

Kings and Prophets 18-02-01

We are here at Grace and Truth Bible Church and we are ready to continue our ongoing study of Kings and Prophets. Tonight we begin the book of Malachi. The book of Malachi, we've covered Ezra and we blew through Nehemiah in a single evening.

I apologize, I know there were people white knuckled gripping and hanging on for dear life last week. But I'm happy to get to this this final book in our study. And you can be turning to Malachi as we take a moment as is our custom to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we're grateful for this time of fellowship, the opportunity to feed our souls and receive instruction through your Holy Spirit from the truth of your word. We pray that as we spend this time together, that each one will be blessed and find guidance and strength for the journey and light on the path from these things that we look at together. As we seek to please you and to glorify our Lord Jesus in our worship, in our fellowship, in our instruction and in our shining a light before the world so that others can see Christ in us and be drawn to those truths that can only come from you.

We ask your blessing on us as we spend this time in Jesus name. Amen. Well, Malachi, as I'm sure you know by now, is from the Hebrew word Malak, which is generally translated angel.

And so this would be my angel or my messenger. Malak was a messenger in general, and God's divine messengers were spirits. He maketh his angel spirits and his messengers a flame of fire.

And this is Malak. So there's been debate and nobody knows the answer. Was this the name of a prophet or is it a title like the preacher in Ecclesiastes? And it doesn't really matter.

He is the author of the book. It comes as the last of a set of 12 books that were organized into what we know as the minor prophets. And the number 12 is significant.

There's been some speculation that the book was somehow artificially created out of some scattered prophecies that an editor gathered together. This, I think, is neither here nor there. I personally think it's humbug.

But it is in our Bibles as the book of Malachi, and that's good enough for me. The interesting connection that it has to the preceding 11 and why I think it is very appropriate to come after Zechariah is you'll remember the structure of Zechariah. The book fell naturally into two halves.

We had chapters 1 through 8, and then we had 9 through 14. And if you look at the book of Zechariah, you find that there is a structural marker at the beginning of chapter 9 that says the burden of the word of the Lord. The burden of the word of the Lord.

And you can just circle that word burden there in Zechariah chapter 9. Then we have the following three chapters, chapter 9, chapter 10, and chapter 11 that fall into a single message. Then at the beginning of chapter 12, notice what you have. The burden of the word of the Lord

against Israel.

This is a new burden. And then you have another three chapter chunk there, 12, 13, and 14. Notice the first words of the book of Malachi.

The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of, this is Bayad, by the hand of Malachi. So there's been speculation of all sorts based on this particular occurrence, the structural marker that somehow this started out in some different form. I think it is simply a wonderful way to see the connectedness of God's word.

And regardless of how it came about, it doesn't really matter. This is how it is. And the book of Malachi is designed to follow Zechariah.

It is designed to be the last book of the minor prophets. It's designed and intended by God to be the close of the Old Testament revelation. And you can see this natural connection that is made.

You really can't separate it from Zechariah because of this wonderful repeated motif. But it is its own book because it comes by the hand of Malachi. It's not part of the book of Zechariah.

It comes in a different way at a different time, at least in terms of writing. Although it is very probably composed and the material comes into being in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, in the prophetic days of Haggai and Zechariah. So you actually have a five-fold witness at the close of the Old Testament canon in the same way that we had the five books of Moses to open it.

Because of the arrangement in the Old Testament, you have the law, the prophets, and the writings. And so in a Hebrew Bible, it doesn't work out this way. But chronologically speaking, if you think about it, the last five books are Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

So what a wonderful symmetry we see in the opening and the closing of this Old Testament covenant, this Old Bible. The Septuagint translates Malachi and calls it his messenger. They change the possessive from the first person to the third person.

And so in Greek, the book is called his messenger. The date we have to infer from the contents. When was it written? And some of the clues that we have begin in chapter one.

And if you look at verse eight, when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? When you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor. And the word for governor there is a Persian word, pakhat, P-A-C-H-A-T. And this tells us that it is from the time after the exile.

Remember, they were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. The Babylonians were overtaken by the Medes. And this quickly becomes the Medo-Persian Empire.

And while they are still under the sway of the Persian kings, Ezra is allowed to return. Nehemiah is allowed to return. But they've absorbed some of these Persian words.

And pakhat is a Persian office. It's kind of like, you know, out here we talk about counties and so on. But when you get back east, or in New Orleans, in Louisiana, they'll talk about a parish.

Well, parish means that you've had a heavy Catholic influence. And we get the word parish from the Catholics because you had a parish priest. And they were priestly territories, so to speak.

Well, in the same way, this word tells us that Malachi is talking to people who know what a pakhat is. So it has to be after the demise of the Babylonians, after the return from exile. The other strong clue we have here is that Edom is not Edom anymore.

