.
  - An Edomite remnant is left in the land, and they continue to inhabit the mountains.
  - The Jews are sent back to their land by the Persian empire. They rebuild the ruins and become a functioning semi-independent nation once more.
  - In the fourth century (at the same time or just after this prophecy was written) nomadic Nabateans expel the remaining Edomite nation from their mountains.
  - In the second century, the Maccabees extinguish them entirely during their revolt against the Seleucid nation.
  - Edom has ceased to exist since.
- The comparison between Edom and Judah

| Edom  | Judah                               |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| I have hated  | I have loved                        |
| Made his mountains a desolation                                 | Brought them back to their own land |
| Appointed his inheritance for jackals of the wilderness         | Rebuilt their cities                |
| Beat them down  | Restored temple worship             |
| Will tear down any reconstruction                               | Will fulfill His promises to them   |
| Will be called wicked territory                                 |                                     |
| Will be called the people to whom the Lord is indignant forever |                                     |

- God has given Judah special treatment.
- Edom wasn't rebuilt by God, but Judah was.
- Edom doesn't have any special commitment of protection from God in the future, but Judah does.
- All this special treatment is due to the promises that God has previously made to them.
- The significance:
  - Even though Judah doesn't feel like God has done enough for them, He's done done plenty.
  - He's done more for them than He's done for other nations.
  - They haven't done anything to deserve this special treatment.
  - He's kept all His promises so far, and is going to do even more for them in the future.
- 5:
  - Your eyes will see this
    - This full destruction of Edom has not yet happened.
    - They *have* witnessed Edom being destroyed, but they still linger as threatening neighbors to the Jewish nation.
    - Soon, God will allow them to be completely eradicated and lost.
    - This seems to be fulfilled by the Nabatean's in the fourth century (during or soon after this was written) and the Maccabees in the second century.
  - The Lord be magnified beyond the borders of Israel.
    - When they see God destroy Edom, they will remember that God really is powerful, in control, and going to keep His promises.
    - Their rekindled love for God will lead them to want to magnify God again to all the world.
- \* Things are better than we think they are.
  - The Jews:
    - The Jews thought things were bad because their circumstances weren't measuring up to their expectations and desires, but truthfully, things weren't that bad.
    - They needed to focus on the good that God had done, and the good that He is going to do, rather than being bitter about things not being "good enough".

- Us:
  - When we think things are bad...
    4. They are not as bad as they could be.
    5. They are much better than we deserve
  - We need to think about ...
    1. What God has done
    2. What God has promised to do.
  - ... and be content with our present circumstances.
- Questions:
  - What are some present circumstances that make us discontent?
  - What are some things that make us feel as if God doesn't love us?
  - What are good things God has done for us that proves He loves us?
  - What are promises God has yet to fulfill that prove He loves us?

\* If we doubt God's love for us, we will love Him less, and our obedience will wane.

- The Jews:
  - They doubted God's love, so they became less loving towards God.
  - A lack of love for God was the source of all their religious indifference and profanity.
  - Since God was no longer desirable, serving Him was no longer worth it, so they did so very half heartedly.
- Us:
  - Loving God is the source of our obedience.
  - We love God because He first loved us.
  - If we doubt His love, then we have lost the very thing that makes us love Him in the first place.
  - If we love Him less, we lose motivation to serve Him.
  - We need to stay convinced of His love for us, and serve Him wholeheartedly as He deserves.
- Questions:
  - What can we do to stay convinced that He loves us?
  - What can we do to make sure we continue to love Him?
  - What are some signs that we love Him less? Personal obedience? Worship?

\* Misunderstanding God's word can lead us to love Him less.

- The Jews:
  - They had many expectations of what God was going to do. When these expectations weren't being met, they assumed negative things about God.
  - However, many of these expectations were presumptuous and either not founded in scripture, or founded on a misunderstanding of scripture, or founded on a physically minded perspective of scripture.
- Us:
  - If we misunderstand God's word and create expectations that God isn't intending to fulfill, we will be disappointed with Him, and love Him less.
  - We need to make sure we understand scripture / have the right perspective of scripture to ensure that we don't have false expectations.
- Questions:
  - What are some misconceptions people have about God that lead them to be disappointed with who God really is?
  - What are some misconceptions that we have about God?

- Where do these misconceptions come from? How do we get these false ideas?
- What can we do to keep ourselves from having such false ideas about God and His promises?

#### \* Why did God hate Esau?

- It seems difficult to read about God hating people, especially when it's based on their nationality. How can we make sense of this?
- Comparative:
  - First, the idea of hating Esau is comparative of His treatment of Judah.
  - God chose to fulfill His promises through the descendants of Jacob rather than the descendants of Esau.
  - Edom received no special treatment, but Judah did. Comparative to His treatment of Judah, He hated Edom.
  - The fact that they are brothers brings attention to this contrast.
- God didn't treat Edom worse than any other nation.
  - God didn't especially have it out for Edom.
  - When they were wicked, He punished them just like He did to Assyria, Babylon, and even Judah.
  - Judah was the only nation that had special promises to be rebuilt.
  - God didn't have those promises for the people's of Edom, or Assyria, or Babylon, so He didn't do that.
- Edom was sinful
  - Just like all the nations of the world (Judah included), Edom was sinful.
  - The prophets make it clear to us that they were idolatrous, vengeful, and violent.
  - They were destroyed for these sins just like any other nation.
- God calls to attention His treatment of Edom so Judah would see the special love He has for them, and realize they are getting more than all the other nations.

## Lesson 3: Sins of the Priests (1:6-2:9)

### Introduction

- The first section of Malachi condemns the sins of the priests (1:6-2:9)
  - 1:6-2:3: evil offerings
  - 2:4-9: evil instruction

### 1:6-2:4: Evil Offerings

#### Presenting Evil Offerings (1:6-8)

- 1:6



- Honor for fathers and masters
  - This is something done naturally
    - Honor to fathers:
      - They have done a lot for us (guidance, provisions, protection).
      - We love them for what they've done, so we want to honor them.
    - Respect to masters:
      - They have authority and power over us.
      - We depend on them because they offer things that we need, so we respect them in order to maintain the mutually beneficial arrangements.
      - We fear them because they have the power to punish, so we respect them in order to avoid that.
- Despising God
  - We don't naturally honor and respect God
    - The Israelites were failing to offer honor and respect to God.
    - God is revealing that to them.

\* We tend to honor people more than we honor God

- Why?
  - Physical vs. spiritual
    - People are physical, they are here in front of us, they relate to us in the immediate moment. God is spiritual and "far away".
    - It's hard to honor the invisible unseen God over the ever present people around us.
  - Trouble with love
    - Ultimately it's easier for us to love physical people than a spiritual God.
    - We love people more than God, so we naturally honor them over God.

\* Honoring family over God

- Why?
  - God tells us to love and honor our families (Eph 5:25, 22, 6:1)
  - Because of the nature of family, our bonds with them are extremely strong, and produce lots of love for family.
  - Culture dictates that loyalty to family is of utmost importance.
- There is a fine line between honoring family because of God, and honoring family over God.
  - Even with our responsibilities towards family, we see that they are still just people.
    - Luke 8:20-21: *And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You." But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.*
    - Mat 10:37: *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*
  - We can't allow family to mean more to us than God.
- What are some ways that we honor family over God?
  - Family events more important than worship.
  - Family responsibilities more important than spiritual responsibilities (i.e. personal worship, etc...)
  - Obey family rules over God's rules. Fulfill families desires more than God's desires.
- The problem here isn't loving family too much, but rather not loving God enough.
  - It's not always that we put God as being more important than God, but we just don't love God very much, so He pales in comparison with our love for family.

- Consider things you are willing to do for family. Are you willing to do that for God?
- What have you been doing for family? Are you doing those things for God?

\* Honoring masters over God (we will talk about this later)

- Instead, the priests were despising God's name
  - Definition of despise
    - Despise = bazaar
    - Careless, contempt, despicable, disdain.
    - To not care about something, therefore, to treat it carelessly.
    - The more valuable that something is, the more inappropriate the careless treatment is. This more offensive carelessness becomes despising.
    - EX: consider a husband forgetting and doing nothing for his wife on Easter, Valentines Day, and their anniversary. Though his actions remain the same, but the increasing significance of the day increases the severity of his failure.
  - The Israelites were being careless with God, and because God is of great importance, they were really despising Him.
  - Note that this message is to the priests who were in charge of the worship.

\* Disinterest towards God is despising God

- We might not think we despise God because we aren't doing anything all that bad.
- However, since God is our great God, carelessness towards him is so ill-fitting that it is truly an attitude of despising.
- Only genuine zeal and fervor for God is appropriate.
- How do we know if we have zeal and fervor? Consider the nature of the sacrifices you are making.

\* This message is to the Levitical priests. All saints are priests today.

- As saints, we are considered to be priests.
  - I Pet 2:5: *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
  - Rev 1:6: *and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father— to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
  - Rev 5:10: *"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."*
- If we are priests, we are responsible for spiritual worship and sacrifices, thus, this message applies to us.

• 1:7-8

- How they were despising God:
  - Presenting defiled food on the altar (bad offerings)
    - Definition of defiled
      - Gaal: stained, unclean
      - Ex: Is 59:2-3: *But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken falsehood, your tongue mutters wickedness.*

- Thirty-four times, Leviticus and Numbers make it clear that all sacrifices were to be without defect (Lev 1:2-3, 10, 3:1, 3:6... etc).
- Vs 8 show that they were offering defected sacrifices (the blind, lame and sick).
- Their offerings were defiled by their disinterest and contempt for God.
  - God expected offerings without defects because He is a great God that deserves absolute honor and respect.
  - They were offering defiled sacrifices because they didn't value him very much. They didn't want to give up the best of their flock for him.
  - What they offered were defected offerings from a defiled heart.

\* As Christians, we are supposed to offer sacrifices

- Sacrifices we offer to God
  - Praise and worship
    - Heb 13:15: *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*
  - Acts of service
    - Heb 13:15: *And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*
  - Personal obedience
    - Rom 12:1: *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*
  - Evangelism
    - Phi 2:17: *But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.*
    - Col 1:28: *We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.*
- Are we offering these sacrifices to God?
  - Are we doing these things?
  - Or are we not making these offerings at all?

\* Are we offering the best of our flock?

- Do we offer God the best of our time?
  - Early morning? Late night?
  - Before fun?
  - Free time?
- Do we offer God the best of our mind?
  - Focus? Attention?
  - Interest? Passion?
- Do we offer the best of our efforts?
  - Are there other things that you are more invested into than God?
  - Fun? Work? School?

