

# Malachi 2 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

<b>THE ORACLE OF THE WORD OF JEHOVAH THROUGH MALACHI</b> (Malachi 1:1) (Malachi means "My Messenger" or "Messenger of Jehovah") <a href="#">Click for EXCELLENT TIMELINE - Go to Page 42</a>				
<b>Mal 1:1-5</b>	<b>Mal 1:6-2:9</b>	<b>Mal 2:10-3:15</b>	<b>Mal 3:16-4:3</b>	<b>Mal 4:4-6</b>
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<b>PRIVILEGE OF ISRAEL</b>	<b>POLLUTION OF ISRAEL</b>		<b>PROMISE TO ISRAEL</b>	
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<b>GOD'S COMPASSION for Israel</b>	<b>GOD'S COMPLAINT Against Israel</b>		<b>GOD'S CONSOLATION to Righteous Remnant GOD'S CONDEMNATION of Wicked</b>	
			<b>Mal 3:16</b> <b>Book of Remembrance</b>	<b>Mal 4:1</b> <b>Coming of Messiah</b>
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	<b>GOD'S LOVE SADLY SPURNED!</b>		<b>GOD'S GRACE STILL OFFERED!</b>	
<b>PLACE: JERUSALEM</b>				
<b>TIME OF WRITING: Difficult to Date but... Circa 445-420BC</b>				

As alluded to in the comments on Malachi 1, Israel's priest and people repeatedly failed to see their sin against God and their need to confess so that they might experience His mercy and forgiveness. As **Wiersbe** wisely points out "*It is a dangerous thing when people argue with God and try to defend their sinful ways.*"

<b>ISRAEL'S REFUTATION OF THEIR SIN</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Mal 1:2</b>	<b>But</b> you say, "How hast Thou loved us?"
<b>2</b>	<b>Mal 1:6</b>	<b>But</b> you say, 'How have we despised Thy name?'
<b>3</b>	<b>Mal 1:7</b>	<b>But</b> you say, 'How have we defiled Thee?'
<b>4</b>	<b>Mal 2:14</b>	<b>Yet</b> you say, 'For what reason?'

<b>5</b>	<b>Mal 2:17</b>	<b>Yet</b> you say, "How have we wearied Him?"
<b>6</b>	<b>Mal 3:7</b>	<b>But</b> you say, 'How shall we return?'
<b>7</b>	<b>Mal 3:8</b>	<b>But</b> you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?'
<b>8</b>	<b>Mal 3:13</b>	<b>Yet</b> you say, 'What have we spoken against Thee?'

Israel doesn't even reply to God's accusations by "**Yes, but**" but only "**But!**" There is no "Yes," no acknowledgement whatsoever of their guilt before a holy God. This reflects their intractably stony hearts, their immutably stiff necks, their unresponsive rebellious spirits! A sad state indeed, for a people chosen by God to be lights unto the Gentiles!

**David Levy** outlines Malachi

1. A People Divinely Loved (Mal 1:1–5)
  2. A Compromising Clergy (Mal 1:6–14)
  3. The Priesthood: God's EKG Of Israel (Mal 2:1–9)
  4. The Broken Marriage Covenant (Mal 2:10–16)
  5. Where Is The God Of Justice? (Mal 2:17–3:6)
  6. Robbing A Righteous God (Mal 3:7–12)
  7. The Two Faces Of Judah (Mal 3:13–18)
  8. The Day Of The Lord Unveiled (Mal 4:1–6)
- (Malachi : Messenger of rebuke and renewal)

**John Phillips** outline of Malachi 2

#### **Disregarding God's Law (Malachi 2:1-9)**

##### **God's Commandment to the Priests (Malachi 2:1-4)**

- What He Said Specifically (Malachi 2:1)
- What He Said Solemnly (Malachi 2:2-3)
- The Thrust of the Message (Malachi 2:2a)
- The Threat of the Message (Malachi 2:2b-3)
- A Shattering Curse (Malachi 2:2b)
- A Shameful Corruption (Malachi 2:3)
- What He Said Surely (Malachi 2:4)

##### **God's Covenant with the Priests (Malachi 2:5-7)**

- A Lesson from the Past (Malachi 2:5-6)
- Levi's Ordination (Malachi 2:5a)
- Levi's Obedience (Malachi 2:5b-6)
- Godly Inclination (Malachi 2:5b-6a)
- His Godly Influence (Malachi 2:6b)
- A Lesson for the Present (Malachi 2:7)

##### **God's Contempt for the Priests (Malachi 2:8-9)**

- Their Abandonment of God (Malachi 2:8)
- Their Abasement by God (Malachi 2:9)

##### **Nation's Special Sins (Malachi 2:10-17)**

- Their Detestable Ways (Malachi 2:10-13)

A Denial of Brotherhood (Malachi 2:10)  
 A Distortion of Belief (Malachi 2:11-13)  
 Their Marriages (Malachi 2:11)  
 Their Mockery (Malachi 2:12)  
 Their Misery (Malachi 2:13)  
 Their Deserted Wives (Malachi 2:14-16)  
 What the Lord Witnessed (Malachi 2:14)  
 What the Lord Wanted (Malachi 2:15)  
 What the Lord Withstands (Malachi 2:16)  
 Their Distorted Words (Malachi 2:17)  
 Their Words Wearing to God (Malachi 2:17a)  
 God's Words Wrested by Them (Malachi 2:17b)  
 (Exploring the Minor Prophets)

**Malachi 2:1 "And now this commandment is for you, O priests.:"** (Mal 1:6 Jer 13:13 La 4:13 Ho 5:1)

**And now** - NICOT comments "The prophet begins by reminding the priests that this command was especially applicable to them. With the introductory weattâ, "**and now**," the prophet recapitulates what was said in the preceding passage and emphasizes the topic of his new discourse."