And this is going to come up in our first chapter. And I'm going to save the discussion of that. But the Edomites are no longer dwelling in their own territory.

They have been driven out sort of like Israel got driven out. And you'll remember in some of the earlier prophets, we saw the burden of the word of the Lord against various nations surrounding Moab, Ammon, and Edom, and so on. And talking about what would happen to Esau and that they would be driven from the land.

Well, that has been fulfilled in the time of the writing of Malachi. And the Edomites don't live in Edom anymore. And God is going to point that out in this very first chapter.

And this also is something that is pertinent in the post-exilic time. We believe, based on the contents of the book, that the temple is standing. And this is going to be because of the strong condemnation that comes to the priests, and the abuse of the sacrificial system, and the bringing of these blind and lame sacrifices.

There must be an altar. There must be a temple. There must be a priestly system in operation that has been there long enough to establish a pattern of unfaithfulness that calls out God's condemnation.

So this puts it squarely in the time of Nehemiah. Because remember, Ezra is the one who brought back priests, and really tried to get the priestly functions underway, and brought the funding and the implements. So this is why we're studying it chronologically at this time, and why we think that it's appropriate to do so, and why it is fitting that it is the closing book of the Old Testament.

The book itself breaks into six parts. And these have been labeled disputes, or charges. I would call them charges.

God brings six charges against His people who have come back. Now, think about this. What have we seen in the return from the exile? Zerubbabel brings them back.

You have this effort to get the foundation of the temple laid. It goes fallow. Haggai and Zechariah preach, and they say, Look, you've got to get this back underway.

But more importantly, this is a symptom of an underlying problem. Just building the temple is

not going to answer God's charge that Haggai and Zechariah bring. What is the big idea in those books? We studied them chapter by chapter, but what's the single big idea? If you're going to learn the lesson of the judgment in losing your land and being taken into exile, your heart has to be responsive to God.

Not just your hands, not even just your heads, but your hearts. It is not enough to build a house for God. It is not enough to resume the sacrificial system.

It's not enough to come back into the land that God granted to your forefathers. You've got to have a heart that is oriented toward God. This isn't something that you can squeeze in from the outside.

It is something that has to be a desire. It's got to be a felt need. We have to recognize our need for God.

To deny that need is to deny the only possible solution to our problem. And our problem isn't that we don't have enough stuff. Our problem is that we are corrupt.

And those around us are corrupt. And we cannot fix ourselves. We have to be fixed by the one who made us.

And he has done that in a wonderful way. And has expressed his love toward us through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is in prospect.

And remember when we looked at Haggai and we looked at Zachariah, we begin to see the prospect of this healing that is going to come from God. Not through keeping the law. Not through temple observance.

Through God himself being present. Immanuel. So, God is going to bring these charges because Haggai and Zachariah have already spoken.

Their message is clear. And the people have responded with their hands. They have laid the foundations of the temple.

18 odd years later, they finished building the temple. They have repaired the walls. They have returned.

The priests have begun their work. Right? Haggai and Zachariah said, this is all well and good that you do this. But you've got to be motivated properly.

It isn't what you do. It's why you do it. It isn't what you do.

It is how you do it. You can't fool God with externalities. Man looks on the outward appearance.

God looks on the heart. They've known this since the days of Eli. So, God is going to bring six charges in these days after Haggai.

After Zachariah. After Ezra. After Nehemiah.

Actually, probably in the days of Nehemiah would be my estimate. Six charges. In chapter 1, verses 2 through 5, there is a dispute about, there is a difference of opinion between the people and God with regard to God's love.

Let's read this section. The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of my messenger Malachi. I have loved you, says the Lord.

Well, people don't buy that. The people of Israel don't buy that. You say, in what way have you loved us? Now, knowing the situation as you do, what would be the grounds for this objection, this rejoinder? God says, I have loved you.

And they come back and say, how have you loved us? What would they be thinking of? Well, look at all of the trouble we've been having. Look at the Samaritans coming down. Look at Sanballat.

Look at the difficulties we've had having to try to build a wall with a trowel in one hand while we have a sword in the other. And there's been internal disputes. And there's been problems of logistics.

And there have been people who are at odds and people complaining about this, that, and the other. Where is the triumph? Where is Joshua marching in with fire and brimstone from heaven and hail and mighty victories and walls falling down? This has been a whimpering, sidling return to the land instead of the glorious entrance we had the first time. Look at the contrast.

So, you know, if God seems far away, who's got the problem? Well, they say, God hasn't loved us. If God loved us, we would have had a mighty glorious entrance. There would be glory emanating out of our finished temple.

