

# From Babylon to Jerusalem - (Malachi)

## ch.1:11-2:16

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of putting God first in our lives, being sincere in our words and actions, and honoring God's name in every area of our lives.*

**Duration:** 1:00:38

**Scripture:** Malachi 1:9-10, Malachi 2:1-2, Malachi 2:5, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "From Babylon To Jerusalem"

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### Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Abraham and the importance of keeping our promises to God. He highlights how Abraham went above and beyond his promise to provide for the strangers who visited him, while many people today conveniently forget their vows to God. The speaker emphasizes the need for reverence and obedience to God's commandments as the true proof of our fear of God. He also warns about the consequences of neglecting the prophetic word and how it led to the decline of the Jews after Malachi's message.

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### Transcript

We saw in our last study that this was word that God gave through his servant Malakai, meaning my messenger, and it was soon after Nehemiah had built the wall, and we find that even though the external form of coming out of Babylon and into Jerusalem was there, yet the inner life was not there. And this is why the book of Malakai has a particular message for those who have taken that step of coming out of Babylon as a system and coming into the truths of the New Covenant and the body of Christ. But the danger is that we can have the form and not the inner life that corresponds with the New Covenant, whereas many of the other messages in the other books that we have studied so far have a message particularly for those who are in Babylon, exhorting them to come out.

Here we find a message particularly to those who have obeyed that call, who have responded externally, but in whom there is a need for cleansing in the spirit. So we saw in our last study, we ended up with verse 10 and 11, where we saw that these Israelites were bringing to God an offering that cost them nothing. And essentially, in the book of Malakai, what God is saying to his people is that you are not putting me first in your lives.

You have given me a place, yes. You have built the walls, you have built the temple, you are bringing the offerings, you have established the priesthood, and all that. But in spite of all this, you are not putting me first in your life.

In other words, God is not foremost in your thinking, in the ordering of your daily life, in your family life, in your professional life, in your business. God is not uppermost and first. And that is the condition of a lot of Christians today, and it is possible for us to come out of Babylon as a system, to come into what we understand to be the body of Christ, and yet not to put God first in every area of our life.

That was their essential crime. When they brought an offering, they brought the blind and the lame and the sick. They brought an offering.

They were not irreligious. But God was not supreme in their affections, and therefore their offering was not acceptable to God. Way back in the beginning of the Old Testament, in the book of Genesis, we read about Cain.

His offering was not acceptable to God, and he himself was not acceptable. God was not first in his life, and that is why his offering was not acceptable. And we find at the end of the Old Testament the same story, that their offering is not acceptable, because God is not first in their life.

And in Abel, there God found a man who put him first, and therefore his offering was acceptable. And later on, when you come to chapter 3, you read about a remnant who feared God's name, who gathered together in Malachi chapter 3, and they were those who followed in the footsteps of Abel. So we find in the book of Malachi, those who have followed in the footsteps of the religion of Cain, and those who have followed in the footsteps of the religion of Abel.

And that's right through the Old Testament, and that's right through the New Testament too. Those who are religious, but for whom God is not everything. The kingdom of God is not first in their life.

And that's very, very easy for us to degenerate into that condition, brothers and sisters. To understand the doctrine, yet God is not supreme and first in every area of our life. Now, it's impossible to be a part of the bride of Christ, and to be a part of that body that becomes his bride, unless God is supreme in every area that we are conscious of.

That means in every area, we say, what does God think about this? That's important. How I handle my money, how I spend my leave, how I spend my time, how I bring up my family, how I run my affairs in the office, in the factory, in every area that I bring God in and say, what does God think about this? Have I consulted God about that? Have I sought the will of God in this area, in what I read, in how I spend my time? In every area. That is to follow in the footsteps of that remnant spoken of later on in Malachi.

So that's good for us to bear in mind that this was why their offering was worthless. Because basically in their heart, God was not first. And that becomes the religion of Cain, where they bring an offering, but without putting God first in their lives.

And that can happen today when we come for meetings and break bread and so many things, and we can fall into the same danger. And therefore he says, O that there were one person among you, one man, who would shut the door to these types of offerings and tell the people plainly that all your offerings are not acceptable if I am not first in every area of your life. And then he says, in the last part of verse 10, I will not accept an offering from you, but now I will tell you what I'm going to do.

I'm going to reject the whole lot of you Jews as a people, and I'm going to get a pure offering from another people who are not Jews. The kingdom of God was going to be taken away from them and given to another who would bring forth the fruit. As we mentioned in our last study, that's happened again and again in church history, that when a particular group that God raised up to restore a certain truth began to think that now God is accepting only us and we are the people, and they became proud of themselves, God set them aside and raised up another group.