**Commandment** (04687) (**misvah/mitsvah**) is an authoritative directive, written or verbal, issued as instruction or prescription to a subordinate from men (1Ki 2:43; Esther. 3:3; Pr 6:20; Isa 36:21; Isa 29:13 = "tradition," [= 2 words - mitsvah + iys = man] Jer. 35:18) or from God

**Misvah/mitsvah** is probably better translated in this context "decree," since no explicit commandment is given (cf. Nah. 1:14). The decree which follows gives the consequences of the priests' disobedience.

**Priest** (03548) (**kohen** - from **kahan** = to officiate/minister as priest) signifies an acting priest, chief ruler, chief priest, or principal officer . Besides the well-known Levitical priests and high priests, there seems to have developed non-Levitical priests (high officials). (2Sa 8:18; 20:26; 1Ki 4:5; 1Ch 18:16, 17)

As noted above David Levy refers to this section as "The Priesthood: God's EKG Of Israel (Mal 2:1-9)"

In the early days e.g. in Deuteronomy, was there DIVORCE when they committed adultery? No...THERE WAS DEATH!!! But through the years instead of putting them to death, they wrote a BILL OF DIVORCEMENT (See Dt 22:12ff). So DIVORCE replaced DEATH! When this occurred the Jews then began to divorce FOR ANY CAUSE. Go to Mal 2:13.

**Disciple's Study Bible** - Mal 2:1-9 GOD, Wrath--God's ministers bear special responsibility to teach His people. When they neglect or misuse this responsibility, they face God's disciplining wrath. Professional ministry is not a reason for pride but an opportunity for service. Mal 2:1-9 WORSHIP, Priesthood--Worship leaders have specific functions: (1) to listen to God; (2) to honor God; (3) to reverence and worship God; (4) to follow the highest moral standards; (5) to turn other people away from their sinful lives; (6) to instruct God's people; and (7) to be God's messengers.

**Wiersbe** - The priests dishonored God's name in another way: they despised the very privilege of being priests (Mal. 2:1-5). They were taking for granted the high calling God had given them and treating the temple ministry with contempt. Serving at the altar was a job, not a ministry, and they did it to please themselves, not to please and glorify the Lord. Unfortunately, that same attitude is in the church today.

**Malachi 2:2 "If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart .:"** (Not listen - : Lev 26:14-46, Dt 28:15-68, Dt 30:17,18 Ps 81:11,12 Isa 30:8-13 Jer 6:16-20, 13:17, 25:4-9, 34:17 Eze 3:7 Zec 1:3-6, 7:11-14) (Isa 42:25, 47:7, 57:11)(**Give honor or glory** - Jos 7:19, Jer 13:16, Lk 17:18, 1Pe 4:11, Rev 14:7, 16:9)

**HONORING GOD'S**

## NAME

**Wiersbe** sees the Key theme of Malachi as "Honoring the name of God by living godly lives." A good word in Malachi's today and our day! Let it be, by the enabling power of Thy Spirit great Jehovah. Amen.

**If...then** - This introduces a conditional statement, which is a promise. We all love the promises of God, but need to remember that some are promises regarding which we would rather not be the "beneficiary!" (e.g., cf 2Ti 3:12-note!)

**Give honor to My Name** - The clear implication is that when the priests obey God, they honor His great Name. Beloved, are we not His priests today in the New Covenant (cf 1Pe 2:9)? How much more should we honor His Name for we have His indwelling Spirit to give us the desire and power to obey His commandments! (cf Phil 2:12NLT-note, Phil 2:13NLT-note)

**Walter Kaiser** - People whose life and ministry did not give glory to God's name practiced merely the "form of godliness," without any of its power (2 Tim. 3:5). They might profess to know God, but their works denied their words (Titus 1:16). (The Preacher's Commentary )

**Give honor** - The KJV has "give glory" - This is the chief end of man according to the Westminster Catechism. Scriptures, both Old and New, repeatedly attests to this truth...

Josh 7:19 Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I implore you, **give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel**, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me (See Achan's response - Josh 7:20, 21)."

Jer 13:16 (Addressed to rebellious Judah soon to be demolished by the Babylonians and taken into 70 years of exile) **Give glory to the LORD your God**, Before He brings darkness And before your feet stumble On the dusky mountains, And while you are hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness, And turns it into gloom.

**Comment:** Note that in the midst of impending wrath, God offers mercy. Give God the glory. Turn from your sin. Obey. Otherwise you will be punished. This principle is timeless.

Luke 17:18 (Jesus in the context [Lk 17:17] of cleansing of the 10 cleansed asks) "Was no one found who turned back **to give glory to God**, except this foreigner ?"

**Comment:** Here we note that giving God the thanks due His Name is a way of giving Him glory.

1Pet 4:11-note (Referring to "**Spiritual Gifts**" Peter declares) Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things **God may be glorified through Jesus Christ**, to Whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**Comment:** When the saints of God effectively and in the Spirit use the gifts of God, the result is that God is glorified. This begs the question dear saint...Do you know your spiritual gift(s)? Are you using your gifts to bring Him glory or are you using them to bring glory to yourself? Or are you not using them at all in the local body in which His Spirit has placed you? If the latter is true, your local body is less than it should be, for the use of your gift(s) is integral to the proper functioning of the Body of Christ.

Rev 14:7-note and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and **give Him glory**, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

**Comment:** The context is the proclamation of the "Eternal Gospel" (Rev 14:6). The implication then of those who "Fear God" is that they believe the Gospel. What a privilege it is that we as believers today can live in such a way as to **give Him glory!**

Rev 16:9-note And men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God Who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent, so as **to give Him glory**.