We see no sign of God at all. Where is He? You say, He loves us. I don't see His love at all.

This is the first contention. This is chapter 1, verses 2 through 5. Was not Esau Jacob's brother? God answers, Yet Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.

Even though Edom said, We have been impoverished, we will return and rebuild the desolate places. Thus says the Lord of hosts, They may build, but I will throw down. They shall be called the territory of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever.

Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel. He doesn't just keep promises within the borders. He keeps promises outside.

Now, what is this talking about? Why is Edom singled out? Here's why. You may have heard, and not really known what it was, like me. A name for a people called the Nabateans.

Did you ever hear of the Nabateans? It's Nabat, N-A-B-A-T. Then one of those A-E's that are squeezed together like encyclopedia. The Nabateans.

N-A-B-A-T-A-E-A-N-S. The Nabateans. The Nabateans at one time by historians were thought to be an Aramean people.

Cousins of the Israelites and the Syrians and so on. But further research and archaeology has determined that they are actually an Arab people. Now, what's the difference there? The difference has to do with them being descended from Keturah and Abraham and one of those 17 sons.

And being an Arab tribe, Arabs culturally. And being basically migrant or nomadic dwellers in the desert for a long, long time. But the Edomites got fat and lazy and complacent in their land.

And the Nabateans who once roamed the Arabian desert and would just take their flocks and herds to oases and seasonal migration patterns and so on. There was a growing lack or a lacking growth of water in the desert. And it became harder and harder to sustain that life.

And at the same time they began eyeing the territory of Edom. Which as you know if you look at a map is to the east, southeast and south of traditional Israel. This whole land east, southeast and south of the Dead Sea area if you will.

That's Edom. So basically to cut a long story short, the Nabateans went in, invaded, conquered and drove out the Edomites and took over their land. And this happened in the time of the captivity.

It began happening and it continued. These guys continued to expand and consolidate their gains and began to even make raids into the southern part of what we know as Palestine and elsewhere. But it began and they did the main driving out of the Edomites in the 4th century and late 5th century B.C. And they really began to consolidate and become a power in the late part of the 4th century B.C. And this was known.

And so when God says, if you don't think I love you, will you notice that you are moving back into your land and Jacob's brother Esau's descendants are moving out. And they may think they're going to come back like you are, but they never will. And they never did.

And God says, you may have difficulties and you may have struggles, but you are in your land. I have fulfilled my promise to bring you back after 70 years. And despite your faithlessness and despite many other things, you are in your land.

Edom is not. But this is all important. Why? In the New Testament, when Paul says, Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated in Romans chapter 9 and 10 and 11, and he draws that contrast.

Jacob and Esau represent what? Individuals or nations? Nations. People, groups. And this goes all the way back to the original statement by God before the twins were ever born, which is

something Paul points out.

God tells their mother, Rebecca, two nations are in your womb. And the elder serving the younger and all the rest of that has to do with nations. To take that and co-opt it and try to say that this has to do with election and predestination.

And, you know, some people God foreknows and foreloves and I have foreloved and foreknown and pre-elected and predestined and they're going to be saved and the rest of them are not, is to violate the context both in Genesis and here in Malachi. It is very clear that the context of this claim in Malachi chapter one is directing Judah's attention to Edom's loss of their territory to the Nabataeans, which is current news. It's local.

It's immediate. It's well known. While they are coming in, Edom is being driven out.

They were driven out, but they came back. God says, you watch. You want to know if I love you? You're going to be in your land.

Edom will never be back in their land and the Edomites are no more. So that's the Nabataean question. Now, the second case begins in verse six and goes through chapter two, verse nine.

A son honors his father and a servant honors his master. If then I am the father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my reverence, says the Lord of hosts, to whom? One of the things we always do when we look at scriptural content is, who is it addressed to? Now, the first part is to all of the people, right? Because all of the people have faced great difficulties ever since they came back from the captivity. It has not been easy.

And it has not been glorious. And it has not been a big hallelujah praise song. They've had moments, but you remember they were standing there in the drenching rain.

And they've had struggles and opposition and internal strife, external strife, divisions of opinion. People wanting to dissolve mixed marriages and others who said it was wrong. And great difficulty and dissension.

Now, this second dispute, this second charge or case from God is directed specifically against the priests. That also tells me that this is after the time of Ezra. Because remember, Ezra is the one who brought some more priests back and really got the priestly function going in the recently rebuilt temple.

You priests who despise my name, yet you say, in what way have we despised your name? Now, this is a pretty serious difference of opinion. If you're a priest, what is your job? What is the site of the temple called? The place where I will put my name, God says. It is God's name that is lifted up and memorialized and remembered.