\* Are we offering defiled sacrifices

- Praise and worship?
  - Public: do we care? Or are we just here?
  - Private: meaningful worship? Or just checking off the list.
- Acts of service?
  - Great sacrifice because really trying to help?
  - Minimal sacrifice to assuage your conscience?
  - Public sacrifice for attention?

- Personal obedience?
  - Are you living a truly obedient life?
  - Are you presenting yourself to God with sin and evil in your heart?
  
- Despising worship.
  - Saying, “the table of the Lord is to be despised”
    - The table is the altar
      - There is a table of showbread in the temple, but this verse is referring to the altar.
      - It fits the parallel statement.
      - The table of showbread doesn’t fit the context because you don’t make offerings on it.
      - Ezek 41:22: *The altar was of wood, three cubits high and its length two cubits; its corners, its base and its sides were of wood. And he said to me, “This is the table that is before the Lord.*
    - They said that making offerings to God is something to be despised.
      - They didn’t say this literally with their words (I hope), but by their actions.
      - Because they offered defiled sacrifices, it shows they didn’t care at all about worship. It showed they despised worshipping God.

\* Do we despise worshipping God?

- Actions speak louder than words
  - You might not say you despise worshipping God, but what are your actions saying?
  - If you aren’t making sacrifices for God, if you aren’t offering Him your best, then you despise God and His worship.
- We despise God’s worship because we don’t love Him.
  - If we truly loved God, we would love to worship Him.
  - Our failure to worship God properly is rooted in our failure to love Him.
  - If we are not offering to God worthy sacrifices, we need to ask ourselves, “Why do I not love God?”

• Why not offer it to your governor

- Governor
  - Pechah: a foreign word only used of foreign rules, especially in the post exilic books.
  - The Persians sent the Jews back to their homeland to form a semi-independent nation. They had freedom, but had to pay tribute to Persia.
  - Their governor was the steward of the Persian king set to rule and collect tribute from Judah.
  - In this case, it refers to the Persian governor was the steward over Judah for the Persian king.
  - Failure to pay tribute would result in great penalty and eventually destruction.
- The Jews knew they had to make proper offerings to Persia.
- The result was they were making better offerings to Persia than to God.

\* We honor bosses over God

- Why?
  - They have authority and power over us.

- We need their jobs, etc...
- Failure to honor them results in immediate consequence.
- We obey them before we obey God.
  - We give them our time and efforts because we have to, and we fail to do so for God because we “don’t have to”.
  - Time?
    - Does work dominate our schedule more than worship (public/personal)?
    - Are we always at work, but not always at worship?
    - Dare we always at work *on time*, but not at worship on time?

**\* Bonus: do we honor significant others over God?**

- Time on phone with them taking precedence over prayer?
- Lots of time and effort making “offerings” to them as we neglect to do God’s will.
- Give them all of our mind and attention while we ignore God.

## **God Doesn’t Accept You (1:9-10)**

• 9

- Entreat the favor from the Lord
  - Meaning of Entreat
    - NASB: But now will you not entreat God’s favor...?
    - Literally, “Beseech the Lord’s favor, I pray”.
    - Entreat: sincerely and earnestly plea/make request
  - Intention
    - Sarcastic: “Yes, now entreat God and see how he responds.”
    - Sincere: “You are not acceptable to God, so please entreat His favor.”
- That He may be gracious to us
  - We have sinned, so we are in need of God’s grace ( not just grace to forgive sins, but grace to be kind to us in any way in spite of our sins).
  - We must earnestly plea for God to be kind to us in spite of our sins.
- But with such an offering...
  - Offerings
    - The way we entreat God’s undeserved favor is by offering something to Him.
    - The offerings themselves aren’t sufficient to earn or deserve God’s kindness, but it is an expression of love and gratitude that accompanies our request.
  - Such an offering
    - Such = refers to the offerings they had been making
    - Their offerings were lame, blind, and crippled animals.
- Will God receive you?
  - Is God going to receive these sacrifices?
  - The rhetorical answer is “no” (we will see why more specifically in the next verse).
  - If God isn’t receiving their offerings, neither will He receive the people making them.

**\* We are in need of God’s favor, and we need to entreat Him to receive it.**

- Need of favor:
  - We have failed God, so we are all in debt to Him.
  - God does NOT owe us anything. We need to stop being entitled.
- We need to entreat Him

- We need to sincerely seek for God to accept us in spite of our shortcomings.
- He will accept us because He is gracious and favorable.
- Let's entreat His favor with the meaningful offerings that He has requested.
- It's a blessing that we can receive God by entreating Him with offerings
  - God gives us the resources to make offerings.
  - God is kind enough to care about those insignificant offerings.
  - He is gracious that obedience and good intention are sufficient to win His grace.

\* Evil offerings don't win God's favor

- God doesn't have to receive any offering
  - All offerings are inherently insufficient.
    - We don't earn God's favor.
    - He isn't obligated to respond to these offerings in any way.
  - If God accepts an offering, it is because He graciously chooses to do so.
- God certainly won't receive evil offerings
  - If God is not obligated to receive any offering, then certainly He won't receive an offering that is somehow contrary to His desires and instruction.
  - God will reject such sacrifices.
  - We need to consider the possibility that we could be offering evil sacrifices, and God is not receiving them.
  - We must not expect God to be receiving any kind of worship we offer Him.
- Offering evil sacrifices to earn God's favor is attempted manipulation.
  - We see God as being obligated to accept whatever we offer Him.
  - So we offer Him back sacrifices to bend His arm behind His back and force grace out of Him.
  - Not a good idea. God discerns the difference, and will not give favor to those who so entreat Him.
- If God has rejected these sacrifices, then He continues to reject us as well.
  - If God is not accepting our offerings, then He is not giving us favor, and we remain unacceptable to Him.
  - If we are unacceptable to Him, then we are not received by Him.

• 10

- Oh that one might shut the gate that you might not uselessly kindle fire on my altar
  - Useless fire
    - The offerings made to God had no inherent value (i.e. a burnt animal benefits God in no way).
    - The value was the obedience and good intention that led the individuals to make these offerings.
    - Sacrifices devoid of obedience and good intention are useless to God.
  - Shut the gates
    - God would rather that their useless worship cease than continue.
    - This is because their meaningless sacrifices were more offensive than no sacrifices at all.
      - Failing to offer sacrifices is negligence that God can turn away from. Evil sacrifices however, are an abomination for God to suffer.

- EX: Your significant other has been rude, and they know it. Rather than address the situation to make amends, they just start saying sweet things and trying to act cute in an attempt to win your affection without having to admit and deal with their shortcomings. What do those words mean to you? What would you rather them do? Shut up most likely.

**\* Sacrifice without obedience and good intention = useless.**

- Our actions are of no value
  - What we actually do has no real benefit
    - Baptism - you are wet
    - Prayer - you are talking to the air
    - Etc...
  - The value comes from our obedience and good intention.
    - If these are lacking, it shows we don't care about God.
    - We we offer sacrifice to God without caring about Him, He doesn't care about our offerings.
- Such offerings have no value to God nor us.

**\* Bad worship < no worship**

- To prove that God isn't going to receive and kinds of offerings He tells us that He would rather receive no worship than meaningless worship.
- Useless offerings are offensive to God

- I am not pleased with you, nor will I accept your offerings

- Not pleased
  - They had sinned, so they were in need of grace.
  - God was willing to be gracious and tolerate their shortcomings if they would entreat Him
  - However, their entreating was done in a disobedient heartless way.
  - God did not accept their entreating, and they remain in sin, and unacceptable.
- Nor will I accept your offerings
  - You are not acceptable to me.
  - Your offerings are evil and aren't making you acceptable to me.
  - You can continue to make these evil offerings in this unacceptable state, but I will continue to refuse them.

**\* Acceptable offerings are the key to being accepted by God.**

- We can't be accepted without acceptable offerings
  - We all need God's grace.
  - We receive His favor by entreating Him.
    - Entreating Him properly means we will receive His undeserved favor as a gift.
    - That favor makes us acceptable to Him, and we will be acceptable to Him.
    - Entreating Him improperly means we will not receive His favor.
    - Without His favor, we remain unacceptable to Him.

**Honoring God's Name (1:11-2:4)**

## **They were not honoring God's name**

### **• 1:11**

- The truth about God's name: It will be great
  - When?
    - From rising of sun to it's setting: always.
    - God's name will always be great regardless of how His people treat it.
    - In the same way that our good deeds have no practical benefit to God, so our bad deeds cause no practical harm to God.
    - Nothing we do makes God's name any less than it really is.
  - Where?
    - Among the nations.
    - Everywhere, and amongst everyone.
    - The Jews, being God's special people, thought they had sole rights to glorify God's name.
      - For that reason, they took Him for granted, and failed to do so.
      - However, they failed to realize that God's name would be glorified by others whether or not they wanted to do so themselves.
      - EX: not appreciating your girlfriend because she's with you, and going to stay with you, but you forget that she doesn't have to be with you, so she can leave and find better attention elsewhere.
  - How?
    - Acceptable offerings
      - Incense and pure sacrifices will be offered.
      - The Jews were supposed to be glorifying God among the nations by making acceptable offerings.
      - It matters not that the Jews didn't want to do so, because God will commission the nations to make those same acceptable offerings.

- \* God will glorify His name with or without you.
  - He's not depending on us to be great.
  - He's not desperate for any kind of worship and attention.
  - This is why He is going to reject worship that isn't pleasing to Him.

- \* This is predicting the inclusion of the gentiles as God's people making acceptable offerings through Christ.

- \* We glorify God's name among the nations by making acceptable sacrifices
  - What sacrifices are the nations seeing?
    - What sacrifices do visitors see in our assemblies?
    - What sacrifices do people around us see in our personal lives?
  - What are our sacrifices saying?
    - Are our sacrifices pure?
    - Do they show our sincere desire for the Lord?
    - Do they show our indifference?

### **• 1:12-13**



- But you are defiling it
  - Profane:
    - To treat something holy as normal, as nothing.
    - Doesn't necessarily mean it's inherently bad treatment.
    - But due to the exalted nature of the thing, normal treatment is necessarily bad treatment.
  - How were they defiling God's name?
    - Indifferent worship
      - Table of the Lord is defiled
        - Wouldn't literally say this. Their actions did.
        - They were defiling the altar with the sins of their hearts.
      - It's food is despised
        - The food is the actual sacrifice.
        - They were tired of making the sacrifices. They didn't value the sacrifices themselves.

\* Are we despising Christ?

