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As we pick up our study now in the book of Malachi, we're looking at chapter two and we're focusing here in verse 10. We talked about partiality in administering the law, which is a breaking of faith, a breaking of covenant. God made a covenant with Levi.

The priests were to have his truth on their lips and by extension in their actions in the administration of justice, in calling for justice, ensuring that the people themselves function justly and that the law is both communicated and followed impartially. Then in verse 10, he focuses attention once again on God as creator and there should be equality under the law before God. Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? And he is going to move now from the vertical, which is defiling the table, profaning the altar of God and defiling and profaning God's name before the nations where God is supposed to be vindicated and supposed to be glorified among the nations and lifted up.

Israel is supposed to be a light to the Gentiles and that light is the God of their fathers, the God of the covenant. But he's going to turn now beginning in verse 10 to profaning the covenant. Not only have they profaned the covenant with God, the Old Testament, the Sinai Testament, the Sinai covenant, the law of Moses, but they have dealt treacherously with each other in profaning justice and the example that is going to be given in the same way that there is a lot to losing respect, fear, honor, and love for God.

But one example is put for it, which is the defiling of sacrifices on the altar. Now there is a lot to dealing treacherously and unjustly with one's fellow Israelites, but a single and prominent example is going to be put for that, and that is the covenant of marriage. And this is going to tie directly to the episode that we have seen recorded in Ezra and in Nehemiah dealing with intermarriage with foreigners in post-exilic Israel.

And it's a fascinating interplay between the account in Ezra, the account in Nehemiah, and this word from God in Malachi. Let's review once again what we have in Malachi, then we're going to go look at Ezra and Nehemiah. Verse 11, Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem.

For Judah has profaned the Lord's holy, the Lord's sanctified thing, which he loves. What is it that God has loved so far in the book of Malachi? Jacob, right? God has loved Jacob. That's what we began with, Ahav.

Here is the second thing which God loves. The sanctified thing which God loves, Judah has profaned. He has married the daughter of a foreign god.

Married the daughter of a foreign god. So God says this is a defilement, a corruption, a profaning of what God deems holy. And it is the idea of marriage, the entering into a marriage covenant.

Judah has profaned this by entering into a marriage covenant with the daughter of a foreign god. The Hebrew here is of interest because what it says in verse 11 is Judah has been faithless and an abominable thing has been done because Judah has profaned the holy place of Yahweh, which he loves. Holy here is kadosh.

It can mean holy place, holy thing, holy one, or holiness. But there are those who think that here profaning the holy is still referring to the place of sacrifice, the altar. And why is it being profaned? God says how it is being profaned by bringing blind and blemished sacrifices by the contempt with which the altar is held in the eyes of the priests.

And they won't even eat of the sacrifices because these sacrifices are so literally lame, blind, and imperfect. And they say the table of the Lord is contemptible. And Judah, this would be Levi, right? Levi presides over the sacrifices, but who brings those sacrifices? The Levites are the ones who declare whether they are fit or not.

And they declare them fit when they say, well, it's fit for God, but it's not fit for me. You can offer it on the altar, but I'm not eating any of that. But now we've switched to a different brother.

Remember the birth order, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah. Levi gets his first, the priests. Now God turns his attention to Judah.

Judah, of course, is also now the Southern kingdom. They are the ones who returned from the Babylonian exile. And so these in Judah are Judahites.

And so in the same way that the priests have Levi as their father, the people have Judah as their father in principle, at least, right? So Judah has profaned the holy place of Yahweh, which he loves. So this wouldn't be defiling the institution of marriage as you might think at first. This is still talking about worship.

Now, how could you defile the holy place, the holy worship of God, that which he considers holy, so holy that only the priests can enter the holy place and only the high priest can enter the holiest, the holy of holies, because Judah has married the daughter of a foreign God. Now you would think, well, this is the Ezra and Nehemiah thing, to which we will soon turn, and that these are daughters of the surrounding nations of the land. But this is very specific.

There is a great way in Hebrew, a very simple way of saying, marrying foreign wives. These aren't just foreign women or daughters of foreigners. This particular phrase here, bat el nakar, daughter of a foreign God, this is unique.

It's a hot box in the Old Testament. It only occurs here. And you could look at this as a almost goddess worship, perhaps.

