

Malachi and the Middle

A study of the final book of the Old Testament and brief overview of the Intertestamental Period

Chapter 2

“And now this admonition is for you, O priests. ² If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name,” says the LORD Almighty, “I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honor me. ³ “Because of you I will rebuke your descendants; I will spread on your faces the offal from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it. ⁴ And you will know that I have sent you this admonition so that my covenant with Levi may continue,” says the LORD Almighty. ⁵ “My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. ⁶ True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin. ⁷ “For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction—because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty. ⁸ But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi,” says the LORD Almighty. ⁹ “So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.” ¹⁰ Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another? ¹¹ Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. ¹² As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings offerings to the LORD Almighty. ¹³ Another thing you do: You flood the LORD’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. ¹⁴ You ask, “Why?” It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. ¹⁵ Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, “and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. ¹⁷ You have wearied the LORD with your words. “How have we wearied him?” you ask. By saying, “All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them” or “Where is the God of justice?”

1. What was the problem with the priests? What weren’t they doing which made the sacrifices they offered impure? (v. 1-2) See **Deuteronomy 28:15-20**.
2. Remember the first promise of the Savior? **Genesis 3:15**, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” How does the phrasing of God’s rebuke in v. 3 echo in a terrifying way this promise?

3. What is “offal”? Doesn’t the way this curse is expressed seem to be altogether beneath God’s dignity? What point is the Lord is making?
4. What was different about Levi compared to the priests of Malachi’s day? What kind of guy was Levi? See **Genesis 34:24-26, 31**.
 - God’s covenant with Levi is alluded to a few times in the Old Testament, including here in **Malachi 2:4-6**. What’s the nature of this covenant and to whom does it apply?
 - Turning many away from sin, what higher calling could there be? How do we do it?
5. Consider **v. 7**. Why is it acceptable for one Christian to hold another to a higher standard? Why is it more than fair for those who don’t believe to do the same?
 - What does Jesus say about the person who causes someone else to stumble or fall into sin?
6. Proverbs has much to say about God’s disgust toward those who show partiality in matters of the law. Each minor prophet does as well. Why?
7. What truth about humanity does Malachi reveal in **v. 10**?
8. Why does God so routinely paint idolatry as spiritual adultery (**v. 11-12**)? What happens to the one who does this and leads other to do the same?
 - Why, according to **v. 14**, was God not accepting their offerings?
9. What is the nature of biblical marriage? How does God feel about divorce? What are the biblically allowed circumstances for divorce?
 - Marriage is great, but what makes it also difficult? What’s the value of seeing marriage as a covenant relationship?
 - To the same level as his hatred for divorce, what else does God hate?
10. What overt perversion is detailed in **v. 17**?