- What is our sacrifice to God? Christ.
- When we sin we are despising Christ, our sacrifice.
  - How do they despise?
    - It's tiresome: Looking forward, don't want to do it.
    - Sniff at it: Afterward, don't value it
    - Evil offerings (robbery, lame, sick): During, don't do it properly.

\* We despise Christ our sacrifice when we offer evil sacrifices.

- The result:
  - God didn't receive these offerings.
  - God doesn't receive them.

• 1:14

- The result:
  - Cursed
    - Not only does God reject such sacrifices...
    - He punishes those who make such sacrifices.
- The swindler
  - We think we are offering something to God that belongs to us.
  - The truth is, all belongs to God.
  - Our refusal to return our goods back to the Lord is attempted theft.
  - EX: you borrow a book, and then don't say anything about it so you can keep it in your library.
- Vows the male, but sacrifices a blemished animal
  - The means
    - They had the means to offer pure sacrifices, but they were unwilling.
    - This makes it a sin of rebellion.

- The understanding
  - They know they are expected to offer something of certain quality, but they change their mind.
  - This makes it a sin of rebellion.
- The betrayal
  - Thus, evil sacrifices are deliberate ungrateful acts of betrayal.

**\* Have we promised to do what's right, but broken your commitment?**

- Have we been convicted by an even or lesson, and made a commitment to change?
  - We know what needs to be done.
  - We know it's something that can be done.
- But then we lose our conviction and turn away from it.
  - We just decide that we don't want to anymore.
  - Our conscience is no longer hurting.
  - Our great words of "commitment" were sufficient to assuage our consciences.
- This is robbing God of what we know he is worth.

- God's name will be feared among the nations.
  - This is God's will.
  - This is God's plan.
  - We decide if we will be a part of it.

**They need to honor God's name**

**• 2:1-2**

- This command is for you, priests
  - The priests were in charge of leading and regulating offerings and sacrifices.
  - So they were responsible for all the unacceptable sacrifices being offered to God.
  - Therefore the command to honor God's name is their responsibility first.
  - If they, the leaders of God's worship, don't honor God's name, then why will the rest of the people?

**Honor God starts with leaders**

- If you will not listen
  - This is something that they already knew, yet God is telling them again to rebuke and warn them.
  - If they don't accept this rebuke now, they are warned that worse things will happen.
- Take it to heart to give honor to God's name
  - Take it to heart = to put it in your heart
    - They needed to have an inner desire to honor God's name.
    - They needed to cultivate this desire.
    - And act with this desire.
  - To give honor to God's name
    - To make sure that their actions were glorifying the Lord.

- To make sure that their actions were encouraging and leading others to do the same.
- God will curse them
  - I will curse you
    - They were supposed to be making offerings to God to entreat His favor to receive undeserved blessings.
    - Instead, because they were offering unacceptable sacrifices, they were going to receive curses/punishment instead.
      - Punishment for their previous sins that have no atonement.
      - Punishment for their evil sacrifices.
  - Curse your blessings
    - God will take back the favor He has already shown them, and turn that into a curse.
    - For example, He will take the lush land He has given them, and make it bare.
  - I have already cursed you
    - This was already happening.
    - God is calling attention to some negative things going on and attributing them to their dishonoring God.
    - They know that worse is in store if they don't repent.

## • 2:3

- I am going to rebuke your offspring
  - Literal
    - The word offspring is literally seed
    - God is going to rebuke the seed of the land so that it wouldn't grow and produce.
    - They were losing love for God because they thought things were bad. That lack of love led to dishonoring God. That dishonor is going to lead to God deliberately making things even worse.
  - Additional meaning
    - Seed is also used to refer to descendants.
    - God is also going to rebuke their descendants.
    - Because the leaders were not honoring God, the descendants would honor God even less. That is going to lead to the people being more evil, and more curses on account of that evil.
- I will spread refuse on your faces
  - Refuse
    - Origin is an unused word, meaning, there are no roots in the word that help us understand it's meaning. We will understand its significance from the context it is used in.
    - It is used five other times outside of Malachi in reference to a portion of the animal sacrifice that was burned (Ex 29:14; Lev 4:11, 8:17, 16:27; Num 19:5).
    - Translations: ESV = dung; NASB = refuse/vomit
    - It seems to refer to waste inside the entrails of an animal, which will either be vomit or dung, depending.
  - Refuse on your faces
    - They were entreating God for His favor.
    - Instead, God gives them absolute shame, dishonor, and rejection.

- The refuse on their face shows how unclean they are to God, and how they continue to remain distant from Him.
- They were treating God like dung, so He wipes that dung in their faces for them to consider how that feels.
- Refuse from your feasts
  - The religious festivals included many animal sacrifices.
    - The refuse could be the dung that is inside of the animal.
    - They are offer animals, but God is taking the dung of those animals and wiping it on their face.
  - The animal sacrifices would be eaten by priest and people.
    - The refuse could be the dung from the people after eating these sacrifices.
    - They are making offerings to God to be accept by Him. They eat which represents the union they have with God. Rather than having union, they are being offensive. God wipes the dung of their false communion on their faces for them to consider the wickedness of their dishonoring God.
- You will be taken away with it
  - You are seeking to be accepted by God.
  - Instead you are cast away like dung, burned outside of Jerusalem with the entrails of the sacrifice.

#### • 2:4:

- Then
  - After the harsh condemnation and rejection.
- You will know that I have sent this command
  - This was to help them know God was serious.
  - This was to help them take God’s command more seriously.
- That my covenant may continue with Levi
  - Wasn’t a complete rejection, but a means to change their attitude so He could draw nearer to them.
  - Even after all they did, God still wants the same thing He has always wanted: to have a continued relationship with His people.
  - Segue into the next section: he specifically uses the terms “covenant with Levi” because He now wants to talk about how they are dishonoring that covenant.

## 2:5-9: Evil Instruction

#### • 2:5

- My covenant
  - What is a covenant? Contract where one or both parties agree to do fulfill a particular commitment.
  - There is no specific covenant with Levi
    - THE covenant God made to the nation of Israel is “I will be your God and you will be My people”
    - God made no explicit arrangement or agreement in covenant form.

- I presume this refers to the command God gave to Levi (that is the tribe of Levi) that they should exclusively be responsible for religious duties, the sons of Aaron being the priests.
- Life and peace
  - Life: bring life to nation by atoning substitute sacrifice.
  - Peace: bring peace by acting as mediators to reconcile nation to God.
- I gave them as an object of reverence
  - Them = life and peace
  - These blessings were given so that the covenant would be revered.
  - Revered = lit. feared, i.e. valued. EX: something so valuable you handle it with caution in fear of spoiling it.

### How Levi used to be

- So he revered and stood in awe of God's name: Levi used to revere God and the covenant.
- 2:6
  - Instruction
    - True instruction was in His mouth.
    - Unrighteousness was not found on his lips.
  - Obedience: he walked with me in peace and uprightness
  - Example: he turned many back from iniquity

### How Levi ought to be

- 2:7
  - Instruction: priests should preserve knowledge
  - Example: men should seek instruction from them

### How Levi is now

- 2:8-9
  - Disobedience
    - Turned aside from the way
    - Not keeping my ways
  - Bad example: causing many to stumble
  - Evil instruction: showing partiality in the instruction
- \* Partiality
  - It seemed peculiar to me that partiality is mentioned for the first time and the end of this discourse to the priests.
  - It seemed oddly specific and didn't fit with the criticism.
  - I thought perhaps it could be translated differently and mean something else, or perhaps it refers to preferring certain rules over others.

- Rather than fitting this previous discourse to the priests, it is more fitting with the next discourse to the rest of the nation. That's how it fits with the context.

- Result: as they despised and abased God, so will He do to them.

**\* Our covenant**

- As Christians, we are priests.
- We need to consider our
  - Instruction: are we helping people know the truth?
  - Obedience: are we personally following that truth?
  - Example: are we helping people to follow that truth?
- If we are not doing this, we are dishonoring our covenant.

**\* True Christians are always thinking about their impact on others**

- This whole discussion about their evil teaching is condemning them for the negative impact they had on the people.
- As Christians we need to always be thinking of the impact that we have on other people.
- The next section is going to make this point more real.

## Lesson 4: Sins of the People (2:10-2:16)

### Introduction

- The first section of Malachi condemns the sins of the priests (1:6-2:9)
  2. 1:6-2:3: evil offerings
  3. 2:4-9: evil instruction
- Now we will look at the sins of the people: Treachery
  1. Marrying daughters of false gods.
  2. Divorcing their wives

## 2:10-2:16: Sins of the People

### Accusing the Nation of Treachery (2:10)

**• 2:10**

- Rhetorical introduction:
  - What was said:
    - Do we not all have one father?
    - Has not one God created us?

- The purpose of what was said:
  - These two questions draw attention the people's single source.
    - One Father
    - One Creator
  - Calling attention to this single source points out the singularity/unity of the people.
    - One family
    - One creation
- The implication
  - Equity and fairness is appropriate and required.
  - This is said to emphasize how bad the next accused sin is.
- The accusation:
  - Why do we deal treacherously against our brothers?
    - Treachery: they are being accused of being divided and betraying their own blood.
    - "Brother":
      - Ach = brother
      - Translated "brother" 218x; "countrymen" 28x; kin/family\* 117x.
      - In this context, refers more to treachery against their nation, their fellow man, than literal brother or a particular man.
  - So as to profane the covenant of our fathers
    - Profane = treat something that is holy as if it were normal or regular, to defile it.
    - Covenant = the Law of Moses, the rules and regulations God was expecting them to live by.
    - Fathers = they were all one nation, bound together to serve this covenant.

**\* What was their treachery?**

- Their treachery was twofold
  1. Marrying the daughter of a foreign God (vs 11)
  2. Divorcing the wives of their youth to do so (vs 14-16).

**\* What are key words or ideas that connect with the previous portion of the book?**

- Key words:
  - Covenant (2:4, 5, 8)
  - Profane
    - That word: (1:12)
    - That idea: (1:6-8, 14)
- Key ideas
  - Treachery = partiality
    - The people were being partial towards their brethren.
      - The Jews were treating their women unfairly by divorcing them and marrying foreigners.
      - We saw previously that "brother" can be translated to be the nation as a whole. The women were the "brethren" were being betrayed.
  - The priests allowed the men to do this
    - They were partial with their instruction.
    - They allowed the men to be impartial and abuse their wives.
    - The priests didn't teach against it.
    - They didn't keep it from happening.