And that's happened again and again and again and again. And each group thought, but that will never happen to us. And we can sit today and say, but that will never happen to us.

Then we are in danger. God is no respecter of persons. And if we don't put God first in our life with all the truths that we understand, God can also set us aside and raise up someone else who follows the Lord and puts him first.

So that's the warning there. From the rising of the sun even to its setting, my name will be great among the nations. Among all the nations of the world, God says, my name will be great.

This is an emphasis in Malachi, the name of the Lord. Three times in verse 11, my name will be great among the nations. In every place, incense is going to be offered to my name, and a great offering that is pure for my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.

And so we see here three times an emphasis on my name. You remember when Jesus taught us to pray, the first request he taught us to pray was, hallowed be thy name. And so we see here the emphasis on my name throughout the book of Malachi.

A pure offering will be offered to my name. And what was it that made the offering impure of all the other people? What is it that makes an offering made to God impure? We say, if there is sin in the life, if a conscience is defiled, then the offering is impure. That's true.

But more than that, there may not be any sin on my conscience, and yet the offering made to God can still be impure if God is not first in every area of my life. I can say I am not committing any conscious sin, but that's not enough. The sin of these people was that God was not first in their life.

And when God is not first and foremost in every area of my life, then whatever offering I bring to God is unacceptable. A pure heart is a heart in which God is supreme. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.

And if a person loves God with all his heart, it is not possible for him to love money. That is why Jesus said that if you love money, you cannot love God. Because when you love money, in a little bit in your heart, God is not there.

And then, of course, we see that God does not accept the offering made from such a heart. You cannot love God and money. And we find here that the great conflict in Malachi was between these two gods that are constantly seeking for the worship of man--God and mammon.

And it is because they worshipped mammon that they were unwilling to bring to God the best lamb, the best bullock. They thought, how can we give that? That will cost us something. And mammon got a grip on their hearts.

And we see this is the great conflict even today. God and mammon. Jesus said these are the two masters.

And Malachi was speaking particularly on that, right through the book you find that. God and mammon. And when we do not love God with all of our hearts, in other words, if God is not supreme, every offering we bring is impure.

We turn now to verse 12. You are profaning my name in that you say the table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be dispensed. That means they were saying that God's work was a burden.

Verse 13, you also say, my, how tiresome it is to keep on bringing these offerings to God. Every day we have to bring these offerings and we have to bring the best to God. How tiresome it is.

His commandments are a burden. And when that thought comes into our heart, that God's commandments are a burden, then we know that we have fallen into the backsliding that characterized the Israelites in Malachi's day. And you disdainfully sniff at it, says the Lord of hosts.

Why did they say it was a burden? Because their love had gone. It says in the Old Testament that Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him as a few days because of the love that he had for her. He loved Rachel so much that he slogged for seven years in the sun and the rain, and it was just like a few days.

And that's always true, that where there is love, fervent love, any labor will look light. When labor for the Lord looks like a burden, when a sacrifice we make for the Lord looks like a burden, when I think that something I have done for the church, why doesn't somebody else also pitch in and help? And I have such questions and complaints in my mind, why aren't brother so-and-so and brother so-and-so also doing their part? When I yield to such thoughts, I can say to myself, love is gone. When Jacob worked for Rachel, he wasn't bothered about whether anybody else was working or not.

And that's the way by which we know that we have left our first love. And the crime, the sin that the leader of the church in Ephesus fell into, is also what happened here. And they were doing God's work, but it was a burden.

They had complaints against others as to why aren't they doing their part. Beware of that, brothers and sisters. And you sniff at it.

And you bring to God what was taken by robbery. That teaches us that we cannot give to God what belongs to Caesar. Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.

In other words, if I have cheated the income tax, it's no use my giving money in the offering box, that money which I have saved by cheating the income tax or cheating some other tax, and I put it in the offering box, God says, what you are putting in the offering box is what you have stolen. It is exactly the same as going to somebody's house, stealing his purse, taking that money, and putting it in the offering box. It's exactly the same when we don't give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.

When we don't give, when we don't pay back our debts, and we put money in the offering box, God says, I don't want it, that doesn't belong to you, that belongs to so-and-so, you should have repaid that debt. When we haven't made restitution of money that we have stolen from the office or the factory or whatever it is, in the olden days, or from the railways, and we haven't paid it back, and we put money in the offering box, God says, I don't want it, you put what is taken by robbery. You have robbed somebody else, and you

come and put it here.