But if he had meant to, in any case, this is talking about worship. This is worship of a foreign God or worship of the daughter of a foreign God entering into covenant with the daughter of a

foreign God, meaning allegiance and worship, more interest in pleasing a female deity or the ideas that are attached to it. Idolatry has gone and there's not idolatry in view here, but the daughter of a foreign God implies that there is some sort of fear, honor, glorification, and worship of a, of an Asherah type deity without there being any formal high places or idols being manufactured or emplaced, that the outward trappings have not come back, but the heart attitude that caused them to worship on the high places and worship Asherah, Astart, and these female deities, which were abundant in Babylon and would continue down into the days of the Greeks with Diana of the Ephesians and these female deities, that the idea of it has returned with them and they have some sort of heart covenant.

The covenant that they're supposed to have with God has been replaced with this covenant, this marriage covenant. This is a spiritual marriage. This is a worship inclination toward the daughter of a foreign God.

He could have easily said, if he wanted to just designate foreign women, he would have used *Nashim Nakarot*, which is what that means. And foreign wives are, this is mentioned several times in Ezra and Nehemiah. That's not the phrase that is used here.

And interestingly, everybody wants to connect this passage in Malachi with Ezra and Nehemiah, and it does connect, but not in such an obvious and trite way. So let's break off here and refresh our minds on what happened in Ezra and Nehemiah. Let's start back in Ezra chapter 10.

Ezra chapter 10. Really, you can begin in chapter 9. After they have fasting and prayer for protection, they have gifts for the temple in chapter 8 of Ezra, the return to Jerusalem in verse 35, 835, the children of those who were carried away captive, who came from captivity, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel, bulls, rams, lambs, goats, delivered the king's set traps and governors beyond the river. They gave support to the people in house of God.

Notice the house is now standing in Ezra's day. So they offer these sacrifices at the second temple, which was rebuilt shortly after the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah goaded them after 18 and a half years of inactivity. Chapter 9, Ezra chapter 9. When these things were done, the leaders came to me saying, the people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites.

For they had taken some of their daughters for themselves and their sons so that the holy seed is mixed with the people of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass. This is based on Deuteronomy chapter 7. Keep your finger here.

Turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 7. So we are clear on what the allegation is. Deuteronomy chapter 7. When the Lord your God brings you into the land, which you go to possess and has cast out many nations before you, Hittites, Kirkishites, Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Jebusites, etc., seven nations greater mighty than you, when the Lord God delivers them over to

you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them, nor show mercy to them, nor shall you make marriages with them.

You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods. The anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

Thus you shall deal with them. You shall destroy their altars, break down their sacred pillars, cut down their wooden images, burn their carved images with fire. For you are a holy people to the Lord your God.

The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people. You were the least of all peoples.

But because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh the king of Egypt. Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments, repays those who hate Him to their face to destroy them. This is chapter one of Malachi.

He will not be slack with him who hates Him. He will repay him to his face. Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which I command you today to observe them.

Then you go on to a long list of blessings. All the rest of that chapter is the blessings for obedience. And chapter eight then begins, every commandment which I command you today, you must be careful to observe that you may live and multiply, go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to your fathers.

And this is the covenant of life and peace. That is what they claim to have been breached in Ezra chapter nine. They have taken some of their daughters for themselves and their sons so that the holy seed is mixed with the people of those lands.

They were to be a holy people. It doesn't say anything about the holy seed in Deuteronomy chapter seven, but the leaders and rulers, the people and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, but have intermarried with them. So what is our, what is our prohibition in Deuteronomy? Do not marry them.

But they have married them. What is a marriage? It's a covenant, right? They have entered into a covenant. So when I heard this thing, verse three, tore my garment, plucked out my hair and beard, sat down, astonished, people assemble because of the transgression.

And then Ezra falls on his face in verse six. Oh my God, I'm too ashamed and humiliated to lift

up my face to you. Our iniquities are risen higher than our heads, et cetera.

Verse 10 now, Oh God, our God, what shall we say after this? We have forsaken your commandments, which commanded by your servant, the prophet saying the land, which you are entering into possess is an unclean land. The people have filled it with abominations and so on. Therefore, verse 12, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons.

Never seek their peace or prosperity that you may be strong and eat the good of the land. Leave it as inheritance forever. So verse one of chapter 10, while Ezra was praying, while he was confessing, weeping and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel.

The people wept very bitterly and behold, the prophet of the Lord came and talked to Ezra and said, here's what you should do. No. Shekinah, the son of Jahiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, we have trespassed against our God and have taken pagan wives from the people of the land.

Yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. Is Shekinah a priest? No. Is he a prophet? No.

But he says now, therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the law. Arise. This matter is your responsibility.

We're with you. Be of good courage and do it. So he gets this piece of advice to dissolve these marriages and drive these women and children out from the land from Shekinah, who in scripture has no connection to God whatsoever.