**Comment:** Notice the importance of repentance, a doctrine which sadly many fail to proclaim as an integral component of the Gospel. Whereas those who repent and believe the eternal Gospel in Rev 14:6-7 give Him glory, those who fail to repent and believe do not give Him glory. And so we see the parallel here in Mal 2:2 where the priests do not give God the glory due His great Name, but instead like those earth dwellers (unbelievers) in the time of the Revelation, do the very antithesis...they blaspheme the Name of God!

**I will send the curse upon you** - MacKay notes that this "is almost an exact quotation of Deuteronomy 28:20. 'Send' is an intensive form of the verb and so may be translated 'hurl' or 'let loose'. A curse, literally 'the curse' (all the devastation of God's righteous judgment) is the inevitable counterpart of the covenant blessing. It comes into force because the requirements of the covenant have

been ignored."

**I will curse your blessings** - A "divine oxymoron" - cursed blessings! This is the antithesis of what Jehovah desires most to bestow on His chosen people, but what He must do if they persist in disobedience.

**Walter Kaiser** - The penalty for failing to hear and respond to God was strong: three times the text mentions a curse that God would bring on the priests for their disobedience and unbelief. God's name is serious business, and nothing pollutes it more than the misconduct of those whose business is to honor it.

**You are not taking it to heart** - Not determining to obey and honor His Name. This is the second mention of the **key word heart** in verse 2 (the other **key word** is curse). Is not the heart of all our problems, the problem of our heart! This is a fascinating verse, for in the first clause we see a prophecy and in the last clause the fulfillment of the prophecy! (See discussion of **key words** for the value of disciplining yourself to observe and interrogate key words in a verse, chapter or book and how in so doing, you will very often receive wonderful spiritual insights as the Spirit illuminates the text - 1Cor 2:11-13, Jn 16:13).

God through Moses had clearly warned Israel not to sow seeds of disobedience, lest they reap the fruit of divine retribution...

See, I have set before you today **life and prosperity**, and **death and adversity**; in that I command you today to **love** the LORD your God, to **walk** in His ways and to **keep** His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may **bless** you in the land where you are entering to possess it. 17 But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You shall not prolong your days in the land (**Note**: "The land" in most of its OT uses refers to the land God promised to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. 19 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the **blessing** and the **curse**. So **choose life in order that you may live**, you and your descendants, (Deut 30:15-19)

**LORD of hosts** (This Name occurs 239x in OT and 24 or 10% are in small book of Malachi!) - This is an interesting choice of one of His great Names, Names they refused to honor! Richard Mayhue writes that "Jehovah-Sabaoth or LORD Almighty ('LORD of hosts) refers to God's command of all His creation, which ensures divine victory over every enemy (Jer 11:20)." See more discussion of **Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts (of armies)**.

**Malachi 2:3 "Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it.":** (spread: Heb. scatter, Mal 2:9 1Sa 2:29,30 1Ki 14:10 2Ki 9:36,37 Job 20:7 Ps 83:10 Jer 8:2 Na 3:6 Lk 14:35 1Co 4:13)

## JEHOVAH'S STINKING REBUKE

NLT - "Because of you I will rebuke your descendants ; I will spread on your faces the offal from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it.

NET Malachi 2:3 I am about to discipline your children and will spread offal on your faces, the very offal produced at your festivals, and you will be carried away along with it (cf where the offal was to be discarded = Ex. 29:14).

GWN Malachi 2:3 "I'm going to punish your descendants. I'm going to spread excrement on your faces, the excrement from your festival sacrifices. You will be discarded with it.

**Behold (hinneh)** -This interjection always serves to call the reader's attention to something. Jehovah is now going to announce His a rebuke to which the readers should give special attention!

**W A Criswell** notes that - This verse begins with the first of five "**behold**" clauses in the book that announce something which will occur in the future (cf. Mal 2:3, 3:1; 4:1, 5). The "**refuse**" spoken of is the dung left behind after one of Judah's hypocritical religious feasts. Spreading it on the priests would render them unclean and, thus, unfit for priestly service. Since their lives had already rendered them unfit, this would be an appropriate punishment, although the action is surely to be understood figuratively. The law commanded that the dung of the sacrifices was to be burned outside the camp (Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:11, 12; 16:27). As the dung was to be removed after a festival, so they were also to be removed, disqualified and rejected.

**Henry Morris** - God had commanded that the dung of the sacrificial animals be buried "without the camp" (Exodus 29:14; Leviticus 4:11-12; 16:27). But, because of the faithlessness of the priests to their high calling, they were to be subjected to utter humiliation and disgrace. God would "send a curse upon you" (Malachi 2:2) and "take you away with it." This dire warning seems to imply an untimely death, with each such corrupt priest buried "without the camp" (Exodus 29:14) in the dung heap.

**Rebuke your offspring** (NET - I am about to discipline your children) - The KJV is quite different "corrupt your seed!" Some think seed here refers to the lineage of the priests, but others to the crops (I favor the former, because of the example of Eli and his "seed" - 1Sa 2:27-29, 30-33)

**Rebuke** ([01605](#))(**gaar**) means to criticize sharply and suggests a sharp or stern reproof.

**TWOT** "This root indicates a check applied to a person or peoples through strong admonitions or actions. Jacob rebukes Joseph when he relates the dream of sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing to him (Genesis 37:10). Aggressive nations flee before God when he checks their deed against his people (Isaiah 17:13). God rebukes Satan's attempt to hinder worship in Jerusalem (Zech. 3:2). Ruth is not prevented from gleaning in Boaz's fields even though she is from Moab (Ruth 2:16). God prevents the normal action of water and wave when he rolls back the Red Sea (Psalm 106:9).