**\* Corruption starts from leadership down**

- Israel
  - The priests were profaning their covenant. They didn't exhibit careful observance of their Levitical covenant.
  - Therefore the people didn't care about carefully observing the entire covenant.
  - The priests profaning and sins were an excuse and encouragement for the people to sin themselves.
  - If the leaders weren't careful to take it seriously, why would the people be careful to take it seriously?
- Us
  - We as leaders need to set a strong example of upholding the standard strictly to accurately exhibit that standard, and encourage the keeping of that standard.
    - Example
      - Example in worship
      - Example in personal obedience
    - Standard
      - Show people what is right and wrong by our example.
      - Show people that they are *expected* to follow that standard.
      - Show people that they are *able* to follow that standard.
  - Who are the leaders?
    - Leaders are elders, deacons, evangelists.
    - However, we are *all* a nation of priests.
      - We are all able to be leaders.
      - We are all expected to be leaders.
      - We all are already leaders in some capacity for sure.
    - Are you true to the covenant and encouraging your brother to be strong?
    - Are you disloyal and encouraging their sin?

\* Bad worship = bad obedience

- Israel
  - The most obvious sin of the priest was the profaning of the worship.
  - By their poor worship they were teaching that God doesn't need to be respected.
  - The result
    - The priests did not honor the covenant of worship
    - The people did not honor the covenant of obedience.
- Bad worship encourages sin
  - How we worship is a reflection of how we view God; then in turn, worship becomes a projection of who God is. That projected view greatly determines how people will treat God.
    - EX: If I always talk about how dumb, ugly, and useless my car is, how will my passengers treat it when they are inside? Put feet on seats? Eat in it? Leave food and trash?
    - EX: Modern contemporary worship. Casual and comfortable. Based on what we want. That's a reflection of how we think of God. We don't have to take Him seriously, and basically we can do whatever we want.
  - If we don't obey laws regarding worship, why would we obey laws regarding morality?
  - If we aren't serious in glorifying God in worship, why will we glorify Him in our obedience?

\* One piece missing, the whole thing falls apart



- Israel: The leadership didn't value God, they dishonored God with profane worship, the people see the profane worship, and determine that they don't need to honor the covenant, which means they don't feel required to honor the people of the covenant nor their own personal covenants, so break their vows and abandon their wives.
- When one vital piece is missing, it causes a chain effect that destroys so much of our spiritual lives and leads to many bad things.

## Treachery #1: Marrying daughters of foreign gods (2:11-12)

### • 2:11

- You have married the daughter of a foreign god
  - Treachery:
    - A form of betrayal.
    - Against whom?
      - God
      - Nation
  - Abomination in Israel and Jerusalem
    - Abomination = a detestable thing, deserving of extreme dislike (God extremely disliked their marriages with women of a foreign god.
    - The emphasis is the location. There was a bringing of profane things into God's holy land. The land being holy because it's where He chose His holy people to dwell.
  - Profaned the sanctuary
    - The definition of sanctuary
      - Hebrew: quodesh (n) = holy
      - Usage:
        - Used literally as stand-alone noun ("holiness") 9x (Ex 15:11).
        - Used as adj. ("holy"\_ connected to other nouns 269x (Ex 3:5, 12:16).
        - Used as stand-alone adj. ("holy") with implied but not specifically stated noun (Lev 22:7, 10, 14; Num 4:15; Deut 26:13).
        - Used as stand-alone noun (often "sanctuary") to refer to temple: 65x "sanctuary" (Lev 4:6); 31x holy place, or something of that nature (Ex 26:33-34).
    - Examples of translation in Mal 2:11
      - KJV: *...for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved...*
      - NASB: *...for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord which He loves...*
      - ESV: *...for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves...*
      - NIV: *...Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves...*
    - My thoughts
      - Holiness (of God)
        - More literal, but not the common meaning of the word.
        - The phrase "which He has loved" implies that there is an object He loves, not just His own abstract holiness. I'm not aware of that being a common concept in scripture.
        - Seems that there is an implied noun that is holy.
      - What is the implied noun?

- In the context, I would think that the holy thing that God loves is His people; however I haven't seen evidence of that being the implied object when this word is used as a stand-alone adj.
- Sanctuary is the common translation in such cases. It is likely referring to that.
- However, we see the emphasis of the land in the previous parallel statement.
- I see the sanctuary as being representative of the holy land as a whole
- Significance:
  - The priests were profaning the temple with inappropriate sacrifices.
  - Now the people were profaning God's land with their marriages to women of foreign gods.
  - The people of God were to be separate and distinct, only loyal to Yahweh; however, they were joining themselves to women who were loyal to other gods.
  - These marriages were bringing profane people into the land, which would profane the people of God themselves by influencing them to be disloyal to Yahweh.

\* This profaning of the sanctuary was treachery

- Their profaning the sanctuary is equated with treachery. In what way?
- Treachery towards God
  1. Rebelling against explicit command (Deut 7:3)
  2. They valued something that was against God.
  3. They were willing to do something that would jeopardize their loyalty to God.
    - EX: Is simply flirting with another women cheating against your wife? Yes. You are valuing someone who is against your wife. That is treachery. You are willingly doing something that is further jeopardizing your loyalty to your wife. That is already treacherous.
- Treachery against his brother
  - They were risking the corruption and consequent destruction of the nation.
    - They risked personal corruption: the ungodly women would corrupt their personal obedience.
    - Family corruption: the ungodly women would provide a corrupt upbringing for the children.
    - Societal corruption: the more corrupt families there are the more corrupt society is and becomes.
  - If the nation returns to the evils of idolatry, they would be destroyed once more.
  - Those who were marrying these idolatrous women were risking that fate for their nation for selfish purposes. That was treacherous.
- Treachery against the women
  - Rather than marrying and providing for the godly women in the nation, the men were marrying "more desirable" ungodly women for selfish purposes.
  - This isn't fair to those women.

\* Should Christians date/marry non-Christians?

- Is there a command?

- Though there was explicit command against the nation of Israel marrying outside of their faith, there is no equivalent statement for Christians under the new covenant.
  - It is clear that it isn't sinful to *be* married to a non Christian (I Cor 7:12-31; I Pet 3:1).
  - However, there are passages that prohibit fellowship with those outside of Christ (II Cor 6:14-18).
- Consider if dating/marrying a non-Christian is treacherous?
  - To God?
    - Against our love for God:
      - Why do I like this person? What is my purpose for dating them?
      - If we desire someone who is not a Christian, then we like them for reasons that are contrary to God.
    - Risk our faithfulness to God:
      - This person is going to influence me more than anyone else.
      - Are they going to bringing me closer to God or father away? Are they going to help me be more obedient? Or tempt me to sin?
    - If we know that I desire this person for reasons that have nothing to do with God, and I know that this person could potentially take me away from God, is it not rebellious to go against better judgement and join myself in a relationship with this person? Is that not doing something wrong with full knowledge?
  - To brethren
    - Risk corrupting ourselves
      - If we date/marry a non-Christian, we seriously risk our faithfulness to God.
      - If we are not faithful, how are we going to fulfill responsibilities in the church? How are we going to encourage the brethren? How are we going to evangelize?
    - Risk corrupting our brethren
      - If I being corrupt myself, will not my bad example corrupt others as well?
      - As a weak Christian in the church, I will bring my brethren down.
      - As a fallen Christian, I will discourage my church.
    - Single Christians of the opposite sex
      - If there are people around me seeking God, is it fair for me to neglect them to pursue an ungodly person for ungodly reasons?
      - Can that discourage them from desiring to seek a spouse in godly ways?

## • 2:12

- As for the man who does this: God will now prescribe the appropriate punishment for these treacherous offenders.
- May the Lord cut [the man who does this] off from the tents of Jacob
  - These people will be removed from the camp, and cut off from God's people.
  - Because they have profaned God's covenant people, they are removed from being God's covenant people.
- Anyone who awakes and answers or presents and offering
  - This is a confusing statement. Challenging to know what it means or what it refers to.
  - Hebrew:
    - Awake: Ur = awake, rouse self
    - Answer: Anah = testify, answer, respond
  - Translations:

- NASB: *As for the man who does this, may the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob everyone who awakes and answers, or who presents an offering to the Lord of hosts.*
- NKJV: *As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the Lord remove him from the tents of Jacob[a]—even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty.*
- KJV: *May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, being awake and aware, yet who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!*
- NIV: *As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the Lord remove him from the tents of Jacob[a]—even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty.*
- ESV: *May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant[a] of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!*
- Idiomatic phrase
  - When you have a simple phrase like this that doesn't make sense, and it seems to be the literally translation, and there is great difference in the translations, it usually means it's an idiomatic phrase with an uncertain meaning.
  - Idiomatic phrases are cultural sayings that only make sense in the cultural context. If we don't know the background of this phrase, we are left trying to figure out what it could possibly mean.
  - One explanation: was One commentary says this was a saying of nomadic people where some would stay awake and keep watch for the camp (there was no explanation of how they knew this, nor what the point was).
- Looking at the translations:
  - NASB = this is just a literal translation from the Hebrew.
  - NKJV = this is taking this literal words, and trying to word them in a way that makes sense if these words are meant to be taken literally (which they probably aren't since it is a idiomatic phrase).
  - KJV =
    - This is an attempt to explain the idiomatic phrase.
    - Rather than the literal words being translated, they translated what they think the idiomatic phrase is referring to.
    - Awakes = the scholar teacher (priest).
    - Answers = the student (laymen).
    - This phrase is referring to *all* the people. Whether you are priest or just laymen, God is going to cut you off for your sins.
  - NIV = takes the KJV interpretation, but inserts the interpretation of the concept rather than the interpreted idiomatic phrase.
  - ESV = just skips it all together lol.

## Treachery #2: Divorcing the wives of their youth (2:13-16)

- 2:13
- Another thing
  - On top of being disobedient, they additionally had a bad and frustrating attitude.
  - Their bad attitude:
    - Covering the altar with tears, weeping, and groaning...
    - ...because God doesn't regard their offering nor accept their offering favorably.
  - Why they thought God wasn't accepting their offerings:
    - I postulate it was because they were offering sacrifices, and yet their circumstances remained unfavorable by their standards.

- In their minds, they were worshipping God, but God wasn't blessing them.
- Why is this attitude frustrating?
  - This attitude assumes God is the problem and the bad guy.
  - The Jews made themselves the innocent victims of God's supposed indifference.
  - This of course was not the case. Their worship was profane, and God, though presently disciplining them, was still blessing them with more than they deserved.