This is very similar to the advice that Peter and the surviving disciples got when they said, we need to elect a twelfth apostle. So let's cast lots. And it comes down between two guys, and it ends up being Matthias.

So he's going to be the twelfth apostle, of which nothing further is heard because God was not in it. Who commissions disciples slash apostles? Who calls them by name? Jesus Christ. Matthias was never called by name by Jesus Christ.

He was called by name by Peter. We see how much authority that has. Catholics should have taken note that the Peter appointed apostle is never heard from again because Peter doesn't have the authority to appoint apostles, only the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who does the Lord Jesus appoint to replace Judas? Saul of Tarsus, the apostle Paul. And Peter didn't have anything to do with that assignment, that encounter, and that commission. That was the Lord Jesus Christ who completely brushed aside the election and the ham-fisted attempt to replace Judas in the early chapters of Acts.

So, same thing here. Now, what's wrong with this? Let's just see if we've got our spiritual thinking caps on. Doesn't Deuteronomy say don't intermarry with the people? And they have intermarried with the people, and so Shekinah says, well, we've got to undo this.

What is the problem? Feel free to speak up. What is the problem here? These people in Judah have already entered into covenant, have they not? They have made a covenant. They have made a promise.

So, if you drive these people out, what are you doing? You're breaking covenant. Now, was that a bad covenant to have made? Maybe. Maybe not.

What does God regard as a bad marriage? Not the daughter of a foreigner, of which we have replete instances in the Old Testament as being wonderful women of faith and godliness. What is God's beef in Malachi? We just read it. Daughters of a foreign God.

Judah married the daughter of a foreign God. This is what Solomon did when he married women who did not become proselytes to the God of Israel, like Ruth. Probably the most prominent example one can think of.

Is Ruth the daughter of a foreigner? Yes. Is she the daughter of a foreign God? No, she's not. Let me direct your attention to Nehemiah.

Flip over to Nehemiah, where throughout this book, chapter 10 for example, Nehemiah the governor and all of these other listed people seal a covenant. The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, this is Nehemiah 10, 28. The rest of the people, priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, Nethanim, all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone who had knowledge and understanding, these joined with their brethren, nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses, the servant of God, to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our God, His ordinances, and His statutes.

We will not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the lands, nor take their daughters for our sons. If the peoples of the land bring wares or any grain to sell on Sabbath day, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. We will forego the seventh year's produce and the exacting of every debt.

We made ordinances for ourselves to exact from ourselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God, and so on. But I want you to notice in verse 28, the priests and the Levites and the leaders of the people, the gatekeepers, the Nethanim, all those who separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of their God, with their wives, sons, and daughters. It doesn't say, but there were some priests and some Levites who, because they had married foreign women, refused to separate themselves and take this pledge.

As near as I can tell, all of the priests and the Levites here, regardless of where their wives came from or what mixed blood their sons and daughters might be, they made this covenant to keep the law of God, right? That's Nehemiah chapter 10. You skip down to verse 38, the priest, the descendant of Aaron shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes. The Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse.

Children of Israel, children of Eli shall bring the offering of the grain, new wine, oil, storerooms, where the articles of the sanctuary are, where the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers are. We will not neglect the house of our God. This is their pledge.

The leaders of the people in chapter 11 cast lots to see who's going to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and who's going to dwell elsewhere. The people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem. Here's the ones who did so.

In verse 15 of chapter 11 of the Levites, and there's a list of them. And verse 20, the rest of Israel, the priests and Levites in all the cities of Judah, everyone in his inheritance. The Nethanim dwelt in Ophel and so on.

When you get down to chapter 13, on that day they read from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the assembly of God, because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.

So it was when they had heard the law that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel. So the mixed multitude were separated out. These are complete families of Moabites or Ammonites.

Now you skip down to verse 23 of Nehemiah 13. In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. Half their children spoke the language of Ashdod and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people.

So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them, and pulled out their hair. Remember, Ezra plucked out his own hair and his own beard. Nehemiah strikes the other people and pulls out their hair.

Made them swear by God, saying, You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take the daughters for your sons or yourselves. Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, pagan women caused even him to sin.

Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women? One of the sons of Joida, the son of Elisha, the high priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. I drove him from me. Remember them, O God, because they have defiled the priests and the covenant of the priesthood, and I cleansed them of

everything pagan.