Louw-Nida says **gaar** means "to tell another that they have done wrong, with conviction or zeal, implying disapproval and a straining of relationship."

**Baker** - When depicting God's actions, this word is often used to describe the result of His righteous anger (Isa. 54:9; Nah. 1:4) against those who rebel against Him, including wicked nations (Ps. 9:5[6]; Isa. 17:13); their offspring (Mal. 2:3); the proud (Ps. 119:21); and Satan (Zech. 3:2). So authoritative is the Lord's rebuke that even nature obeys His voice (Ps. 106:9; Nah. 1:4).

**Rebuke** (Webster, 1828) - To chide; to reprove; to reprehend for a fault; to check by reproof.

**Gaar** -13v - rebuke(9), rebuked(4), rebukes(1).

Genesis 37:10 He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"

Ruth 2:16 "Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

Psalm 9:5 You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

Psalm 68:30 Rebuke the beasts in the reeds, The herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples, Trampling under foot the pieces of silver; He has scattered the peoples who delight in war.

Psalm 106:9 Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up, And He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness.

Psalm 119:21 You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, Who wander from Your commandments.

Isaiah 17:13 The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters, But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away, And be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind, Or like whirling dust before a gale.

Isaiah 54:9 "For this is like the days of Noah to Me, When I swore that the waters of Noah Would not flood the earth again; So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you Nor will I rebuke you.

Jeremiah 29:27 now then, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who prophesies to you?

Nahum 1:4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither; The blossoms of Lebanon wither.

Zechariah 3:2 The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke (Lxx = epitimao = charge someone as being blamable) you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

Malachi 2:3 "Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it.

Malachi 3:11 "Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the LORD of hosts.

**I will spread refuse on your faces** - The Lxx translation refers to it as " the dung of your feasts!" God is serious about the priests' attitude and actions in carrying out the sacrifices. The defiled priest would be further defiled! Imagine you were a priest reading these words! Beloved if this doesn't get their attention, I don't know what would!

**Guzik** - Sacrificed animals still had excrement in their systems, and God said this should be burned outside the sanctuary (Exodus 29:14). Here, God says He will “rub their noses in it,” so that they will have to be taken outside the sanctuary.

**Albert Barnes** - And spread dung upon your faces, the dung of your solemn feasts, or, of your sacrifices. It was by the law carried without the camp and burned with the animal itself. They had brought before the face of God maimed, unfitting sacrifices; they should have them cast back, with their refuse, upon them;

**Refuse** (dung, offal) (06569) (**peres/feresh**) refers to the feces, excrement produced in an animal or human being!

**NET Note** - The Hebrew term feresh ("offal") refers to the entrails as ripped out in preparing a sacrificial victim. This graphic term has been variously translated: "dung" (KJV, RSV, NRSV, NLT); "refuse" (NKJV, NASB); "offal" (NEB, NIV).

**You will be taken away with it** - NLT renders it "I will add you to the dung heap."

**MacArthur** - This very graphic language shows how God viewed unfaithful priests as worthy of the most unthinkable disgrace. As the internal waste of the sacrificial animal was normally carried outside the camp and burned (cf. Ex 29:14; Lv 4:11, 12; 8:17; 16:27), so the priests would be discarded and suffer humiliation and loss of office. The Lord's purpose in such a warning was to shake them out of their complacency. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**MacKay** - The idea seems to be that they will be degraded from the sanctuary to the dung heap. As they thought so little of being in God's presence, they will be judicially deprived of appearing in the Temple.

**Wiersbe** - In short, God was saying, “You're treating Me with disrespect, so I'll treat you like garbage! You don't value the priestly ministry, so why should you be in office?”

**Steven Cole** applies this true to modern pastors - God gets pretty graphic by saying that He will spread refuse or dung on the faces of the priests and cause them to be despised and abased in front of all the people. These proud priests were trying to keep up their image as important and influential men. But God will expose them for what they are, defiled and unclean. Whenever a pastor's sin gets exposed publicly, you know that he didn't just suddenly fall. God is exposing in public what has been going on behind the scenes for a long time. “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (James 3:1)! A. W. Tozer wrote, “Save me from the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offering. Help me to remember that I am a prophet—not a promoter, not a religious manager, but a prophet” (“The Prayer of a Minor Prophet”). That is the essence of spiritual leadership, to honor God by walking with Him and teaching His truth. “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching” (1Ti 4:16)! ([Requirements for Spiritual Leadership Malachi 2:1-9](#))

**Malachi 2:4** "Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi," says the LORD of hosts. (you will know- 1Ki 22:25 Isa 26:11 Jer 28:9 Eze 33:33, 38:23 Lk 10:11)(my covenant: Isa 1:24-28, 27:9 Eze 20:38-41, 44:9-16 Mt 3:12 John 15:2)

## EXAMPLE OF A PIOUS PRIEST

Note that from Mal 2:4 through Mal 2:8 there is a "change in tone" as this section is "a historical reflection on what was and what should have been. That covenant arrangement with the Levites was to endure unaltered. Obviously they were not meeting their responsibilities." (The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 7)

**Then** - A time phrase. Always query **expression of time** by asking "What time is being referred to?, What preceded and what follows?, etc". They would come to **know** when the discipline came upon them. When the priests were defiled (which would prohibit their continual function as priests) by God's punishment in Mal 2:3, then they would **know** it was from God. As a general principle, note that God does not discipline without a goal or purpose - whether we learn the lesson He intends is another matter (cp Pr 6:23b, Ps 119:67, 71)!