## • 2:14

- A frustrating question:
  - They ask, "For what reason?"
  - This question is frustrating for two reasons
    1. It assumes their innocence
      - They ask this as if there is no reason for God to treat them this way.
      - It assumes that they have done nothing wrong, and God is just being unfair.
    2. It shows the extent of their thoughtlessness.
      - The fact that they can't think of what they are doing wrong shows how little they are actually thinking about it, and how little they are thinking about God and His perspective.
      - EX: A wife is mad because her husband forgot their anniversary. The fact that the husband doesn't know why his wife is mad makes it even worse because that shows how clueless and thoughtless he really is. Her being mad should make him think they he's messed up, and then think and realize what he missed.
- The real reason God is not accepting their offerings
  1. They were bad sacrifices (1:8-10).
  2. Because the Lord was witness that they had betrayed their companions and wives of their youth (by divorcing them 4:16)
- ✳ Wondering why God isn't "blessing us" even though we are not obeying Him
  - This is a false assumption of what "blessing us" is.
    - We often require God to do things He hasn't promised to do (give us more money, job, girlfriend, healing, etc...).
    - These are things God can do, but He isn't required to do them, so He is not unfairly withholding blessings from us by not granting these things.
  - False assumption of the purpose of worship.
    - This is based on the assumption that God deserves to be worshipped depending on what He does for us rather than Him necessarily deserving worship for His inherent praiseworthy character.
    - It's not wrong to praise God for good things He does for us (in fact we ought to), but God is deserving of praise regardless of what He does or doesn't do.
    - Therefore, we shouldn't praise Him to get things from Him, nor withhold praise if He hasn't done certain things for us.
  - Founded in discontent
    - Believing that God isn't blessing us because He isn't doing specific things we desire is a failure to recognize the many more important blessings that God has already provided for us.
  - This is a false assumption that God is unfair

- We often think God is unfair, but we ourselves aren't really obeying the Lord.
- God is unfair for doing so much good for us.
- Let us not think God unfair because He isn't doing "enough" for us sinful people.
  
- This divorce is the treachery that was previously spoken about
  - Previously mentioned treachery against the nation:
    - *Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we **deal treacherously** each against his brother so as to **profane the covenant** of our fathers (2:10).*
  - Treachery mentioned against the wives:
    - *The Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have **dealt treacherously**, though she is your companion and your **wife by covenant** (2:14).*
  
- Their treacherous divorce
  - I have been witness
    - God knows about their sin and has seen it happen.
    - God is now going to address the problem.
    - He speaks as if in a court coming to defend the wives.
  - Wives of your youth / companions
    - These are the offended party.
    - Wife of your youth
      - Married you when you had little.
      - Has been with you since.
      - Is older now just like you.
    - Companion
      - Has been there with you through everything.
      - Has done much for/with you.
      - Worked / shared together.
  - You have dealt treacherously
    - Breaking of the covenant
      - These women are their wives by covenant.
      - As prescribed in God's covenant, the men were to take wives by covenant.
      - Divorce breaks both covenants
        - With God (2:10).
        - With their wives (2:14).
    - Damages of this betrayal
      - Broken promises = by breaking their covenant, they have become liars.
      - Broken commitment = by breaking their covenant, they are not going to fulfill their commitments to provide, protect, and support their wives.
      - Broken life = they are unable to marry (few would want to marry a divorced woman, wasn't lawful to marry divorced woman).
      - Broken families = now their families are divided
      - Broken hearts = they are hurt and abandoned emotionally as well.
    - Why this betrayal happened
      - To marry different women of foreign gods.
        - These women hadn't done anything for these men. They were just new women they had seen and met.
        - These women didn't care about God, serving Him, or raising their children to obey Him.
      - Because the men were shallow

- These men were not betraying their wives for failure on their part.
- These men were not marrying these women of foreign gods for any great character or attribute.
- These women were likely younger and good looking.
- This betrayal is all on account of these men's shallow selfish desires. They sold out the commitment and sacrifice of their wives for a pretty face.
- EX: Young med students take wives during their college years. Their wives are committed and selfless as their husband is spending countless hours completing their studies. Often the women are overburdened with raising the children almost on their own. Finally the husband completes his schooling, begins to work bringing wealth and a more stable home life. At this point the doctor meets a younger female receptionist, and decides to leave his wife for her. This receptionist hasn't been there through his hard times, but she is younger and prettier, and that's all that it takes for him to disregard all his wife's sacrifice.

#### \* Avoid shallow relationships

- This divorce was founded on shallow reasons. People with shallow values make shallow decisions.
- For a relationship to last, it needs to be meaningful. A relationship started for meaningful reasons has the potential to continue because of those meaningful reasons.
- A relationship started for shallow reasons, is doomed to end for shallow reasons.
  - A relationship based on fun is only going to last as long as the fun does.
  - A relationship based on appearance is only skin deep.
- If we are going through life as shallow people, we are dooming to end our marriage for shallow reasons.
- Let's aim to rise above shallowness now, to give life to whatever relationship we will have in the future.

#### \* Everything we allow ourselves to be now is what we will be in the future

- If you don't want to be like these shallow men and break a marriage for shallow reasons, you need to be deeper now. And more.
- Flirting / looking around?
- Emotionally addicted to attention from multiple people of the opposite sex?
- Cheating on girlfriend / boyfriend?
- Willingly making decisions that are against your better judgement because you are desperate for someone's attention?

#### \* Broken covenants

- Connection between God's covenant and marriage covenant:
  - The people had already broken their covenant with God.
  - Their covenants with their wives were based on their covenant with God, so if they are profaning their covenant with God, why would they honor their covenant with their wives.
  - Thus they break their covenant with their wives which is a further breaking of their covenant with God.
- The strength of a marriage covenant depends on the strength of their covenant with God.
  - A person is only as committed to you as they are to God.
  - They are not committed to stay loyal to God, you have no assurance that they will be committed to you.

• **2:15**

- Translation of the beginning of verse 15
  - Uncertain translation
    - NASB: *But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring?*
    - ESV: *Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring.*
  - The challenge of the translation
    - Challenge is due to ambiguity of third person pronouns (like in Spanish). Which verbs are referring to God or man?
    - In support of the NASB translation: The man having the Spirit fits the context of the warning to take heed to their own spirit so as not to divorce.
    - In support of the ESV translation: God made us into one. And the unity is a theme in this context (2:10)
  - Significance of each translation
    - NASB: People who have any small scrap of God's Spirit within them would never divorce their wives. One of the reasons is because they are seeking to raise godly children.
    - ESV: God made male and female into one flesh by His Spirit. One of the reasons God designed it to be this way was so that they could better raise godly children.
  - The commonality of the translation
    - The life long committed monogamy of marriage is for the purpose of raising godly children.
    - Either man stays married (NASB), or God designed life long marriage (ESV) to help raise godly children.

\* Family is God's best / preferred design to creating godly people

\* Divorce is treachery to children

- Life long marriage is God's design and the only proper way for children to grow up.
- Divorce is deliberately breaking this plan, robbing your children of this God ordained right, and instead providing them with a life of hurt and confusion.
- If you hope to raise godly children, you need to live a life now that ensures a long meaningful committed relationship to your spouse.

• **2:16**

- God's messages about divorce
  - God's view of divorce
    - Two things that God hates
      1. Divorce
      2. The one who covers His garment with wrong (the one who divorces).
  - God is very against divorce
    - Not only does he hate divorce itself...
    - ...but he also hates those who divorce.



- \* Is divorce acceptable?
    - The Jews thought divorce was acceptable
      - God had given them a certificate of divorce (Deut 24:1-4), so therefore they had come to believe that divorce was lawful for any reason (Mat 19:3).
      - They were focused on the rules of what they could get away with rather than what God actually wanted.
      - They focused on this divorce clause rather than the original plan.
    - Today we might think the same thing
      - Scriptures about divorce:
        - Living a divorced life
          - I Cor 7:11: *but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband.*
          - This passage is telling people to remain divorced if they have already divorced.
        - Infidelity clause:
          - Mat 5:32: *but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*
          - This passage means that divorcing someone on account of their infidelity does not make you responsible for the subsequent adultery after you divorce them.
          - Mat 19:9: *And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.*
          - This passage means that divorcing someone on account of their infidelity gives you lawful right to remarry.
      - Does this make divorce okay.
        - Concerning I Cor 7
          - People might think this means divorce is okay as long as you don't remarry.
          - That's not the case. Divorce is still betrayal and a broken commitment. Adulterous remarriage is just more sin on top of that.
        - Concerning the infidelity clause
          - It is lawful to divorce and even remarry in such cases, but does that mean it's God's desire that all should divorce on account of infidelity?
          - Might God rather us persevere, forgive, and make one flesh again?
          - What has God done for us?
    - In one case divorce is lawful, under no case is divorce a good thing.
      - Divorce is treachery against:
        - God
        - Spouse
        - Children
      - Even lawful marriage can potentially be treacherous to any of these three parties.
      - Let's commit to be loyal spouses and maintain holy marriages.
  - God's warning about divorce
    - Two warnings
      - *Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth (15).*
      - *So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously (16).*
- \* Divorce comes from our spirit
  - Divorce is something that can be anticipated because it comes within.

- As mentioned, divorce is based on shallow selfish desire. These desires come from within.
- We need to taking heed to our desires and discern whether or not they are leading to holiness or selfishness.
- If we are cultivating a selfish spirit in anyway, we can be sure that divorce is around the corner.
- We need to be free from selfishness before marriage, we need to further purge selfishness in our marriage, we need to be on alert to prohibit any selfishness from returning to our marriage.

## Lesson 5: God's Justice (2:17-3:6)

### 2:17: The Nation Accuses God of Being Unjust

#### • 2:17

- You have wearied the Lord with your words
  - Wearied
    - Definition: yaga: to make faint, to make weary from labor.
    - It's as if it's hard work dealing with these Jews especially because of their attitude expressed in their words.
- \* Our attitudes are the significant factor to God
  - God never grows weary of doing great acts of deliverance.
  - God grows weary of the people being so selfish and thoughtless.
- With your words
  - What they said:
    - "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord" = God loves evil doers.
    - "Where are is the God of justice?" = there is abundant evil, but God is doing nothing about it.
    - It is very likely that these were literally phrases they would say amongst each other.
  - Why the said it:
    - Probable that they were more frustrated that things were not going well for them even though they were "righteous" more than they were frustrated that wicked people were prospering.
    - Probable that the injustice they accused God of related to the success of neighboring nations that would sometimes harass the Jews.
- \* Their understanding of justice
  - The justice they desired was for God to come and punish all the wicked nations around them.