Malachi really let the people have it. And he says, you bring all this, and you bring what is lame or sick, so you bring the offering. In the King James Version it says, you bring what is torn.

Torn means torn by the animals. And I want you to turn to a verse in Exodus chapter 22, which tells us the law that God had laid down, that if you find an animal of yours torn to pieces in the field, the flesh that's torn to pieces in the field, what you must do with it. Exodus 22, the last verse, verse 31, it said, You shall be holy men to me, therefore you shall not eat any flesh torn to pieces in the field, you shall throw it to the dogs.

Whom were they to throw that animal that was slain in the field to? To the dogs. What were they doing in Malachi's day? They were taking that animal and bringing it as an offering to God. What were they treating God like? A dog.

That's it. They were giving to God what God said should be given to the dogs. Can you imagine religious people who got the form of godliness, the temple in the midst, the walls around Jerusalem, but so much in the grip of mammon that they were hesitant to give God the best.

I want to tell you brothers and sisters, it is when it touches our money that we find out how spiritual we are. That is clear. When Zacchaeus' attitude to money changed, Jesus said, Salvation has come here.

Salvation from mammon. Zacchaeus has stopped worshipping mammon. Because his attitude to money changed, he decided to make restitution.

Jesus said about a man who was not rich towards God. And that's the danger. That's how it was with these people.

They were not rich towards God. They gave to God, but they gave to God like people give to the beggar. When the beggar comes to the door, you are not rich towards him.

You feel a little bad, so you drop something into his hand. And it's possible for us, we may not treat God like a dog, but perhaps like a beggar. In our giving to God, do we treat him like a beggar? That's a searching question.

And that was the problem with these people. He said, so you bring the offering. Should I receive this from your hand? Verse 14.

But curse it. This is another word, curse. Seven times in the short book of Malachi comes the word curse, curse, curse.

In fact, the book of Malachi ends with that word, curse. Seven times. There's no prophet among all the prophets who speaks so much about curse as Malachi.

Jeremiah was another one trying to save people from Babylon. Malachi was trying to save people again from another spiritual Babylon. And we find that despite Malachi's prophecy, the Jews ended up in a spiritual Babylon by the time Jesus came.

They were in a spiritual Babylon when Jesus came. But God sent his prophet Malachi to save them from that. But curse it, be the swindler.

Imagine calling a child of God a swindler. These were God's people. He was not talking to the heathen.

He says a swindler. And who is this swindler who has a male in his flock and he vows it, but when the time comes to give to God, he 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.

Now notice there. Here is a man who says to God, Lord, I will give this, maybe in a time of sickness, maybe in a time of need or difficulty or when some problem came into his family. He said, oh God, if you will heal me or heal my child or you'll do this, I will do this for you.

Alright? The healing came, the answer to prayer came, but then he conveniently forgets about the vow he made to God. Now in the book of Ecclesiastes, it says in chapter 5, Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verse 2, do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth, therefore let your words be few.

For a dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words. What that means is that if you are preoccupied with many things in your mind during the day, that will come out in a dream at night. If you are preoccupied with making money, you'll find that comes forth in your dreams at night.

And in the same way, he says, like much activity brings forth dreams at night, many words are the identifying mark of a fool. A fool is known by the fact that he keeps on talking to people and to God, saying a lot of things, gossip to people and a lot of things to God which he doesn't mean. And he says, when you make a vow to God, don't be late in paying it.

For he takes no delight in fools who say things which they don't mean. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

That's a serious thing, to say something to God and not do it. If you say something, God says, do it. Otherwise, don't say it at all.

God is trying to teach his people to be careful with their speech. Don't say, I surrender all to Jesus, if everything is not surrendered. God says, if you sing that, then do it.

All to Jesus I surrender, then do it. It's a serious thing to sing something in our hymns which we don't mean. Jesus, I and my cross have taken all to leave and follow thee.

God says, then do it. And this is one of the main reasons for the carnality and the spiritual poverty of so many believers, that they are not careful about what they sing in their hymns. I really believe that.

Because it is through hymns that we tell the maximum number of lies to God. It's far better when we come to a line of a hymn not to sing it. Let the rest of the congregation sing it, because I can't honestly say, I want to leave all.

God appreciates that person, because he's honest. He takes that word seriously. It's very important.

And God calls the man a swindler, who makes a vow, maybe in a hymn, and then he doesn't do it in his daily life. He says, I want to die, Lord. And he goes home and he's got no interest in dying to himself.

I want to show you a contrast to this. In the book of Genesis, chapter 18, Abraham says, I want you to notice this, this is very interesting. You know, Abraham was once standing by his tent and he saw three

men coming towards him.