**USB Handbook** - The relationship with the previous verse is one of cause and effect: because of the punishment described in Mal 2:3, the priests will realize that the Lord's command (Mal 2:1)

**MacKay** adds that "the priests will come to understand what it was that the Lord had done, and why—but it would be too late."

**Walter Kaiser** - The expression in Malachi 2:4 is elliptical. Its general sense is that God sent His commandment to the priests so that, by taking it to heart, the Levitical priesthood might continue. The phrase “Then you shall know [that I am the LORD]” regularly occurs in texts where the judgment of God is used as a lever to help men and women face up to the challenge that God has set before them (e.g., the experience of Pharaoh in Ex. 7:10; 9:14, 29–30; 10:2; 14:2, 18 or of others in Ezek. 15:7; 33:29). God's

judgment would come if the priests would not respond to His call to change.

**I have sent this commandment to you** - Repeats the word **commandment** seen in Mal 2:1 which links Mal 2:1-4 together.

**That** - expresses purpose. Pause and ponder - "What purpose?"

**My covenant may continue** - God explains His motive for discipline against the ungodly priests. As Guzik says "The Lord hoped that this would warn the priests back to a proper respect of His covenant."

**Criswell** - God's judgment on the priests would convince them of His intention of restoring the priesthood to faithfulness to His covenant with Levi. The nature of this covenant is elaborated in Mal 2:5-7.

**Disciple's Study Bible** - God's intention even in chastising was to renew the solemn oath and purpose He had with Israel. Levi, the representative name for the priestly tribe which acted as mediator before God, provided the true teaching and honest interpretation of God's will for His people. Revealed teaching seeks to turn people from sin to God. The agent of God's revelation is expected to live a life of wholeness and moral uprightness.

**The LORD of hosts** - "The quotation formula says the Lord of hosts serves to mark the conclusion of the first subsection of the paragraph 2.1–9." (A handbook on Malachi. UBS handbook series).

**Malachi 2:5 "My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name.":** (covenant - Nu 3:45 8:15 16:9,10 18:8-24 Nu 25:11-13 Dt 33:8-10 Ps 106:30-31 Eze 34:25 37:26)

NET Malachi 2:5 "My covenant with him was designed to bring life and peace. I gave its statutes to him to fill him with awe, and he indeed revered me and stood in awe before me.

**My covenant** - To what covenant does this refer because there is no direct mention of a covenant in the Pentateuch? Mal 2:4 refers to the covenant with Levi, so this appears to refer to Levi. **John MacArthur** ([MacArthur Study Bible](#)) agrees that the covenant was "The relationship of God to the priesthood (as) clearly set forth in the Levitical covenant (Nu 3:44–48; 18:8–24; Dt 33:8–11)." Others feel the specific covenant could refer to that made with Phinehas in Numbers 25...

Num 25:11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel, in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy. 12 "Therefore say, 'Behold, I give him **My covenant of peace**;13 and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the sons of Israel."

Notice that in Mal 2:5-6 he reverts from the "you" (disobedient priests) of Mal 2:4 to "him," (obedient Levitical priest), the latter being a description of what attitudes (reverence, awe of God's Name) and actions (true instruction given, righteous, upright behavior, turning back his listeners from iniquity).

**Life and peace** - Kaiser notes that "'Life and peace" were gifts from God to obedient persons. Repeatedly Deuteronomy and Proverbs taught that these blessings were the result of a total commitment to the commandments of God (e.g., Deut. 4:40; 6:2; 30:15–20; Pr. 3:1, 2; 4:10, 22; 6:23)."

Keep in mind that Malachi's descriptions of the priests ("life and peace...reverence...stood in awe") were not the way things were but the way things should have been. The priests in Malachi's day had drifted far from the godly, God honoring moorings of their Levitical predecessors. Beloved, is drifting not our natural human tendency? The church at Ephesus is a sad example, having had Paul as their teacher for 3 years (Acts 20:31) and yet after only one generation (about 30 years later) Jesus had to rebuke them declaring "But I have this against you, that you have left (active mood = speaks of the decision of one's will and thus implies an intentional, not accidental, act) your first love." (Rev 2:4) Considering that the Church is Christ's Bride, it is fascinating that the verb Jesus chose for "left" is **aphiemi**, which was used His day to describe someone dismissing their wife. Here, the "wife" dismisses as it were her Husband! This begs the question dear priest of God (1Pe 2:9-note, Rev 1:6-note, Rev 5:10-note) - have you drifted from those first days when you fell in love with Jesus and you sensed His continual presence and love? The world, the flesh and the devil have a way of "dissipating" our love for Jesus. Jesus gives the remedy for a tepid love, going on to command us to

**Remember** (present imperative -Jesus commands this to be our daily practice, our virtual lifestyle - such a supernatural attitude calls for us to jettison self-effort and humbly rely on the Holy Spirit to give us the desire and the power - see Php 2:13NLT-note) therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. (Rev 2:5-note)



**So he revered Me** - The pious Levitical priests of the past (? Levi as the prototype). Why did he revere Jehovah? Because he understood and took to heart His statutes (they were an "object of reverence") which resulted in a godly, reverential fear of God (see this pattern - God's truth in Dt 6:1, an appropriate response of reverential fear in Dt 6:2), something the priests of Malachi's day sorely lacked. John Phillips gives an excellent description...