- In turn, God would raise the Jews to be a powerful political nation once more.
- This is what they expected the Christ to do, this is what they were waiting for, and since it hadn't happened yet, they were frustrated and accusing God of being unjust.
- They said, "How have wearied Him?"
  - They were so focused on their own "problems" that they were losing sight of God.
  - They continue to be self-centered and thoughtless to the point of being unable to see how they could potentially be at fault in any way.
- \* Thinking and worrying about our "problems" skews our perspective
  - The more we dwell on our own problems, the more we are thinking about ourselves.
  - The more we think about ourselves, the more our vision is skewed so that our own importance blocks out anything else.
  - We soon fail to see how we can be at fault in anyway.
  - This justifies more evil behavior on our part.

## 3:1-4: The Christ is Coming to Bring Justice

### • 3:1:

- Behold
  - They thought God wasn't doing anything to bring justice against evil doers.
  - Here God is going to relate to them His plans for justice.
- The messenger:
  - I will send My messenger
    - Messenger
      - Same word that is sometimes translated as angel.
      - Used to refer to prophets (Hag 1:13).
    - He will be sent by God in the future.
  - He will clear the way before Me
    - Yahweh is coming
      - Messenger is sent before Yahweh to clear His path.
      - This signifies that Yahweh Himself will come after this messenger.
    - To bring justice
      - In the context, Yahweh will come to bring justice.
      - In their minds, this justice would be the destruction of neighboring nations.
- Parallel passage
  - Two passages
    - Mal 3:1: *I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me.*
    - Isa 40:3: *A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."*
  - These are talking about the same thing
    - The word "clear" and "prepare" are the same Hebrew word.
    - The NT signifies that they speak of the same thing (Mk 1:2-3).

- They say virtually the same thing (a messenger is clearing the way for Yahweh).
- The Lord
  - The word “Lord”
    - This is adonia = master. Used of God and men.
    - This is not the word Yahweh.
  - The Lord you seek will come to His temple
    - After the messenger, the Lord will come.
    - He will enter His temple, as if to judge.
- The messenger of the covenant
  - The covenant
    - God had promised a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34)
    - They were waiting for this covenant to come.
  - He is coming
    - After the messenger came to clear the way for the Lord, then a messenger of the covenant would come to bring this new covenant.
    - They might see this new covenant connected to the rebuilt political nation.
- \* The “Lord” and “messenger of the covenant” are the same person
  - “Lord”
    - This means master.
    - It is used of God, but doesn’t necessarily mean God.
    - It’s used of men, but also of the Christ (PS 110:1).
  - Parallel statements
    - The two statements
      - And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple.
      - And [even] the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming.
    - The parallels
      - The lord = the messenger of the covenant
      - Whom you seek = whom you delight
      - Will suddenly come = behold He is coming
  - The lord = the Christ
    - Waiting:
      - They were waiting for the Christ.
      - The lord is the Christ.
    - Seek / delight
      - They were seeking and delighting in the coming of the Christ to bring justice.
      - They certainly weren’t seeking and delighting in God, as is evident in this book.
- \* NT fulfillment of this passage
  - The messenger is John (Mat 11:10; Mk 1:2-4).
  - The lord who came after John the baptist is Jesus (Mk 1:7-8).
  - Jesus is the lord who came into His temple
    - Jesus came into His temple
      - Cleansed His temple (Mat 21:12-13).
      - Built His new temple (Jn 2:19-21; Mat 16:16; Eph 3:19-22)
  - Jesus is the messenger of the new covenant (Lk 27:20)

- \* This passage shows the divinity of Christ
  - The Lord will come to His temple
    - The temple belonged to God.
    - If Jesus is the Lord who enters His temple, then He is God Himself.
  - Jesus is Yahweh
    - Mal 3:
      - The messenger was preparing the way for “Me”.
      - The one speaking was Yahweh.
      - The one John was preparing the way for was Jesus, therefore, Jesus = “Me” = Yahweh
    - Isa 40:
      - The messenger was clearing the way for YHWH.
      - John was clearing the way for Jesus.
      - Therefore Jesus = Yahweh

• **3:2-4:**

- Who can handle the coming Christ?
  - Parallel statements:
    - Who can endure the day of His coming?
    - Who can stand when He appears?
  - Significance:
    - When the Christ comes to bring justice, who will be able to handle it?
    - After He brings justice who will be left?
- The work of the coming Christ
  - What He would do:
    - Refiner’s fire: He will come with fire to burn out impurities.
    - Fuller’s soap: He will come to wash away sin.
    - After He refines and washes, will you be left?
  - Who He was going to do it to:
    - To the sons of Levi.
    - We have read about the evils and wickedness of the Levites in this book. The Christ is coming to bring justice against them to purge these impurities from them.
    - The Levites are the leaders of the nation. By addressing the leadership, He is also addressing the entire nation of Jews.
- The purpose of His work
  - Purify
    - The Christ will remove the evil to purify His people.
    - With the present evil, they were as worthless as refuse (Mal 2:3).
    - After they have their evil removed, they will be as valuable as gold.
  - So that they can present offerings in righteousness
    - Wicked offerings
      - They were wicked, so all their offerings were wicked.
      - They were offering defiled offerings.

- Even if the sacrifices themselves were not defiled by physical blemish, the people's spiritual blemishes would still defile the offerings.
- Righteous offerings
  - After the evil is purified from their hearts, they are no longer defiled.
  - Their offerings will not be defiled, but righteous.
- To make the offering pleasing to the Lord
  - Their offerings would be pleasing to God, so He will accept them.
  - The offerings being accepted signifies the offerer himself being accepted.

\* Different expectations

- The Jews were focused on the sins of the world around them and expected the Christ to punish them.
- Instead the Christ comes to address their own sins, and purge His own nation.

\* Christ solves the problems of this book

- The Christ solves all the problems in this book.
  - They were not making righteous offerings (1:7, 8, 12, 14, 13)
  - They were not acceptable to God (1:9, 2:1-3, 9, 12)
- Because of His work
  - The offerings are acceptable
  - And the people are acceptable

\* Justice starts with us

- The Jews had different expectations
  - They expected the Christ to come and bring justice and destroy everyone else.
  - Instead, the Christ was going to come and bring justice to His own people
- If we want justice, we need to first focus on ourselves.
  - If God brought justice now, we would be lost.
  - We need to first be justified so we can endure the day of His coming.
  - Let's be patient with others and pray for their justification rather than punishment.

\* Justice or justification

- Different expectations
  - The people wanted justice against the other nations, instead He justifies His own nation.
  - Rather than punishing the other nations for their sins, He purifies and justifies the nation for their own sins.
- Christ came to bring justice, by first justifying
  - Christ comes, but rather than giving us the justice we deserve for our own sins, He takes the justice, so He can justify us.
  - The justice Jesus brings is justifying His own people so that they can be acceptable to God once more.

\* If we want justice, we need to desire for Jesus to bring justice in our own lives

- The justice here is the removal of evil from His own people.
- If we want justice, that's the justice we need to desire.

• 3:5

- Then God will judge the wicked people.

\* After justification comes judgement

- After Jesus justifies His people, He then comes to bring justice on the wicked.
- We either receive the justification or the justice.

• 3:6

- God does not change
  - He has a purpose to execute righteousness for His people.
  - Despite their sin, He has not given up on this plan.
  - They only reason they haven't already been destroyed is because He refuses to change His mind and give up on His plan.

\* The only reason we are not yet destroyed is because of God's patience.

## Lesson 6: Tithes & Offerings (3:7-3:12)

### 3:7-12: Nation Condemned for Not Tithing

• 3:7

- The problem:
  - Since they days of their fathers, they have...
    3. Turned aside from statutes.
    4. Not kept the statutes
- The solution
  - Return to me and I will return to you.
    - Even after generations of rebellion, God still wants the same thing: repentance.
    - God wants their repentance so that He can have a relationship with them.

\* Repentance is necessary for us to have a relationship with God.

- We often expect God to come to us and fix everything for us without us making any changes whatsoever.
- If God did that, He would be supporting not us, but our sinful lives, and thus sin itself.
- God comes to far as to take our sins away, but God is not going to come any farther so as to support us in our sin.
- We need to draw near to God with the desire to be free from sin, and He will come to us to grant us that freedom.

- \* A good deal:
  - Repentance is a very good deal for having a relationship with God.
  - We don't have to do any great good thing to make God desire us. He already does, even in our sinful state.
  - We don't have to make up for all the past evil that we've done. We just need to commit to stop doing it.
  - We complain about repentance being burdensome and how we have to do "so much" for God. The truth is, repentance is such a good deal, and our refusal to even give God that show just how rebellious we really are.
  
- How shall we return?
  - Their response to such a generous offer is the usual thoughtless ignorance and profession of innocence.
  - They were so self centered that they could not have considered how they had left God in any way.
    - This thoughtlessness is the result of rebellion and is a sinful attitude added to their sinful actions.
    - Furthermore, they will never repent as long as they as long as they have such false confidence in their ignorance.
  
- **3:8**
  - How they need to return:
    - Will a man rob God?
      - "Rob": qaba (kaw-bah) also translated "defraud". It's as if they are trying to trick and deceive God. Similar to the swindlers in 1:14.
      - This is stated as an obviously heinous act that we couldn't imagine anyone daring to do.
    - Yet you are robbing me
      - Though they considered themselves innocent
      - Yet, hey were actually guilty of this inconceivable act.
    - In tithes and offerings
      - They were robbing God by not properly tithing
      - Tithing:
        - Tithe: maaser; from Hebrew word eser meaning "ten".
        - Command for tithing: a tithe of all the land belongs to God. If you want part of your tithe back, you pay a fifth as an additional charge (Lev 27:30-33).
        - Reasons for tithing: to support the Levites (Num 18:21), and the poor (Deut 14:28-29).
    - How does not tithing = robbing God?
      - God gave them everything that they had.
      - He declared that a tenth was holy to Him, and He demanded they dedicate that to God to show gratitude, faith, obedience, and for the function of supporting the Levites in their work.
      - They were not willing to return to God what was His. Since it wasn't theirs in the first place, unlawfully keeping it is like robbing God.
      - Or they would cheat and give the wrong amount in return as if to trick and deceive God.



- EX: not paying federal taxes.

\* Tithing is the offering

- As Christians, we aren't commanded to tithe, but a parallel command is the collection of the saints used for physical needs in God's spiritual kingdom.
- That is how we support the work in our kingdom.

\* Tithing is not the offering

- Though the offering is parallel to tithing, it is NOT the same thing as tithing.
- Some major differences are (I Cor 16; II Cor 8-9):
  - Purpose: for needy saints and evangelism, rather than supporting the work of the Levites.
  - Volition: the offering is voluntary rather than obligatory.
  - Amount is not specified: God has left it to the heart of the individual to determine the quantity of the gift rather than placing a set amount.
  - The generous heart is the focus more than the specific quantity given.
- The offering is not tithing just as the Sunday is not the sabbath.