Verse 2, Genesis 18, 2. And when he saw them, he was so hospitable, and he said, My Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, don't pass your servant by. He didn't know who they were. They were just strangers.

And he said, Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet and rest yourselves. And verse 5, this is what I want you to notice. I will bring, what did he promise to bring? A piece of bread that you may refresh yourselves.

He says, I'd just like to get you a little bit of bread to eat. And he made them sit down and he hurried into the tent and told Sarah, verse 6, quickly to make some bread cakes. And he went, verse 7, and took a tender and choice calf and asked his servants to prepare that.

And he took the curds and the milk and the calf and the bread and placed it before them. That's the difference. He said, I will bring some bread, but he brought ten times more than that.

Now it's the exact opposite with most people. They say, I'll bring calf, curds, milk, honey, bread, everything. And finally when they come, they only got a little bit of bread.

But Abraham wasn't like that. He didn't know how much he could bring. So he settled for something less and he said, I'll bring some bread.

But then he found he could bring much more. And he brought it. And that is the opposite of what we see God's people in Malachi and a lot of God's people today.

They say so many things to God. But when they come with their offering, it's about one percent of what they promised God that they would bring to him. We have to learn to be extremely careful with the words we speak to God in prayer, private, public and hymns, lest we also are guilty of telling lies to God.

And he has to call us a swindler who says one thing and means another. We have to be very careful. And notice here he says again about his name.

Malachi 1.14. My name is feared among the nations. In verse 11 we saw it is honored among the nations. And these were the two charges God brought against the priests in verse 6. Notice? You don't honor me and you don't fear me.

All right? If you don't honor me and you don't fear me, I will get that honor and that fear from the Gentiles. God will always find somebody else to replace the one whom he originally called to serve him. Jesus called Judas Iscariot.

He failed. God chose somebody else, the Apostle Paul. In the same way, God can choose any one of us for a particular task and say I have called on you, I have chosen you for a particular ministry in my body and if he sees that we don't fear him and we don't honor him, we don't give him the first place in our life, he will take that ministry which was originally planned for you and give it to somebody else who will fear him and honor him.

We will discover, brothers and sisters, at the judgment seat of Christ that there was a ministry God had for us but he couldn't commit it to us because we told him such a lot of lies. We didn't fear him. We didn't take seriously the vows we made in the meetings, in prayer, in our songs.

We didn't live faithfully and therefore God had to take it away from us and give it to someone else. That's a tragedy. Terrific tragedy.

It happened to the Jews. It doesn't happen with one failure. God spoke to the Jews again and again and again and again.

Finally he said, I give you all up. And so it is. He gave Judas Iscariot many chances and he gives us many chances too.

But remember, a time came when God gave up the Jews, a time came when he gave up Judas Iscariot and a time can come when people play the fool with God and they can lose either their ministry and if it carries on further, even their salvation. And that's why we need to fear. And then chapter 2 verse 1. And now this commandment is for you, O priests.

And this was the characteristic of all the prophets, that they always spoke to the leaders first. Always to the leaders. He rebuked the leaders first, Malachi.

You remember Jesus' ministry was like that. His whole ministry was a rebuke and speaking against the leaders of the Jews. And so it was with Malachi.

O priests, this commandment is for you. If you do not listen and if you do not take it hard to give glory and honor to my name, notice again, my name, glory and honor to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send a curse upon you. Notice that word, curse again.

And I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have cursed them already because you are not taking it to heart. If you remember Psalm 1, it says, Blessed is the man who meditates in the law of the Lord day and night, who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly or sit in the seat of the scornful, etc.

And he meditates in the law of the Lord day and night. And it goes on to say in that first Psalm, everything he does will prosper. Whatever he puts his hand to, there will be a blessing in it.

Like Joseph, wherever he went, there was a blessing. You could put him as a slave in a house, the house would be blessed. You put him in a jail, the jail will be blessed.

And that's how it is with a man who is blessed by the Lord. But here you see the curse. When they don't put God first in their life, in all their affairs, there's failure.

Wherever they put their hands, there's failure. In matters of health, finances, spiritual progress, everywhere, failure, failure, failure. Because God is not supreme in their lives.

And since these priests were being supported financially by the others and their types, he says, I've cursed your blessings, means I've put a curse on your financial support. You get this financial support, you get your salary, but you never seem to be able to make ends meet with your salary. And you will never be able to make ends meet with your salary, because God says, you haven't put me first in your life.

There's a curse on your salary. There's a curse on your blessings, your financial support, because you are not taking these things to heart. You're not taking seriously the things that are most important to me.