The Levites of Moses' day had a belief that behaved. With their fighting faith and the courage of their convictions, they were prepared to make short work of both apathy and apostasy. The priests of Malachi's day were lineal heirs of the Levites, but their ministry had degenerated into a well-paying job with fringe benefits and social security. Professionalism in the things of God nearly always degenerates into dead orthodoxy or faith-denying liberalism. (Exploring the Minor Prophet)

**Malachi 2:6 "True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity.": (Instruction: Ps 37:30 Eze 44:23,24 Ho 4:6 Mt 22:16 Mk 12:14 Lk 20:21 2Ti 2:15,16 Tit 1:7-9 Rev 14:5) (Walked - Ge 5:21-24 6:9 17:1 Lk 1:6) (turned - Jer 23:22 Da 12:3 Lk 1:16,17 Ac 26:18 1Th 1:9,10 Jas 5:19,20)**

NET Malachi 2:6 He taught what was true; sinful words were not found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and integrity, and he turned many people away from sin.

### **WORD, WALK & WITNESS OF A GOD FEARING PRIEST**

**True instruction was in his mouth** - Speaking of Levi. The pattern of God's Word, a godly (obedient) walk and teaching of truth is very similar to that seen in Ezra...

Ezra had set his heart to **study** the law of the LORD, and to **practice** it, and to **teach** His statutes and ordinances in Israel. (Ezra 7:10-note)

**Steven Cole** - Sound teaching must flow out of a godly life. As the Puritan pastor Richard Baxter put it, "Is that man likely to do much good, or fit to be a minister of Christ, that will speak for Him an hour, and by his life will preach against Him all the week beside?"

**Instruction** (08451)(**torah**) refers to God's instructions to His people as to how they shall live in this sinful world.

**David Levy** - Today the believer should be eager to show that he is an approved workman for the Lord by diligently studying God's Word and rightly dividing it (2 Tim. 2:15). Only then is he prepared to preserve the Word of God from error and properly teach others.

**He turned many back from iniquity** - As someone has said the proclamation of the Word of God should afflict the "comfortable" and comfort the afflicted!

**Steven Cole** - God's Word is clear that our major problem is not low self-esteem or a poor environment. Our major problem is our sinful rebellion against the Lord of hosts. Any pastor who does not help people deal biblically with their sin is not honoring God by teaching His truth. That's one good reason for teaching straight through a book of the Bible instead of giving topical messages. If I preach topical messages, you may think that I'm singling out your particular problem. But if I'm working through a book of the Bible, and it confronts a specific sin, then "it was in the text!"

**Walter Kaiser** - The goal of all faithful proclamation of the Word is to lead sinners to repentance—to turn "many away from iniquity" (v. 6d). Faithful proclamation of God's Word will "turn many to righteousness" (Dan. 12:3). True teachers of God's Word will also "walk" with the Lord in "peace and equity." To "walk with God" means to live in full accord and harmony with what God has taught in His Word (Deut. 8:19; 13:4; 2 Kin. 23:3; Jer. 7:9; Hos. 11:10). Enoch "walked with God" (Gen. 5:22, 24) as did Noah (Gen. 6:9). But the expression is used sparingly in the Bible to refer only to those who had an unusually close communion or fellowship with God.

**Martin Luther** - Always preach in such a way that if the people listening do not come to hate their sin, they will instead hate you!"

**John Phillips** - Levi was inspired by the fear of the living God and as a result God gave him a threefold ministry: he was an example to all by his words, his walk, and his witness. He was an example by his **words** in that "the law of truth was in his mouth" (Mal 2:6). He upheld the inerrancy, inspiration, and infallibility of the Word of God. Levi was an example by his **walk** in that "he walked with [God] in peace and equity." His conduct was such that he enjoyed the constant smile of God's approval and the conscious sweetness of His presence. Levi was an example by his **witness** in that he "did turn many away from iniquity." He did away with apostasy, put the fear of God into the rank and file, defended the faith, and encouraged those who wanted to live for God. (Ibid)

**Steven Cole** - The primary requirement for a pastor-teacher is not that a man be a gifted communicator, but rather that he walks closely with the Lord. John Calvin said that it would be better for the preacher to break his neck going into the pulpit, if he does not take pains to be the first to follow God (cited by J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness* [Crossway Books], p. 76). Here God contrasts the priests of Malachi's day with the Levitical priests who had walked with God in peace and uprightness (Mal 2:6). The phrase "to walk with" God is used only of Enoch (Ge 5:22, 24) and Noah (Gen. 6:9), although God commanded Abraham, "Walk before Me, and be blameless" (Gen. 17:1). To walk with God implies close, intimate fellowship with God and obedience to His commandments or ways (Mal. 2:9). Walking with God is connected with honoring Him. When God confronted Eli the priest because he did not confront his evil sons, God said, "I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever." But the Lord continues, "Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed" (1Sa 2:30).

**Iniquity** (05771) ('**avon** from verb '**avah** = to bend, twist, distort) describes the iniquity, evil, punishment or guilt which is associated with a twisting of the standard or deviation from it. Since there is a deliberate twisting or perverting, '**avon** describes sin that is particularly evil. It may also describe the punishment or disaster that befalls those who practice wickedness.

'**Avon** also describes a conscious twisting or distorting as implied by the fact that David says "I kept myself from my iniquity." (2Sa 22:24) Israel made a choice to return to the sins of her ancestors (Jer. 11:10; 13:22). The punishment that goes with this deliberate act as a consequence is indicated by the word also (Ge 4:13; Isa 53:11).

This word for sin can also indicate the guilt that results from the act of sin as implied in Moses' prayer in Nu 14:19.

In Pr 5:22 Solomon warns (and sadly failed to heed his own warning - see 1Ki 11:1-11) of the captivating power of **avon** - "His own iniquities (**avon**) will capture (Heb - **lakad** = catch in a net, trap or pit, figuratively of entrapment of men caught in snares laid by enemies as in Jer 5:26; 18:22; Ps 35:8; Lxx translates lakad with verb **agreuo** used in " hunting or fishing = to take, catch; figuratively of taking advantage of someone in an unguarded moment, seeking to catch them in a mistake, try to get them to make a wrong statement as in Mk 12.13) the wicked, and he will be held (Heb = **tamak** = basic idea = "grasping securely") with the cords of his sin (**chattat/chattath**)."