It is God's name that is the center of worship on Mount Zion. They've just rebuilt the temple and resumed worship and offering and sacrifice. And the very guys entrusted with making sure that

that's done right.

What does it mean to despise a thing? To give it short shrift. To not give it the respect that it deserves. To not assign it the weight that it deserves.

It doesn't necessarily mean to find something despicable, to turn up your nose and walk away from it. To despise, in scripture, this particular Hebrew verb means to disrespect. They just use the first syllable of that in our youth culture.

You dis somebody. Disrespect them. Don't give them their props.

Everybody wants to shorten words. I don't know why. It's not like we need to do that, unless you're texting maybe.

But to not give God the honor and respect that is due His name. And His name is His reputation. Who He is to His people.

And these men entrusted with that. What would be the modern equivalent today? If you have pastors and you have teachers who are presenting something other than a God-centered, Christ-centered message from God's word. They are not giving God the honor and the glory that is due His name.

It's not that God needs our applause and He's cranky if people are not constantly wafting adulation in His direction. Why is this important? Does God feel bad if we just don't praise Him enough? Is He sort of insecure and He needs constant... This is the charge of atheists. Poor God.

If people aren't constantly telling Him how great He is, He just gets real cranky and angry. Which I do not want to be standing anywhere near those people when the judgment comes. What is the actual issue? Is it important to God that we remember Him? Or is it important for us to remember Him? What is it that is going to drive the corruption and the sin, the subjectivity, and the tendency to self-centered, self-gratifying motivation? What is going to drive that out of our hearts? This is kind of like, think of addiction.

Just pretend like we're addicted to self-gratification and self-centered self-worship. It's an addiction. We're addicted to ourselves.

We think we are just pretty great. And we should get what we want. We should enjoy what we enjoy.

And anybody that gets in the way... I mean, you haven't lived until you've seen people with that entitlement mentality. You know, where's my government check, etc. So let's pretend like we're addicts, because we are.

So, what is the advice for an addict if they are going to try to abandon a destructive addiction? Let's say it's smoking. Need to quit smoking. Can you just stop? Well, I'll just quit.

Surgeon General says it's bad. Doctor says it's bad. Cancer statistics say it's bad.

I just quit. There is a built-up craving that overrides logic in the same way that crack cocaine and opioids... There's lots of reporting now about the opioid epidemic. If you haven't read about that and seen documentaries about it, look at it.

It is now the biggest scourge in the nation. Opioid addiction. And how is it brought about? Your doctor putting you on pain medicine, promiscuously, and trying to help people that have got chronic back pain, chronic problems, well-intentioned in many cases, but underestimating the addictive power of opioid drugs, and people can't get off of them.

So, we've got this addiction, and you want to try to kick it. But any time the opportunity comes up, logic and reason don't have compelling power over action. You haven't really experienced this until you've experienced it personally, where someone will rob their mother, will pawn their family's stuff, rob their families, take advantage of their families, do anything to get that next substance that they need.

Are they remorseful? Do they feel suicidal when they realize what they've done and how bad they are? Of course. But the knowledge that it's bad is insufficient to stop them in the moment. Drunks can't stop drinking.

Smokers can't stop smoking. And when you get to the more powerful things like opioids and cocaine and other hallucinogenics, it doesn't matter how logical and right and proper and meaningful it may be, when the opportunity comes, it all goes out the window, and you become a creature of impulse, instinct, and get it done. I'll worry about the consequences later.

So, if you're going to get rid of an addiction, if you're going to break an addiction, if you're going to get out from under its power, what do you have to do? It is not enough to sit there staring at a pack of cigarettes on the table saying, don't smoke, don't smoke, don't smoke, don't smoke. It is not enough to say, don't drink, don't drink, sitting there in the bar with people smoking and drinking all around you, saying, I'm not going to smoke, I'm not going to drink, not going to smoke, not going to drink. Willpower will only carry us so far, and it eventually fails and breaks down.

There are people with all kinds of behavioral addictions, gambling addictions, sexual addictions. There are codependency addictions, where people have to be in a relationship, they don't feel comfortable unless they're in a toxic relationship, and you think it just makes no sense. What do you have to do? You have to not only stop the bad behavior, you have to fill that gap with something else.

This is biblical. Change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God. Kojak famously, when he wanted to quit smoking, turned toward Tootsie Pops.

The man spent I don't know how many seasons on television sucking on Tootsie Pops because he didn't want to smoke. Crude but memorable example. To replace that which is toxic with

that which is not toxic and preferably healthy.

Eating bad food, start eating good food. Hanging around with bad people, hang around with good people. Bad habits, bad locations, bad lifestyle, change it, replace it.

Don't just sit there trying not to. Fill that void with something else. All addiction recovery programs recognize and are founded upon that principle.