That's how the Living Bible paraphrases it. You're not taking it seriously. I just want to say one more indication of a curse, is that when God forsakes his people, he does not send a prophet to them.

Read that in Psalm 74. We saw it in an earlier study. It's perhaps good to look at it again.

Psalm 74, verse 9. It says, We do not see our signs, and there is no longer any prophet. He says in the first verse, O God, why hast thou rejected us forever? And one mark of God's rejection was, curse your blessings. And seven times, as I said, that verse, curse comes upon, in this book of Malachi.

And one manifestation of it was, that Malachi was the last prophet. There was no more prophet for the next 400 years, till John the Baptist came on the scene. When God takes away a prophetic voice from his people, it means he's withdrawn his blessing.

And a church that does not have a prophetic voice in its midst, is a church, we can say, forsaken by God. We can have Bible studies galore. And there are umpteen denominations having Bible studies galore.

But the word of God says, there is a famine of the word of the Lord. And that is why it's very important for us to take heed seriously to the prophetic word. When we lose that prophetic word, that means God's given up.

It's finished. And that, we learn from this verse as well. And after Malachi finished his message, I just want to say, degeneration set in.

They didn't take Malachi's word seriously. And they began to backslide. Declension set in to the Jews.

And finally, it ended up, 400 years later, with the Phariseeism that was present in Jesus' day. People who were ready to take the bottom level of hell. A generation of vipers.

In spite of the fact that God had sent a prophet to them 400 years earlier to warn them. But they despised him, they didn't care for his word, and they declined it. It's a serious thing to reject a prophetic word.

It's much more serious than rejecting anything else. And the Lord goes on to say, I'm going to rebuke your offspring. It's going to be suffering on your children.

And I will spread refuse on your faces, the dung of your feasts, and you'll be taken away with it. That is the priest. And then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you.

When everything you touch fails, that my covenant may continue with Levi, says the Lord of hosts. God chose the tribe of Levi because they were wholehearted in the day when Moses said, who is on the Lord's side? In Exodus 32. To stand against the idolatry and the compromise of God's people.

When they were worshipping the golden calf, he said, who is on the Lord's side? Up till that time, the priestly tribe had not been chosen. But then when the tribe of Levi said, yeah, we are on your side, Lord, Moses said, go in with your sword and slay these compromisers. That wasn't an easy ministry.

That was a hard ministry. They were faithful and God said, all right, the tribe of Levi will be the priest. But now they have become compromisers, the children of Levi.

He says my covenant with him, verse 5, was one of life and peace. And I gave them, that is the commandments. I gave my commandments to him as an object of reverence, so he revered me and stood in awe of my name.

And the Living Bible paraphrases that beautifully, that it is through obedience to God's commandments that we show our reverence for him. How do we show our reverence for God? Many people have got so many crazy ideas. Some people think that when they come into what they call a church building, they must sit solemnly and that is how they show their reverence to God.

That's a lot of garbage. I believe the best thing you can do when you come to a meeting hall is to have fellowship with the person next to you till the meeting starts. It's not by that that we show our reverence.

It's by obeying his commandments. There is no other substitute for reverence, to show our reverence for God. He says, thus he revered me and stood in awe of my name.

It's the only proof of the fear of God, obedience to his commandments. And true instruction was in his mouth, verse 6, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness and he turned many back from iniquity.

There are two outstanding examples of the tribe of Levi in the Old Testament. One is Exodus 32, where they used the sword and slew even their own relatives, even their father, mother, etc. And they became priests.

And the other example, I just want to show it to you in Numbers, chapter 25, is another of the tribe of Levi, that is Phinehas. It says here that some of the children of Israel began to commit adultery with the Midianite women, and that was a sin against God. When they brought these heathen women into their tents, and it says here in Numbers 25 that one of the sons of Israel brought a Midianite woman to his relatives in the sight of all the congregation, they were so daring, and Phinehas, verse 7, the son of Eliezer, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw it.

You know what he did? He didn't go in there and say, brother, that's not a good thing. You remember later on there was a man called Eli, who when he saw his own sons committing adultery, he just told them, my sons, that's not a good thing. That's not what Phinehas did.

It says he took a spear and he went in after the man and he put one spear straight through the man and the woman and pinned them down to the ground, and then it says, thus the plague was checked. And those who died by the plague were 24,000. If Phinehas had not stood there uncompromisingly, wholeheartedly, that plague would have destroyed the whole nation of Israel.

And the Lord said, Phinehas, verse 11, has turned away my wrath. Therefore, verse 12, I give him my covenant of peace. How did that peace come? With a spear.