O my God, remember me for good, he says several times in this book." Here is the distinction, because if you go back to Malachi now with all of that in view, let's continue in the chapter, because God seems to say the exact opposite of what Ezra and Nehemiah have just said and done. Verse 11, Judah has profaned the Lord's holy place, which he loves, and he has married the daughter of a foreign God. The marriage that God finds abominable, defiling, corrupted, and profaning is Judah investing in a sort of spiritual marriage with the daughter of a foreign God.

They are definitely not invested in their covenant with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are not invested in their covenant with Sinai. They have instead adopted the ways of the foreigners, and they have essentially, spiritually, married the daughter of a foreign God.

Why do I say this? Keep reading. May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob, the man who does this, being awake and aware. This is a very interesting phrase in Hebrew, and it's somewhat difficult.

It's er-va-o-keh, er-va-o-keh, and it's difficult. They're cal-active participles, and one means, you know, a participle is an I-N-G word. It's a verb turned into a noun, and so you have the awakening one and the answering one.

And those who came to Ezra and Nehemiah coming to the people and saying, these marriages are terrible, they are the awakening ones. After they've entered into covenant, after they've restored law, worship, and all the rest of it, and after they've separated the mixed multitude out and said, we've got to be a holy people, and we're not going to intermarry with you, we're not going to have truck with you on the Sabbath, and so on. Then they get to looking around, and that's not enough.

What they want to do now is divide Israelite families, because there has been an intermarriage that took place in the past. God said do not enter into these covenants, but once you have entered into it, it's a different thing. Do you remember Joshua and the Gibeonites? Remember the ones who said, we know that Israel is going to wipe us out, so let's pretend like we're from a distant country, because there's an out for those who are distant.

So they put on old sandals and brought moldy bread. Oh, we've come from a great distance. And Joshua doesn't seem to have been on the scene, but they entered into a covenant with the Gibeonites.

Remember that? They made a covenant with them. Then it was discovered that they weren't from far away, they were from nearby. So did they abrogate that covenant and say that covenant was made under false pretenses? Israel had to honor that covenant, even though they were deceived into making it.

Right? Go look it up. They didn't say, oh, this covenant is out because it was made improperly.

So we're going to pretend it doesn't count, and we're going to slay you according to the law of God.

Remember that? In the same way, once these Israelites have entered into a covenant with foreign women, and you get the idea from the earlier chapter in Ezra, these people assented. They are like Ruth. They came and said, we will abide by the law of God.

We're not bringing our gods. We're not entering into false worship. And it's all about, are you entering into covenant with the daughter of a foreign God? Or have you entered into covenant in the past with the daughter of a foreign individual, a daughter of a foreign land? It isn't a daughter of a foreign land, it's the daughter of a foreign God that God finds offensive.

Does God find Ruth offensive? Does He find Rahab offensive? Does He find Mrs. Moses offensive? Why? All of those ladies come to enter into a relationship with and worship of the God of Israel, and that negates national origin. It is only the daughter of a foreign God, a woman who is dedicated to that God, who draws your heart away, and they rightfully cite Solomon. Scripture says Solomon's heart was drawn away by his foreign wives to the worship of other gods, and he actually created altars and temples to those gods on the outskirts of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives.

That's what God finds offensive. What was the reason for the prohibition of intermarriage? What does it say in Deuteronomy 7? They will draw your hearts away from God to worship foreign gods. That's the reason.

God's not anti-immigration. God is anti-false worship. God is anti-demon worship.

God is anti-entering into covenant with the daughter of a foreign God. And I personally believe that God is distinguishing between those two kinds, because look what he goes on to say. He says, this stuff that's going on, and it's going to be quite obvious in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, he says, verse 14, The Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously.

How have they dealt treacherously? By saying, well, you're from a foreign land, and we've got mixed offspring here that are half Hittite and half Israelite, or half Perizzite and half Israelite, or half whatever foreign nationality they might've been, Edomite, Ammonite, Moabite, whatever they were. But they came to Israel. They agreed to relinquish their gods and to live as Israelites, just as Ruth did.

Your God is my God. Your people are my people, she says to Naomi. These women have done the same.

And these men have taken the opportunity to dissolve these marriages at the behest of Ezra and Nehemiah. Shekiniah may have decided he didn't like his foreign wife. And so he says, well, you know, we've got to get rid of these and drive them out.

So they turn these women and children into widows and orphans. With no word from God, God said, don't enter into a covenant with the people of the land. But when Israel did so in the days of Joshua, God said, you've got to honor that covenant.

You made a promise. You're stuck with it. Jephthah's vow.

He didn't realize that his daughter was going to be the first one to come out. But a vow is a vow. A promise is a promise.