• Their response: How will we return?

- As is usual, they were so thoughtless as to how they could possibly be guilty of robbing God.
- Yet, they were not properly tithing. If they were thoughtful they could've figured that out.

\* Checklist religion

• The Jews:

- Why couldn't the Jews see their guilt?
- They didn't really care about God, but they knew they had to keep His religion.
- They would do most of the commands, some of the time, but certainly fall short of legitimate obedience.
- Since they didn't care about God, their semi-obedience was sufficient to claim that they were following the religion.
- This is what justified them in their own eyes.

• God:

- Yet God wasn't pleased.
- He had finally taken out the great evil (they were no longer worshipping idols).
- He had gotten them to be somewhat obedient (semi-keeping the Law long term).
- But He wasn't satisfied until He had their faith (genuine care, desire, affection, and true submission). It is clear they didn't have this yet.

• Us:

- It's not enough for us to remove the "great" sins, and start being "religious". Our faith is what saves us.
- Faith is genuine service and obedience to honor the God to whom we are grateful and love.
- Too often we are stuck in religion we don't really care about.
  - We aren't actually keeping our religion.
  - God isn't pleased with that religion.

- However, we are self-satisfied and unlikely to truly repent because we see ourselves as being obedient.
- This checklist religion continues long term.
- We need to wake up, and genuinely love the Lord with true submission and love.

\* Thinking you are innocent doesn't mean you are innocent

- We don't offer God proper repentance, and yet we still think things will work out. How? We have been deceived.
  - Eph 5:6: we allow others to deceive us
  - I Jn 1:8: we deceive ourselves
- By ignoring or justifying our sin, we deceive ourselves into being innocent, and then, if we feel innocent, we must actually be innocent; however, how we view ourselves doesn't determine our innocence.
  - I Cor 4:3-5: *But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.*
- God is the one who will judge you. You can deceive yourself into feeling innocent, but you can't trick God into thinking you are falsely innocent.
- The only answer is to genuinely repent.

• 3:9

- The result of their sin:
  - Cursed with a curse
    - Repetitive to prove a point? Or just Hebrew language?
    - Present tense
      - They are already cursed, and suffering from this curse.
      - They have stopped serving God because they see themselves as suffering, and yet it is their lack of obedience that has caused their suffering in the first place.
  - The curse
    - God has already declared a curse on those who try to deceive Him and withheld Him what is due (1:14).
    - We see in 3:11 that the curse is related to farms and crops.
    - This is similar to the very first curse (Gen 3:17-18).
    - By not sowing to God, they have reaped a curse rather than blessing.
    - Sin is the source of all curses and afflictions.
- The whole nation of you
  - The whole nation was guilty.
  - So the whole nation was cursed.

• 3:10

- A call to repentance:
  - What they need to do:
    - Bring the whole tithe

- To the storehouse
  - This food would be stored.
  - The tithe is not an offering to be burned, but rather an offering to be collected and used for functional purposes.
- That there may be food in my house.

\* Why does God desire food in His house?

- Is it for a lack of food?
  - No. The Lord provides and makes all food. He gives the people all their food. He gets back a small portion, and then He gives even *more* in return.
  - If God just wants lots of food He didn't make a very good arrangement.
- Functional use:
  - For Levites
  - For the poor.
- As testimony of faith
  - What God desires is...
    - Faith
    - Obedience
    - Generosity
- The offering is the same
  - What we offer is for a functional purpose of serving the saints.
  - The heart that gives is what God is looking for.
  - Phi 4:15-18: *You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*
- Test God
  - Not a test by challenging God
    - This isn't a test doubting God to see if He exists.
    - This isn't commanding God to fulfill our wishes to prove His existence and faithfulness.
  - A test by obeying
    - This is God telling His people to obey His will and see if it works.
    - He tells them to test His promises to see if He is faithful to His word.
- The result of obedience:
  - What God will do:
    - Open the windows of heaven.
      - All good things come from heaven, and they are up there waiting.
      - Simple obedience is how we access this abundant grace.
  - Pour out a blessing until it overflows.
    - It will not just be adequate.
    - It will be poured out in abundance so that there is not more room.

• 3:11

- Rebuke the devourer
  - Rebuke
    - In 2:3, God was going to rebuke their offspring (literally “seed”) for not honoring His name.
    - With their repentance, God is going to rebuke the things that threaten their seed.
  - The devourer
    - Likely locust (Joel 1:4, “devourer” = “eaten”; same Hebrew word)
  - Result of rebuking the devourer
    - It will not destroy the fruit of the ground.
    - The vines won’t cast their grapes: this refers to harsh winds, or cold that cause the grapes to fall off the vine before ripening, and thus becoming spoiled.

#### \* Test God by obedience

- It was hard for them to give up their tithes.
  - They were afraid of not having enough.
  - They didn’t want to part with the blessings they already had.
  - Tithing seemed to be counterproductive and something they could not afford.
- True faith is obeying God’s commands especially when they seem counterproductive.
- This is when we test God’s word to see if it is true.
  - To the Jews: as a political and physical nation, He promised them physical blessings to accompany their obedience (Deut 28:1-6; 12).
  - To us:
    - We are not a political or physical nation, so He hasn’t promised to send us material blessings in abundance as the result of our obedience, but He has made some great blessings concerning material and physical things.
  - Promises:
    - Mat 6:33: *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
    - Mat 10:28-31: *Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.*
    - Rom 8:28: *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*
    - Heb 13:5: *for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.*
    - Mat 10:28-31: *Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.*
  - There will be times when obeying God’s word seems like it will hurt us. In those times we need to test God’s word to see if it’s true. Obey it, and trust that God will work all things out for those who love Him.

#### \* The challenge of tithing

- Reasons the Jews didn’t want to tithe:

- They didn't want to tithe because they feared they wouldn't have enough.
- Or they were greedy for more.
- Reasons we don't want to give to God:
  - We don't think we have enough to give.
  - We are greedy and want to hold on what we have.
  - We are trying to get more.
  - Ultimately, we are selfish and think that giving to God is going to keep us from having the things that we want.
- We can't let greed keep us from giving to God what is His.

\* Stealing doesn't pay

- We withhold from God for the purpose of personal gain.
- It doesn't help us. It instead hurts us.
- We lose what we do have, and don't gain the things that we need.
- We need to realize it's not worth it.

\* We need to be more generous; feel bad when you're overly spending money on self

- Save up to give to God.
- Save up to give to others in need.
- Stop spending your money just because you have it.
  - It is completely wrong and foolish to spend money on selfish material things when we don't have the money in the first place. This is greedy and covetous.
  - It is also wrong to selfishly spend money even if you do have it. It's not your money. It's God's. You don't have the right to spend it any way you want. You are obligated to be giving and sharing, but if you are busy spending it on yourself, how can we do that? We should feel guilty the more useless things we spend our money on.

\* Prophetic of God pouring out His spirit

- Here in Malachi...
  - Open the heavens.
  - God will *pour* out blessings on the land.
- When Jesus was baptized...
  - The heavens opened up
  - The Spirit came upon Him.
- This is symbolic of what Jesus will do for us.
  - He opens heavens to us
  - Pours the Spirit upon us.
    - Many passages of God pouring His Spirit on dry land to bring life
      - Isa 44:3-5: *'For I will **pour out water on the thirsty land** and streams on the dry ground; I will **pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing** on your descendants; And they will spring up among the grass like poplars by streams of water. 'This one will say, 'I am the Lord's'; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to the Lord, 'And will name Israel's name with honor.'*
      - Acts 2:33, 38-40.
- In Christ we have access to God through His forgiveness, and His Spirit and grace in abundance to give us more than what we need to be pleasing to Him.

- **3:12:**
  - How others will see them:
    - Blessed
    - Delightful land
  - This is compared to how the nations will view Esau in 1:4.

## Lesson 7: God's Justice Pt. 2 ( 3:13-4:6)

### 3:13-15: The Nation's Arrogant Words

- **3:13**
  - The accusation: “Your words have been arrogant against Me”
    - Arrogant
      - Lit = strong, i.e. bold
      - You have to be arrogant to speak so boldly to God.
      - Hence, these bold words would be inherently arrogant.
    - Against
      - Not only are they bold words, they are bold words against God.
      - They are accusing and speaking against God.
  - The response: “How have we spoken against You?”
    - They aren't aware of speaking these bold words.
    - Once more, they exhibit ignorance that is rooted in indifference and rebellion.
    - This is the seventh and final time they respond to God's accusation against them with a questioning how they have done that.
- **3:14**
  - The arrogant words
    - Two reasons why “it is vain to serve God”
      5. God doesn't bless good people
        - Their words: “*what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts?*”
      - The hypocrisy in their words:
        - They haven't kept His charge.
        - They have mourned (2:13-14), but it is evident they were mourning for their undesirable circumstances rather than their sins because they weren't repenting. This kind of mourning is useless.
- **\* Useless mourning**
  - Mourning for the consequences.
  - Mourning to atone for our sins.

- We think “feeling bad” is what justifies us.
- We think “feeling bad” replaces the need to repent.
- This kind of mourning is called earthly sorrow and is useless
  - II Cor 7:10: *For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

• 3:15

6. God blesses wicked people

- Their words:
  - “We call the arrogant blessed”: though they are arrogant against God, He still blesses them.
  - “Doers of wicked ...
    - Are built up”: God builds and strengthens wicked people as they do wicked things.
    - Test God and escape”: the doers of wicked do not receive punishment for their evil deeds.
- The implications of their words: God is unjust
  - He doesn’t love “good people” (Mal 1:2). He doesn’t keep His promises to protect and care for His people.
  - He supports wickedness by blessing wicked people.
- The irony of their words:
  - They were mad at God for blessing arrogant people, and allowing those who test God to escape.
  - They were arrogant against God (3:13), and they were testing God (2:17: “*where is the God of justice*”), and yet God was blessing them and letting them escape for their sins. Even more, they were mad at God for not blessing them *more* than He already was.
  - They continue to show just how very clueless they are about their own sins and position before God. This is the result of their rebellious indifference and the true face of their vain religion.

\* Wake up and realize you’re wrong

- We need to be in the word so we can see our failures.
- We need to stop deceiving ourselves and believing in the deceptive words of others.
- This “ignorance” and “deception” is really just deliberate rebellion and will not save us.