The way to get peace in the church is with a spear and with a sword. There's no other way to have peace in the church. No, that's the way he got the covenant of peace.

And it shall be for him and his descendants a covenant of perpetual priesthood because he was jealous for his God. The other people would have criticized him for being so ruthless. You could have done it gently.

There are always compromisers galore who will say you could have done it more gently. But God approved it. And that's what we read in Malachi chapter 2, verse 5. My covenant with him was one of life and peace.

How did that covenant of peace come? With the spear and the sword. But now these compromising priests had given up the spear, had given up the sword. They didn't want to offend anybody.

They didn't want to hurt the rich people. They didn't want to speak the truth. And the result was no peace, confusion in God's congregation.

He says it was different in Phinehas' day. It was different in Exodus 32 when I chose the tribe of Levi. But now you priests, you compromisers, you claim to be the descendants of these men, but you are first-rate compromisers.

Good for nothing. And notice three things, sorry, seven things you see in verses 5-6 concerning how it should be with the priests. First, they feared me.

He revered me, it says First, we have to fear God. That's what Phinehas did. He didn't fear the opinions of the people.

He couldn't care less what the people thought of him. He feared God. Secondly, the last part of verse 5, he stood in awe of my name.

He was concerned for the name of God. Not for his own name. So many people are concerned for their own name.

People must think I am humble, I am gentle. Phinehas couldn't care less for that. He was concerned about God's name.

Hallowed be thy name. He was concerned that the name of the Lord was dishonored. And that's the second requirement God looks for.

Those who are concerned that his name is dishonored among the heathen today, dishonored among compromising Christians today. Third, the truth was in his mouth. He loved the truth.

And the truth was in his mouth. We have to cleanse out lying. Loving the truth.

And fourth, unrighteousness was not found in his lips. He did not speak useless words. He hated iniquity.

He hated gossip. He hated rotten words. Unrighteousness was not found in his lips.

A very important requirement to be a Number five, he walked with me in peace. That means he walked in harmony with God. That's how it is in the Good News Bible.

He walked in harmony with God. He walked in peace with God. God and he were always at peace with a clear conscience.

Number six, there was an uprightness in his life. He was straight. There was no crookedness in any area of his life.

Every area you looked into his life, it was straight. Uprightness in all areas. Number seven, he turned many people away from sin.

He turned other people away from sin by his life and by his preaching. There is no respect of persons with God. Everyone of us can qualify to be a priest like that.

Just go through those two verses and say, Lord, may that be true in my life and make me a priest. Don't just let me say he has made me kings and priests. We are to be priests.

Let the Lord rebuke us and say, you priests are not really true and faithful to me. And he goes on to say, the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. And that teaches us the responsible place that a messenger of the Lord of hosts has, that if he is a messenger like this, he has to take his commission seriously.

Because men expect to hear the word of God from him. And if we are priests and we share the word of God in the meetings, men expect to hear God's word from us when we get up to speak. But we don't have God's word if we don't take those conditions seriously.

But as for you, he says, you have turned aside from the way. In your private life, you are not walking the way I want you to walk. In our day, the new and living way.

You have caused many people to stumble. The way you lived, the way you sit and gossip at home, you have polluted other people. You have caused other people to stumble by the way you live.

And you have corrupted and broken God's covenant. You have gone astray, you have stumbled others and you have broken God's covenant. That was serious, the way God rebuked those priests.

And he goes on to say in verse 9, And so I have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping my ways, but you are showing partiality in the instruction. Here was another crime among the priests. They were showing partiality in their teaching.

They taught something as God's word and when some poor person disobeyed it, they came down very hard on him. But when some rich person disobeyed it, they covered it up a little bit. They hid it.

Because they were afraid that they would lose that rich man's tithe. And that's the condition of many pastors today. Many preachers, they show partiality in their teaching.

They will not say that which will hurt the rich people. But they have no hesitation in saying that which will hurt the poor people. God says I have rejected you as priests.

You are not going to be my messengers. I believe this is one of the most serious sins that is found among preachers of God's word today. That they show partiality in their preaching.

They don't want to offend the rich and they don't want to offend their friends. They will not say something that will hurt their friends. But they will say something that will hurt others.

Partiality. And therefore God says I have made you despised and abased before all the people. Meaning God has publicly humiliated them.

Publicly he has made them despised. Publicly he has shown others that God's anointing is not upon them. Then what's the use being a messenger after that? If God's anointing is not upon us.

That was a terrible terrible state. Let's see further. It says here in verse 10.