A covenant is a covenant. And God says, I'm not going to listen to your weeping and crying and I'm not going to receive your offerings anymore and receive it with goodwill from your hands. For what reason? Verse 14, because the Lord has been witnessed between you and the wife of your youth with whom you have dealt treacherously, yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

He doesn't say you've dealt treacherously by intermarrying with women of the land. He says, you married women of the land and now you're breaking covenant with them. At this point, God doesn't care where they came from.

He cares about the promise that was made. And these women are not drawing them away into false worship. That's not the condemnation.

They are breaking this covenant for no good reason. He made them one, having a remnant of the spirit. He seeks godly offspring.

What these men need to do if they have entered into marriages with the daughters of the land, they are not to send these women and children off to be beggars and die of starvation and be homeless and helpless. And even if they returned to the land of their origin or the people of their origin, those people are going to look at them and say, well, you've been defiled by the Israelites. We're going to have nothing to do.

These families probably starved and were outcasts and pariahs by the hundreds, if not thousands. Does this glorify God's name among the nations? Does this honor God? It's treachery. It is a breaking of covenant.

You shouldn't enter into a covenant, but once you do, once you make a vow, you keep it. Let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce for it covers one's garment with violence.

We'll talk about this next time, but there's a word play here. The word garment is very close to the word marriage. You just change the vowels and it's the same thing.

You cover your marriage with violence. Now, is there a time when divorce is legitimate? Yes, there is. But this was not a legitimate cause to hold their national origin as a reason to divorce and dismiss and drive out women and children from Israel.

God says it's treachery and it's not right. God says national origin and worship of other gods is a reason to not enter into covenant. And Paul says that if someone is not interested in worshiping God through Christ, you can let them depart.

You can dissolve the bonds. This is a different thing. This is an arbitrary, superficial, legalistic divorcing of these women and disowning of these children for no reason other than they were born to foreign parents.

But they have come to Israel. They evidently have entered into covenant with God in the earlier chapters of Ezra, but simply because of their race, can we say? Their national origin, can we say? They are being driven out irregardless of how much they love God or how much they have pledged to love, honor, and obey their husbands before the Lord. There's no consideration taken of that whatsoever.

Anybody that has foreign origins is mercilessly driven out. And God says it's treachery and he's not going to accept sacrifice from the people of Judah. The priests are taking faulty sacrifices anyway.

This is on the people because the people are dealing falsely and treacherously with the wife of their youth. It is violence, says the Lord of hosts. Therefore, take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously.

It is not treason to separate yourself from someone who worships a foreign God and is dedicated to them. It is treachery to literally split the blanket with someone who is amenable to God, who does worship God, and you take up a false cause to divorce, dismiss, and drive away these people. That's what happened in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and that's what Malachi is talking about.

God says that's treachery. You made a covenant, and the only grounds for dissolving that covenant is idolatry, worship of a foreign God, entering into marriage with the daughter of a foreign God. These ladies evidently are not so, and God says it's treachery.

It's all talked about in the same breath. Well, we'll have more to say about this next time, but what is the conclusion for us? We have to be covenant aware. We have to be promise aware and do what we do as unto the Lord and ensure that our yea is yea and our nay is nay, because God is keeping track.

And it may be difficult. Jephthah's vow was certainly difficult, but to break a covenant promise is a serious thing, and we have to be sure we are on solid biblical ground that we can stand before the Lord and defend that decision. This woman is doing to me what Solomon's wives did to him.

This man is doing to me what Solomon's wives did to him. I cannot worship. I cannot live my life before the Lord within the bounds of this covenant.

That's a different thing. Be not unequally yoked together with the faithless. That can be grounds.

You can break that yoke if exclusively it is necessary to continue your life of faith and obedience and you are being dragged into sin and dragged into evil against your will by the bonds of that covenant. You can break it in the same way that when God's name became so awfully defiled in Israel, he broke the terms of that covenant and sent them back out of the land into slavery and revoked their blessings and turned their blessings into curses. Levi broke his covenant with God and God broke his covenant with Levi and took them out of the land and sent them back to Israel.

There are grounds but we need to be sure we are on solid ground before we do so. Well, much more to say about that in Malachi, via Ezra and Nehemiah next time but we will close here in the Word of Prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your Word.

Thank you for impressing on us how important it is to live our lives in the light of our relationship with you through the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, illuminated by your word. We pray that as we reflect on these things in the details of our own lives, that we will find comfort, encouragement, strength, and guidance to be exemplary in the time that remains to us in this life and be found worthy at the judgment for further service and opportunity in the kingdoms to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.