You have got to do something different. So if the very people who are supposed to be helping you break the addiction are in fact feeding the addiction, and this is why they're trying to sponsor a lot of education programs for doctors in private practice and so on to get them to understand the dangers of the pain medicines they are prescribing because they weren't taught it in school and they are in many cases unwitting accomplices in bringing people to all kinds of bad situations. So they need to be brought around.

Well, this is what God is doing here. In what way have we despised your name? You offer defiled food on my altar and say, in what way have we defiled you? You don't recognize the problem. You cannot turn to a new thing.

You cannot exercise that option. You can't find a solution to a problem that you deny. Look at the big book of AA, Alcoholics Anonymous.

The first thing you must do is recognize that you have a problem you cannot solve yourself and you must look for help from outside yourself. Anybody who doesn't do that can't break an addiction. If you don't recognize the problem, why would you? Oh, I can quit anytime.

I quit for a whole day yesterday. Glug, glug, glug. Puff, puff, puff.

Squirt, squirt, squirt into your vein, whatever it may be. It is self-deception. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

You have to recognize the problem. What is the problem here for the priests? They do not recognize that what they are doing is not only corrupt, evil, and toxic for themselves but they are leading the people astray. They are the leadership.

If they can't figure it out, how are the people going to? Now, it is critically important at this point to notice the grammatical, syntactical reality here. Critically important. Could not be more important to understand this book.

So, let's take a look at just what we've covered so far. We've done the first seven or eight verses here. So, God is speaking in the first person, is He not? I have loved you, yet you say, in what way have you loved us? So, there is a dialogue going on.

God is supplying both sides, right? I say this, but you say, and then He quotes them. And they use the first person plural. God is speaking in the first person singular.

I have done thus and so. I accuse you, second person, of doing bad things. Yet you say, and then there is a quote.

And they speak in the first person plural. We, in what way have we done this? We have done that. We have done this.

We have done that. Clear? So, when you have the first person, it is God speaking. When you have the we speaking, it is the accused.

It is the defendants in these cases, right? Very, very important. Because we're going to scan through here. We'll take up in a couple of subsequent sessions details.

But I want you to get the big picture here, because this completes a circle that we began in Ezra and continued in Nehemiah. And it is going to be closed and accomplished in Malachi. So, the third dispute.

The second dispute is you're offering defiled food on my altar. You see it in verse 7 there. You say, in what way have we defiled you? God says, by saying the table of the Lord is contemptible.

It's not important. It isn't worthy of respect. They have despised God's name by despising God's table, which is the sacrificial system.

When you offer a blind sacrifice, is it not evil? When you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? I'm in verse 8 here. Try offering it to your pakat, your Persian governor. Would he be pleased with you? The same animals that you are willingly offering to the God of the universe who brought you back into your own land, you wouldn't give that to a human that you wanted to impress, but you'll give it to God.

Would he accept you favorably, says the Lord of hosts? So now entreat God's favor that he may be gracious to us while this is being done by your hands. Now, doesn't this seem kind of squirrely? Verse 9. But now entreat God's favor. It sounds like God is talking, but it breaks the pattern.

When God is talking, what person is it in? First person singular. Now entreat God's favor that he may be gracious to us. Who is talking here? The defendants.

These are the bad guys. They are saying, oh, people of Judah, let us entreat God's favor that he may be gracious to us while this is being done by your hands. This is what you are saying, but this is what you are doing.

You see it? There should be quotation marks around this, or you need to add, you say to the people, but now entreat God's favor that he may be gracious to us. Bring more sacrifices. Bring more support.

Remember they weren't paying the tithes, and Nehemiah had to chastise them and say, hey, you guys need to be paying for the support of the priests. This is what they want to say to the

people. Entreat God's favor that he may be gracious to us.

This is the priests and the people talking. God says, you're saying this while you're offering these polluted sacrifices. What sense does that make? You don't really believe that it's important to bring sacrifices so that God would be pleased, or you wouldn't be saying one thing and doing another.

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Do you see it? Do you see it here in verse 9? You have to see it here because there is a huge important section of this book that isn't going to make sense unless you see this here. Does it make sense? God is quoting them, but he doesn't say, you say.

He just quotes them ex nihilo. Will he accept you favorably, says the Lord of hosts. Notice, will he accept you favorably, not will he accept us favorably.

That's no longer quoting. Who is there even among you who would shut the door so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain? You're so unashamed. You don't even hide this behind a screen.

You won't even pull a door shut so that people can't see these pathetic sacrifices that are being offered to God. They're leaving the gate to the temple courtyard open and people can see these pathetic, maimed, blind, deficient animals, which of course makes good human sense. Let's then out the herd.