Do we not all have one father? And in the Old Testament that father was Abraham. God was not known as father in the Old Testament. Jesus said I have revealed your name to these people for the first time.

John 17. They never knew your name. That name was father.

Jesus explained the father to us. But there the father was Abraham for these Jewish people. And if you went beyond that Adam.

But do we not all have one father among the Jews? That's Abraham. And that you remember that the Jews told Jesus in John 8.39 we have Abraham as our father. Has not one God created us? Then why do we deal treacherously against his brothers so as to profane the covenant of our fathers? I want you to notice something here in verse 10.

That when you are unfaithful or disloyal to your brother you're breaking a covenant. Earlier on there are two parts to this covenant. Notice in verse 8. He says you have corrupted the covenant because you have gone astray from me the Lord says.

There is a vertical aspect of the covenant with God. But then in verse 10 he is talking about the horizontal aspect of the covenant in our relationship with our fellow believers. He says you people are dealing treacherously with each against his brother.

How does that apply to us today? When you speak against a brother behind his back. You are breaking a covenant. You broke bread with him in the meeting.

You went away from the meeting and at home you spoke against him. That is the sin of Judas Iscariot. To break bread and then to go and betray him behind his back.

Brothers and sisters here lies another reason why so many believers never progress spiritually. Because they are constantly breaking covenant. Constantly breaking covenant.

They come and break bread and break covenant there at home. Notice what God says in psalm 50. Psalm 50 verse 5. Gather my godly ones to me those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

Gather those who are gathered to my name. Gather them to me. And then the Lord says.

But verse 19. You let your mouth loose in evil. Verse 20.

You sit and speak against your own brother. And I have heard it. I have heard you doing it in your home.

You sit and speak against your sister. I have heard you doing it in your home. Verse 21.

These things you have done the Lord says. And I have kept silence. You thought I was another gossip just like you.

You thought I was a gossip like you the Lord says. But I will reprove you and state the case in order before you. Consider this.

You who forget God. A brother or a sister who gossips is a person who forgets God. He doesn't believe that God is there at that time listening to him.

At that moment he is an atheist. Because if Jesus Christ was sitting there he wouldn't do it. Why does he do it then? He believes that God does not exist.

Or that God's word can be taken lightly. You have done these things and I have kept silence the Lord says. You thought I was another gossiper like you.

No I am not. And that is what is referred to in Malachi 2.10. You have been dealing treacherously against your brother. Breaking and thus breaking the covenant of our fathers.

Verse 11. Not only was there a treachery in their relationship with their brothers. There are three times in this passage the word treacherous comes.

And I want you to notice the three occasions where the word treacherous comes. In verses 10 down to verse 16. Judah has dealt treacherously the Lord says also with me.

With God. They were treacherous with each other. That means they were unfaithful and traitors.

Verse 11. They have been traitors to me. And abomination.

How did they do that? They went into idolatry. And abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord which he loves.

And has married the daughter of a foreign God. They married unbelieving heathen. Having divorced their Jewish wives.

And those unbelieving heathen led them back into idolatry. The same idolatry that led the Israelites to Babylon. That God punished them by sending them to Babylon.

They were going back into it. How? Through heathen wives. And 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. By those who awake and answer I presume it means those who are teachers.

Those who can give an answer to others when a question is asked. God says I don't respect the fact that you're a teacher. You're a Bible teacher.

I'll cut you off. There's no respect of presence with me. There's a strictness with me if you do this.

And even those who come presenting an offering before God in a holy way. But there's idolatry in your private life. They were treacherous before God.

Because they were led astray by the beauty of heathen women. Why did they marry these heathen women? There must have been only one reason. That those heathen women were good looking.

The same stupid, idiotic, carnal reason with which a lot of young men get married today. A good looking girl. Which the Bible says beauty is empty.

Charm is deceit. Turn to Genesis chapter 6 where there is a warning right from the days of Noah. A tremendous verse.

And the last days will be like the days of Noah. Genesis 6 verse 2. The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful. And they took wives whomever they chose.

On what basis did these sons of God choose their wives? On the basis of physical beauty alone. That's written in the beginning of the Bible as a warning. And the Lord says, my spirit will not always strive with man forever because he is flesh.

He is flesh. And the proof of the fact that he is flesh is seen in the fact that he is drawn only by physical beauty in the opposite sex. One of the clearest marks of the fact that a believer is living according to the flesh even if he talks about the new and living way, if he hasn't conquered the lust to be attracted by physical beauty in the opposite sex.