**Avon** is the Hebrew word which most distinctly unites sins of all kinds with their penal consequences. Avon is not only the iniquity but can also indicate the guilt that results from the act.

The **Lxx** translates **avon** in Mic 7:18 with **adikia** which means a condition of not being right, whether with God, according to the standard of His holiness and righteousness or with man, according to the standard of what man knows to be right by his conscience. **Vine** adds that "In the Septuagint the word has the following renderings: **adikia** ("wrongdoing; unrighteousness; wickedness"); **hamartia** ("sin; error"); and **anomia** ("lawlessness")."

The first use of '**avon** is interesting - (Ge 4:13) "And Cain said to the LORD, "My **punishment** (**Lxx** = **aitia** = speaks of a legal formal charge or the ground for accusation - Acts 23:28, 25:18) is too great to bear!" 'Avon has a similar since in the passage in which Edom was condemned for not helping Israel in the time of Israel's punishment (Ezek. 35:5). 'Avon describes the Levites who had to bear the punishment of their iniquity because they strayed from following the Lord (Ezek. 44:10, 12 - '**avon** = **punishment for their iniquity**).

In Ge 15:16 we read "Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the **iniquity** (**Lxx** = **hamartia** = a departure from doing what is right, especially as it relates to God's standard of righteousness) of the Amorite is not yet complete."

In Isaiah 53 '**avon** is used three times - Isa 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our **iniquities**; The chastening for our well-being [fell] upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. **6** All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the **iniquity** of us all To fall on Him. **11** As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see [it] and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their **iniquities**.

In Psalm 32 David uses all three words for **sin** - Ps 32:2 "How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!... **5** I acknowledged my sin (**Chattat/chattath** to Thee, And my iniquity, I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin (**Chattat/chattath**) . **Selah** (**Selah means "pause and ponder" - something worth doing when we read what God does with our sins!**).

In one of the most incredible prophecies in the entire Bible, Daniel uses all three words for sin in Daniel 9:24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin (**Chattat/chattath**, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy [place]).

There are 3 primary Hebrew words for "sin". Each is defined based on the existence of God's standard of righteousness (all that God

is, all that God commands, all that God demands, all that God approves, all that God provides in Christ Jesus 1Co 1:30) established by God.

- 1). **Chattat/chattath** [02403] = miss the mark or to fall short of the divine standard; to err and wander
- 2). **Pesha'** [06588] = rebellion or transgression, and indicates revolt against the standard.
- 3). **'Avon** [05771] = iniquity or guilt is a twisting of the standard or deviation from it; crooked dealing[/FONT>

'Avon is translated in NAS as - blame(1), guilt(21), guilty(1), iniquities(46), iniquity(143), punishment(12), punishment for the iniquity(3), punishment for their iniquity(3).

'Avon - 213v in NAS - Ge 4:13; 15:16; 19:15; 44:16; Ex 20:5; 28:38, 43; 34:7, 9; Lev 5:1, 17; 7:18; 10:17; 16:21-22; 17:16; 18:25; 19:8; 20:17, 19; 22:16; 26:39-41, 43; Nu 5:15, 31; 14:18-19, 34; 15:31; 18:1, 23; 30:15; Dt 5:9; 19:15; Josh 22:17, 20; 1Sa 3:13-14; 20:1, 8; 25:24; 28:10; 2Sa 3:8; 14:9, 32; 19:19; 22:24; 24:10; 1Kgs 17:18; 2Kgs 7:9; 1Chr 21:8; Ezra 9:6-7, 13; Neh 4:5; 9:2; Job 7:21; 10:6, 14; 11:6; 13:23, 26; 14:17; 15:5; 19:29; 20:27; 22:5; 31:11, 28, 33; 33:9; Ps 18:23; 25:11; 31:10; Ps 32:2, 5; 36:2; 38:4, 18; 39:11; 40:12; 49:5; 51:2, 5, 9; 59:4; 65:3; 69:27; 78:38; 79:8; 85:2; 89:32; 90:8; 103:3, 10; 106:43; 107:17; 109:14; 130:3, 8; Pr 5:22; 16:6; Isa 1:4; 5:18; 6:7; 13:11; 14:21; 22:14; 26:21; 27:9; 30:13; 33:24; 40:2; 43:24; 50:1; Isa 53:5-6, 11; 57:17; 59:2-3, 12; 64:6-7, 9; 65:7; Jer 2:22; 3:13; 5:25; 11:10; 13:22; 14:7, 10, 20; 16:10, 17-18; 18:23; 25:12; 30:14-15; 31:30, 34; 32:18; 33:8; 36:3, 31; 50:20; 51:6; Lam 2:14; 4:6, 13, 22; 5:7; Ezek 3:18-19; 4:4-6, 17; 7:13, 16, 19; 9:9; 14:3-4, 7, 10; 16:49; 18:17-19, 30; 21:23-25, 29; 24:23; 28:18; 29:16; 32:27; 33:6, 8-9; 35:5; 36:31, 33; 39:23; 43:10; 44:10, 12; Da 9:13, 16, 24; Hos 4:8; 5:5; 7:1; 8:13; 9:7, 9; 12:8; 13:12; 14:1-2; Amos 3:2; Mic 7:18-19; Zech 3:4, 9; Mal 2:6

**Malachi 2:7 "For 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.:** (priest: Lev 10:11 Dt 17:8-11, 21:5, 24:8 2Ch 17:8,9, 30:22 **Ezra 7:10-note** Ne 8:2-8 Jer 15:19, 18:18 Hag 2:11-13 2Ti 2:24,25) (**messenger:** Mal 3:1 Isa 42:19, 44:26 Hag 1:13 John 13:20, 20:21 Ac 16:17 2Co 5:20 Ga 4:14 1Th 4:8)

**For** (See **discussion** of the importance of observing and querying this **term of explanation**) - Explains why the priest were able to turn many from iniquity. Not because they were so persuasive, but because they knew and boldly proclaimed the Word of Truth. Preachers, do your lips preserve knowledge?