Let's get rid of the weak and your survival of the fittest. Let's make the herd stronger. Save the best, sacrifice the worst.

And God says, you won't even pull the curtain across this. You don't care if people see that you're dishonoring my name and disrespecting me with these terrible sacrifices. I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts.

I have no pleasure in you. This is God talking here, right? When people are talking about us and we, it's the people being quoted. Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.

You can sacrifice them all you want. It's unacceptable. For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, my name shall be great among the Gentiles.

In every place, incense shall be offered to my name and a pure offering for my name shall be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. Now this is something of a threat. You priests are not honoring my name.

My name is going to be honored among the Gentiles. What does this anticipate? Remember Paul shaking the dust off his feet. We go to the Gentiles, the Lord Jesus.

The children aren't willing to eat the bread, but the crumbs are falling down to the dogs. You profane my name, God says, verse 12. You say the table of the Lord is defiled and its fruit, its

food is contemptible.

You also say, oh, what a weariness, and you sneer at it. Not only are they bringing terrible sacrifices, but they're complaining about having to do it. This is just a, why this sacrificial system makes no sense.

Why are we even doing this? Remember the difficulty Ezra had? He had to turn around and go back to get Levites to even come serve the temple. And the ones that are back there are serving grudgingly and complainingly. They don't recognize the honor that is due God's name.

It doesn't make any sense to them. Wow, we haven't done this in decades upon decades upon decades. They've rebuilt this house, and we're bringing all these flea-bitten, maimed animals in here blind and limping on three legs.

This is ridiculous. Why are we even doing this? You bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick, and then you complain about having to do the offerings. Should I accept this from your hand, says the Lord.

Verse 14. Cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is to be feared among the nations.

And if my own people don't honor it, how can you expect anybody else to honor it? Remember Rahab and the other people who observed what God had done for Israel in Egypt and what He had done for them in the wilderness, and they feared God, and they came and joined Israel? How is God's name going to be honored among the nations when it isn't honored among His own people? And that's a rebuke to us. We need to be sure that we are honoring God in what we say and what we do so that God's name is respected among the nations. Now, O priests, this commandment is for you.

If you will not hear and if you will not take it to heart to give glory to my name, says the Lord of hosts, I will send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. I have cursed them already because you did not take it to heart. What was the message of Haggai and Zechariah? People, take it to heart.

We're not fooling around here. Life is short. You're like the grass that springs up in the morning and withers by evening.

The grass withers, the flower fades. God is eternal. He has given us eternal life.

That life is in His Son for us. Take it to heart. It makes a difference.

The sand has fallen through the hourglass. That's the days of our lives, right? And the sand is not going to fight gravity and go back the other way. The minutes count.

Time is a stewardship. Take it to heart. What you do, do it heartily as under the Lord and not

under men.

How do you redeem the time? The days by default are evil, but you can invest your time in eternity by doing your common tasks, your daily responsibilities, your activities, your thoughts, your fellowship, your conversations. Count when they are invested in eternity. You haven't lost the days.

They're not gone and forgotten. It isn't a vain exercise. It isn't something to complain about.

Well, I went to all that trouble for nothing. It's my favorite Hank Williams Jr. song from back when he was really young. I've got it on an ancient 45.

I went to all that trouble for nothing for you. We are delivered from that. Our present salvation is being delivered out of this present evil age.

Remember that? The first chapter of Colossians were delivered out of this present evil age. Day by day, the time is redeemed. It's invested.

It's in the bank. When you do it from the heart, when you honor God's name, he is a great king. He is our great heavenly father.

We are body of Christ. To forget that, to fritter away our time in fruitless and meaningless pastimes is tragic. God is talking to the priests here.

Who are the priests now? Take your finger and point it at your face. That's the priests. I am a priest.

You are a priest. Are you doing the Romans 12, 1 and 2 sacrifice? Is it a blemished and blind and lame sacrifice? If you were bringing a blind sacrifice, what would that connote by extension? Not seeing what we're supposed to see, not looking at what we're supposed to look at. What does scripture tell us we should be looking at? Looking unto Jesus, the beginner and the ender, the alpha and the omega, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the father.

If we forget that, we're a blind sacrifice. What about a lame sacrifice? I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you walk worthy, a worthy walk, a life that reflects what God has shown us, what God has done for us, what God is going to do for us. Anything else is a waste of time.

Anything else is a blind and lame sacrifice. And when God says here, O priests, look in the mirror. That's us.

O priests, what are you doing to honor God's name? What are you doing to present holy, unblemished sacrifices? What are you doing that makes the nation sit up and take notice and ask you a reason for the hope that is in you? If you spent your day doing anything else, that day

is gone and you cannot get it back ever. Time, unlike space, is moving in a unilateral direction and there is no going back. All we can do is invest what remains to us.