We need to ask God to open our eyes to see the valuelessness of physical beauty in the opposite sex. Just like the valuelessness of money. The sons of God begin to look with their eyes wide open at the daughters of men in the days of Noah.

And the last days will be like the days of Noah. But there was one man Noah and his family who were God fearing. And so that's what happened in the days of Malachi 2. Here they were talking about the body of Christ and the walls of Jerusalem but all the time their eyes were ogling at the daughters of men because they were good looking.

Because they hadn't taken it seriously in this matter to radically judge themselves in this area. They just talked the pious language and God sent Malachi the prophet to rebuke them for all this humbug and hypocrisy. And he says you've been treacherous to me.

Further, another treachery. They were treacherous to each other as brothers. They were treacherous to the Lord in being not careful with their eyes and marrying heathen women and going into idolatry.

And then notice verse 13 and 14. You have also been treacherous to your own wife. As for the man who, verse 13, and this is another thing you do.

You cover the altar of the Lord with tears. You've got all this spiritual language when you come to the meeting and you can even manufacture tears in the meeting when you pray with weeping. Oh how spiritual that sounds.

That groaning in the voice, that trembling in the voice when they pray and they sound so spiritual it looks as if they're crying in their earnest. It's one thing if it's genuine. Here it was manufactured.

And he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say for what reason? Why doesn't God listen to your prayer? Because the Lord has been watching you and he has seen that you have been unfaithful to your wife. You thought nobody saw it.

And God was watching you all the time. The Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth against whom you have dealt treacherously. Treachery in three areas.

Towards God, towards a brother, and towards one's wife. They usually go together. You're unfaithful to God, you're unfaithful to your brother, you're unfaithful to your wife.

Though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. In the beginning God said I will make a companion for Adam. In the last book of the Old Testament God says your wife is your companion.

In the first book of the Bible God says the two shall be one. In the last book of the Old Testament it says here verse 15 he made them both one. The margin.

Did he not make one? When God joins a husband and wife together, he desires the wife to be the permanent lifelong companion of the husband. And that she must be one with him and he must be one with her. And if he is not living in an understanding way with his wife, 1 Peter 3.7 says, your prayers will not be heard.

No, your prayers will not be heard or answered. If you are not living in an understanding way with your wife. That's what Malachi says too.

You pray and you cry and God's not listening to your prayers and you say why? Because your relationship with your wife is not right. In that case it was really serious. They were treacherous.

They were fooling around with other women. We may be better than them, but if we fool around with our eyes it's just as bad. If we fool around in our thoughts, it's just as bad.

Very serious. If we have come to a knowledge of the truth of the new and living way and then do such things. The times of ignorance God overlooks, but now he commands all men to repent.

Very serious. Once we have understood the new covenant and come to a knowledge of the truth, be very careful. The marriage relationship is very important.

Notice what Malachi speaks about. He speaks about the very things we speak in the church. That's why we believe we are on the right track.

Malachi was speaking as the last prophet before the first coming of the Lord and he has a message, a prophetic message for us who are in the days immediately before the second coming of the Lord and he says, be faithful to your wives. Don't be bored with your wives. Don't be bored with your husbands.

That's the way to unfaithfulness. When you get bored with your marriage partner. When it's boring.

Why does he mention the wife of your youth? The last part of verse 15 he says, didn't he make one? And why one? Because he sought a godly offspring. There's something there. The reason why God wants husband and wife to be one is because he wants godly children.

Why don't we have godly children? Because the husband and wife are not one. Here's the reason. Very clearly written in verse 15.

When husband and wife are not one, it's not possible to have godly children. They may become godly on their own in spite of their parents. That's another thing.

But the way to godly children is through unity between husband and wife. Therefore, take heed then to your spirit. Not just to your actions and your words you keep saying like the books on marriage say, say I love you very much darling and all that.

Forget all that. Watch your spirit, God says. That's more important.

Not some psychological techniques. Watch your spirit, your heart. Let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.

For I hate divorce, says the Lord. I hate the cruel man who covers his garment with wrong. Take heed to your spirit.

The second time, verse 16. Don't worry about your actions and words. Take heed to your heart.

Your spirit. That no one is treacherous in his spirit. That in your heart, in your thoughts, you are not unfaithful.

Why does he say wife of your youth? Because when she was young, she was good looking and trim and charming. Now she's older. And because you have only lust in your heart, you do not value godliness, you despise your wife because she's older, she's not as good looking, not as trim, not as charming.

That's your sins. You've got lust which you haven't conquered. That's why you don't appreciate your wife when she's older.

If you were truly godly, you couldn't care less for the fact that your wife's not good looking now.

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