\* During “suffering” it is easy to think that God is unjust

- Our thoughts: “God is not fair because He’s allowing me to suffer too much. I don’t deserve this because I’m a good person. I haven’t done anything wrong. God should be giving me these certain things I want.”
  - The truth is:
    - Our suffering is not too great (II Cor 4:17).
    - We are still being blessed during our suffering.
    - We are being blessed during suffering in spite of our previous sins.
    - We are being blessed during suffering even though God owes us nothing. Absolutely nothing is due to us.

- \* Grumbling against God is sin
  - We can call out to God and question Him in challenging times, but complaining and speaking against God is blasphemous.
  - Our complaints against God have accusative and blasphemous implications.
  - We need to consider what we are saying, and what does it really mean. When we complain about a particular circumstance, what are we really saying about God?

## 3:16-18: Those Who Feared the Lord

### • 3:16

- Those who feared the Lord
  - Who were they?
    - Descriptions of them in this text:
      - “Feared the Lord” (2x): this is what the nation needed to do, and what God was calling them to do (3:5, 4:2).
      - Esteemed His name: this is exactly the opposite of what the nation was doing (1:6, 12), and is exactly what God was calling the nation to do (1:11, 14, 2:2, 5, 4:2).
    - A faithful remnant that responded to Malachi’s prophecy
      - They feared and esteemed the Lord enough to accept this rebuke and repent.
      - They responded exactly as Malachi called them to and just as they needed to. This fear and esteeming of God’s name is what the nation needed most.
  - They spoke to one another
    - This remnant heard Malachi’s prophecy and saw that it was true.
    - The implication is that they spoke to one another about the changes they needed to make, and encouraged one another to repent.
- The Lord
  - Gave attention: *Immediately* God notices and focuses on these few who are willing to humble themselves.
  - Heard it:
    - He was taking the time to listen to their words.
    - He was listening to what they were saying to each other, even before they were praying to God directly about these things.
    - Listening implies that He was approving and accepting their words with the purpose of acting upon them.
- The book of remembrance
  - Who needs to remember?
    - The book was prepared before God: implication by God’s ordination, thus God support this book and its contents.
    - He is the one having this information so he can “remember it”.
  - What needs to be remembered?
    - It was written “for those who fear the Lord and esteem His name”.
    - It was written to remember who these people are, that God can bless them in the future (3:17).



- Similar concept in the NT
  - This is similar to books in Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 15, 21:27
  - Rev 21:26-27: *and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*
  - Luke 10:20: *Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.*

### • 3:17

- They will be mine
  - This book is about how the Jews complaining that God wasn't accepting them (1:2, 2:13), but the reason He wasn't accepting them was because they were profaning His name (1:8-9).
  - Here we see that He accepts those who fear His name.
    - This is proof that God *is* willing to accept His people (the problem is the fault of the Jews, not God).
    - This is an example of *who* God is willing to accept: those who fear His name.
      - The way we are accepted by God is by fearing His name.
      - It's not enough to ritualistically carry out physical tasks. To be accepted, it is a matter of a humble and submissive heart and mind.
    - This (fearing God) is the solution to the problems (not being accepted by God) that the Jews were facing in this book.

- \* How quickly God accepts those who fear Him
  - As soon as they feared Him, God accepted them.
  - We know that God is willing to accept us.
  - It is only necessary to have the right heart and mind.

- \* If we deceive ourselves, we will never be accepted
  - As long as we continue to be arrogant and assume our innocence and God's guilt, we will never be accepted.
  - There is no benefit lying to ourselves to establish our innocence in our own minds when being innocent before God is what is needed most.

- On the day...
  - Notice the future tense of the phrase "they *will* be mine. Those written in the book of remembrance were recorded so that they would be God's possession in the future.
  - There is a specific day coming in which God will make them His possession.
- Prepare my own possession
  - Other translations:
    - Prepare = make: they are not His possession as they are at the present time. He's going to have to do something to prepare them and make them to be His possession.
    - Possession = special treasure: they will be valuable to God, they will be His exclusively.
  - God already made His own special possession
    - God already made the Israelite nation to be His special possession at Mt. Sinai.

- Ex 19:5: *Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. ' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.*
- Deut 7:6: *For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*
- However, it's something He's going to do again in the future.
  - The physical nation was destroyed and sent into captivity. It was as if for a moment, God had rejected His special possession.
  - They have returned from captivity, but without a complete restoration of the nation. It was as if they were still waiting to be forgiven and accepted by God, and made into His special holy nation once more.
  - God was leaving the physical nation in a debilitated state to reveal that the physical nation was a failure, and there was something else greater to come.
- God is going to make a new spiritual nation
  - Just like God made the physical nation His own special possession, God was again going to make a new spiritual race to be His special possession.
    - Isa 43:18-21: *Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. "Behold, **I will do something new**, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a **roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.** "The beasts of the field will glorify Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, **to give drink to My chosen people.** "**The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise.**"*
    - I Pet 2:4-10: *And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, **are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: behold, I lay in Zion A choice stone, A precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed. This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone, and, a stone of stumbling and A rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. **But you are A chosen race, A royal priesthood, A holy nation, A people for God's own possession**, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not A people, but now you are the people.*
    - Tit 2:11-14: *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*
  - And those who will be included in this new spiritual nation are those who fear Him.
  - Those who were written in the book of remembrance will be included in this spiritual nation when God establishes it.
- I will spare them
  - Spare
  - Spare = have compassion
  - Because of their sin, the people were not worthy to be God's special possession.

- So in order for them to be His possession, He is going to need to be compassionate and spare them the penalty of their sin.
- He will choose to spare those who fear Him.
- As a father spare a son that serves him
  - A father has an irrational desire to be merciful to his son, regardless of what he did, simply because he is his son, and he loves him.
  - This is God's attitude towards us (Lk 15). He is desiring to have mercy on us in spite our sins because He loves us.
  - How does God spare us?
    - Ironically He spares his sons from the penalty of their sin by not sparing His own son the penalty of our sins (Rom 8:32).
    - We can be God's special possession because He spare us from our sin by sending Jesus to the cross.

### • 3:18

- You will again distinguish
  - Distinguish whom?
    - Between righteous and wicked.
    - Between the one who serves God, and the one who doesn't.
  - You will distinguish
    - You = the Jews.
      - They thought God wasn't blessing the righteous any extra, nor punishing the wicked.
      - So they saw all people, whether righteous or wicked, as being the same.
    - God was going to bring justice
      - The justice that God was bringing was justifying His own people by Jesus Christ, so that they could be His special possession.
      - After doing this, then the nation will see that God is treating the righteous differently than the wicked.
      - Then the people themselves will also be able to distinguish the difference.

## 4:1-5: The Day is Coming

### • 4:1

- The day: the same day as when He makes His own special possession.
- Two things done on that day
  1. For the arrogant and the evil doer
    - They accused God of doing nothing about the arrogant and evil doers (3:15). Here God is saying what He will do to them
    - The wicked will burn
      - The wicked will be like chaff, and the day will be like a burning furnace.
      - It will set them ablaze.
      - It will burn branch and root (all of them).
    - Foreshadowing

- Consider the words of John the Baptist concerning the work of the Christ:
  - Mat 3:10: *The axe is already laid at the **root of the trees**; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is **cut down and thrown into the fire**.*
  - 3:11-12: *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and **fire**. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but **He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire**.*
- The Christ was coming to burn away the evil doers.

• 4:2

2. For those who fear God's name
  - These are His special possession (3:16).
  - What God will do for them on that day
    1. The sun of righteousness will come with healing on its wings
      - The sun, rather than burning, will heal.
      - It will heal them by making them righteous.
    - Foreshadowing
      - The Christ is the sunrise that will heal us.
      - God sent John to help prepare His people to be His possession by teaching them to receive the healing sunrise of salvation. Consider Zachariah's prophecy concerning His son, John the Baptist.
        - Lk 1:76-79: *And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For **you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways**; To give to His people the **knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins**, because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the **Sunrise from on high will visit us, to shine** upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*
      - Jesus heals through forgiveness
        - I Pet 2:24: *and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*
        - Acts 10:38: *You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*
2. You will skip like calves from the stall
  - They will be young and reborn full of hope.
- Foreshadowing
  - Acts 3:8: *With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.*
  - Acts 8:39: *When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.*

• 4:3

3. Tread down the wicked
  - Rather than being oppressed by the wicked, you shall tread them.
  - They will be ashes because God has already conquered and burned them. We in victory march over them.
  - Foreshadowing
    - Lk 10:19: *Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.*

- Rom 16:20: *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*
- On the day I am preparing
  - All these things are determined to happen on an appointed day in the future.
  - God is preparing the day to:
    1. Make His own special possession
    2. Burn the wicked.
- 4:4
  - Remember the Law: this is what they were supposed to be doing as they anticipated all these upcoming events.
- 4:5
  - Elijah
    - God is going to send another prophet like Elijah in the future.
    - John the Baptist is this prophet.
      - He was like Elijah
        - Wilderness:
          - I Kings 19:4: *But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die.*
          - Mat 3:1: *Now in those days John the Baptist \* came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea.*
        - Clothing:
          - II Kings 1:8: *They answered him, "He was a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite.*
          - Mat 3:4: *Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.*
      - John denies that he is Elijah
        - Jn 1:21: *They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he \*said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No.*
        - They thought that the literal body of Elijah would return. This is evident in the Septuagint translation it states "Elijah the Tishbite".
        - John denies that he is literally Elijah.
      - NT statements that John is Elijah
        - Lk 1:16-17: *And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*
        - Mat 11:14: *And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.*
        - Mat 17:10-13: *And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.*
    - Elijah is also the messenger in Mal 3:1
      - Mat 11:10: *This is the one about whom it is written, Behold, I send MY messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You.*

- Before the coming great and terrible day
  - This prophet would come before the great day mentioned in this prophecy.
  - The day when the Christ would justify His people, and destroy the wicked.
  
- **4:6**
  - He will restore the hearts of the fathers to the children
    - This is a challenging and ambiguous phrase.
    - Luke explains it more: *and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous* (Lk 1:17).
    - It seems to refer to the generic repentance necessary to be ready for the kingdom.
      - Mat 3:2: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
      - Mat 3:6: *and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.*
      - Mat 3:8: *and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.*
  
  - So that He will not come and smite the land with a curse
    - God cursed the land after the first sin
      - Gen 3:17: *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you.*
    - God cursed the land with a flood / God promised to not curse the ground again
      - Gen 8:21: *The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.*
    - It was prophesied that Noah would free us from the curse of the ground
      - Gen 5:29: Now he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed.
    - Jesus is the descendant of Noah that frees us from the curse of the sin.
    - John the Baptist comes before Jesus to turn people from their sins so that they will not need to be cursed for their sins.