A lot of us, as we get older, we think, boy, you know, if I had to do over again when I was young, I just started putting that money away and let it earn interest and invest it and I'd have a cushy couple of mil in the bank and I could just live off the interest and take vacations and go skiing and oh, wouldn't I have a high time if I only knew then what I know now. Oh, if I could only go back. Well, you can't.

So, let's pretend like we have gone back from the eternal future and suddenly we have popped back into time and we've still got, hopefully, days, weeks, months and years of our lives still to invest. What a blessing! We were in the future and now we're back here and we've still got some life and some time from God we can invest. Let's honor God's name.

Let's bring the sacrifice that He is looking for. Now, just by way of anticipating what we're going to cover next time, I want to show you something here in the next chapter. Oh, priests, if you will not hear, verse 3, I will rebuke your descendants.

I'll spread trash on your faces. The trash of your solemn feasts and you'll be carried out with the trash. That's what it literally says in verse 3. I'm going to smear the trash on your face.

You're indistinguishable from the trash and when they come to pick up the trash and carry it out to the curb, you'll be with it. Then you shall know that I've sent this commandment to you that my covenant with Levi may continue, says the Lord of hosts. My covenant was with him, one of life and peace.

I gave that covenant to him that he might fear me and he did fear me and was reverent before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and equity and turned many away from iniquity.

This is what a priest is supposed to do. This is what you and I are supposed to do. What a wonderful covenant of life and peace and blessing to ourselves and others.

The lips of a priest, that's you and me, should keep knowledge. People should seek the law from his mouth. He is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

He's the Malachi of the Lord of hosts. He's my messenger. But you have departed from the way.

You have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts. How would you corrupt the covenant of Levi? Not doing all the things we just read.

Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people because you have not kept my ways but have shown partiality in the law. Partiality in the law. Interesting phrase.

You're applying parts of the law. It's like saying the Bible is inspired in parts. Well, which parts?

Well, only I can tell you which parts.

I'll tell you what's inspired and what's not. I'll tell you what you should pay attention to and what you should forget. You've shown partiality in the law.

You're picking bits of it. Isn't this what the Pharisees are going to do and what the Sadducees are going to do and what the Sanhedrin is going to do and the chief priests and elders of the people are going to do a few hundred years hence in the days of Jesus and days of the apostles? They're going to be partial in the application of the law. Have we not? Now, look at verse 10.

What happens here? What was in verse 9? I have made you contemptible and base. And we've got our rule here. It's I talking God.

You are the defendants in the dispute, right? What happens when we start hearing we and us? Who's talking? What do we see in verse 9? The defendants are talking. The priests are answering back. The people are answering back, right? Notice in the same way we had in verse 9 of chapter 1, look at verse 10 of chapter 2. Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem.

For Judah has profaned the Lord's holy, which he loves. He has married the daughter of a foreign god. 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.

Now, what's the problem here? Who's talking? Every interpretation I can find of the book of Malachi thinks this is still God talking, and that he is chiming in on the condemnation of these mixed marriages. Married the daughter of a foreign god, verse 11. What's the problem? The person changed.

The speaker changed. God is quoting. Remember now, he's bringing the case against the priests.

Look at verse 13. This is the second thing you priests do. So the first thing they do is they don't honor God's name.

They're bringing polluted sacrifices, and they are not keeping the covenant of Levi to lead the people and teach the people and honor God's name before the people. What are they doing instead? They're using an argument that we all have one father, and God has created us. Why do we deal treacherously with one another? By profaning the covenant of the fathers.

What was the charge in both Ezra and Nehemiah? You're not obeying the law that God gave to Moses way back when he said, don't intermarry with the people of the land. Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah

has profaned the Lord's holy, notice institution is in italics, the Lord's holy, which he loves, he has married the daughter of a foreign God. May the Lord cut off, now the Lord can't be talking when he says, may the Lord cut off, right? Who's talking here? The priests.

The priests, under the leadership of Ezra, and later Nehemiah, have redirected attention from the real problem, which is priests who despise the priestly office, despise the priestly sacrifices, bring these maimed and lame and blind sacrifices, and saying, it's the people that have screwed up. The people, Judah has broken the covenant. What did God just say? Who broke the covenant? Levi.

It's the covenant of Levi that God is talking about. These people say, no, Judah had a covenant, and they've broken it, they've married the daughter of a foreign God. What is, 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.

This was the Ezra Nehemiah thing. This isn't God speaking. This is quoting the priests.

This is the second thing you do. You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, weeping and crying. Remember what they did? They were weeping and crying about the marriages and driving all of these people out.

And God says, this is the second thing you do. You're making a big deal out of these mixed marriages. Now, how do I know that? Keep reading.

God does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, for what reason? Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously. You've dealt treacherously with the wife of your youth.

These ladies from other lands. She is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, having a remnant of the spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring.

Therefore take heed to your spirit and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the Lord God of Israel says he hates divorce. It covers one's garment with violence.

And we saw what that does. You create widows, you create orphans. Therefore take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously.

What Ezra said was a wonderful righteous thing. What Shekinah suggested they do. And everybody agreed.

And Nehemiah even, he starts so well and he runs so well. And then toward the end, he buys into this thing. Starts plucking out beards and knocking people around.

God says you cover your garments with violence when you do this. And you see violence from Ezra and violence from Nehemiah. The only time you ever see any violence from Nehemiah is

when this marriage issue comes up.

The only time you see violence from Ezra is when this marriage issue comes up. God says your garments are covered in violence. You're breaking the covenant with the wife of your youth.

God made you one at the point that you married her. That covenant is made. God hates divorce.

You don't break that covenant once it's made. For this reason certainly. You have wearied the Lord, verse 17, with your words.

Yet you say in what way have we wearied Him? In that you say everyone who does evil is good. Everyone who drives away their wife and their children because they're not of Israelite stock is good in the sight of the Lord and He delights in them. Or where is the God of justice? It is unjust what they're doing.

And it's detailed here. This quotation. And we'll take a further look at that.

But what do we draw by way of interpretation and application from this? We are the priests. And we need to be careful in the commitments that we make that we honor them. If you're an employee and you agree to work, you need to be there doing your work and being on time, knowledgeably, diligently, doing what you're supposed to do when you're supposed to do it.

Not sowing seeds of discontent. Not undermining. If you can't stay in a place because you disagree with how it does what it does or who does what when and where and why, you need to leave.

Many of us have done this in the past. If you're an employer, you deal fairly. You do what you do as under the Lord.

This is the master and slave motif in terms of those who have authority and those who are under authority being diligent and doing what they do as under the Lord. If you can't do it that way, you need to get yourself into a situation where you can. You do not bring disrespect to the name of the Lord by being a Christian who is not a good worker.

This is keeping covenant. If you are in a marriage covenant, then it is important to honor each other as under the Lord, remembering what that entails. God has no patience with those who break covenant with him or with each other.

To the extent that it is up to you, live peaceably with all men. To the extent that it is up to you, there should be peace. There should be benefit.

We should be sacrificial to self and beneficial toward others. We should love our enemies. We should do good to those who hate us.

We should pray for those who spitefully use you. And if it comes time to separate, it should

be as amicable and as nonviolent as possible. It should not end up being like these guys who are fair weather friends.

They marry these women, have children with them, and then Shekinah speaks up and suddenly they're all driven out of the land. If you want to try to think about the implications of what this might have for our current policy on immigration, feel free. I'm not going to go there.

But you do have to look at what God says about people who enter into something in good faith. Whether that situation exists or not may be a matter of observation and interpretation. But if we enter into an agreement in good faith with others, it is our responsibility to hold up our end.

You can't suddenly find fault with the other party and say, well, the deal's off. Not according to God. God didn't do it with the Gibeonites.

He didn't do it with Abraham's other 17 wives and their children. And God is extremely displeased with what the priests do in driving away their foreign wives here. It is clear.

When you go back and look at Ezra and Nehemiah and chapter 2 of Malachi, God brings a charge against them on this basis. We are priests. We have a responsibility first and foremost to our God, to honor His name and to be good stewards of what He entrusts to our care and secondly to one another.

And the third chapter of Malachi is going to complete the message. We're going to take a closer look at chapter 2 next time. We'll look at a little bit of vocabulary and a little bit of the thematic element here.

And then we'll move on into chapter 3. But in a very few weeks, we will be bringing to a conclusion our lengthy but I think interesting study all the way through from the United Kingdom under David and Solomon to and through the return from exile and the situation that forms and pertains when John the Baptist begins his final Old Testament prophetic ministry in the days just preceding the appearance of the Lord Jesus Himself. So we'll pick up our study next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank You for the truth of Your Word. We thank You for the wonderful instruction, rebuke and correction that it brings to our souls and we thank You for the gift of Your Holy Spirit to help us to understand it and find its pertinence to our own situation. We pray that as we seek to glorify You in our life day by day, in our decisions, in our thoughts, in our conversations, that we can be guided, that our path will be illuminated by what we find here in Your Word and the other principles and doctrines that incorporate with it so that we can redeem the time, we can live in a way that is pleasing in Your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus as well as being a blessing to each other and shining that light to the world around us.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.