How different from Judah's teachers described by Jeremiah...

Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish visions; and **they have not exposed your iniquity** So as to restore you from captivity, But they have seen for you false and misleading oracles. (Lam 2:14)

The purpose of these priest/teachers was the same as that of pastors in Paul's (and our) day and that is to **preach (aorist imperative** = command to do it now, speaks of urgency!) the word; **be ready (aorist imperative)** in season and out of season; **reprove (elegcho** means to bring to the light, revealing things hidden in our depraved hearts, and again is in the **aorist imperative)**, **rebuke (epitimao** in the **aorist imperative)**, **exhort (aorist imperative)**, with great patience and instruction. (2Ti 4:2-note)

**He is the messenger of the LORD of hosts-** This is a great description (only here in Malachi, but used of Haggai, Hab 1:13 and of Christ Himself, Mal 3:1) of what was to have been the role of a faithful priest. John Phillips adds "The priestly vocation involved the Scriptures as well as the sacrifices. Occupation with the Scriptures was the first duty of the priest-far more important than his ceremonial duties (Leviticus 10:8-11; Deuteronomy 17:9-11). The priest was to uphold the truth of God."

**Messenger** [04397] (**malak**) is one who bears a message (a notice, word or communication, written or verbal, sent from one person to another) or does an errand.

**Edward Hindson** - The priest is the God-intended means of communication between God and man. His life and message should be such that man would seek him out to find out what God says about everything. No man had a higher privilege than the priest of the Old Testament. It is matched (and perhaps exceeded) only by the minister of God in the New Testament economy. (KJV Bible Commentary)

**Preserve** (08104) (**shamar**) mean to keep, to watch over, to be on one's guard. Adam and Ever were to watch over the Garden of Eden (Ge 2:15)! "**Preserve**" has the idea of storing up or treasuring in the mind the principles of God's Word and the knowledge of Him. The **Septuagint** translates shamar with verb **phulasso** meaning to guard as in the following passages...

1 Timothy 6:20 O Timothy, **guard (aorist imperative** = command to do it now, speaks of urgency!) what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge "--

2 Timothy 1:14-note **Guard (aorist imperative** = command to do it now, speaks of urgency!), through the Holy

Spirit Who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

2 Peter 3:17-note You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **be on your guard** (present imperative - continually guarding even as a sentinel guards a military post) so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

**Steven Cole** - In a society where copies of God's Word were rare and expensive, it was especially important for the priests to preserve and pass on to the people the knowledge of God and His ways. But it is also important in our day, when only one in five Protestants read their Bibles daily. After sleeping and working, the thing that Americans do most is to watch TV! While I hope that is not true of any of you, you cannot resist picking up the ways of the world that barrage you daily unless you saturate your mind with God's truth. If a pastor does not teach the knowledge of God and His ways through the Word, you should find another pastor.

The Scripture says that the priests were not only to represent their fellow men before God, but that they also be teachers (note the "prerequisites" for their being teachers!)

Lev 10:9 "Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you may not die—it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations—10 and so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean,<sup>11</sup> and so as **to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.**"

Deut 33:10 "They shall teach Thine ordinances to Jacob, And Thy law to Israel. They shall put incense before Thee, And whole burnt offerings on Thine altar.

Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

### How should one preserve knowledge?

Thy Word I have treasured in my heart, that (expresses purpose) I may not sin against Thee. (Ps 119:11)

**Spurgeon's comment: The Psalmist's heart would be kept by the Word because he kept the Word in his heart.** All that he had of the Word written, and all that had been revealed to him by the voice of God, — all, without exception, he had stored away in his affections, as a treasure to be preserved in a casket, or as a choice seed to be buried in a fruitful soil: what soil more fruitful than a renewed heart, wholly seeking the Lord? The Word was God's own, and therefore precious to God's servant. **He did not wear a text on his heart as a charm, but he hid it in his heart as a rule. He laid it up in the place of love and life, and it filled the chamber with sweetness and light.** We must in this imitate the psalmist, copying his heart work as well as his outward character. First, we must mind that what we believe is truly God's Word; that being done, we must hide or treasure it each man for himself; and we must see that this is done, **not as a mere feat of the memory, but as the joyful act of the affections.** (Ed: Yes, Lord, make it our joy to eat Your Word, to treasure Your Word, to delight in Your Word, that it might hold us fast in times of trial and temptation. In Jesus' mighty Name. Amen)

#### Related Resources:

Memorizing His Word:

Memory Verses by Topic -consider bookmarking to facilitate review

**Malachi 2:8 "But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says the LORD of hosts.:** (you: Ps 18:21, 119:102 Isa 30:11, 59:13 Jer 17:5,13 Eze 44:10 Da 9:5,6 Heb 3:12) (you have caused: Mal 2:9 1Sa 2:17,24,30 Isa 9:16 Jer 18:15 23:11-15 Mt 15:2-5 Luke 11:45,46 Ro 2:19-24 14:21)(corrupted: Mal 2:5,10 Lev 21:15 Ne 13:29)

## THE DIVINE INDICTMENT

Malachi 2:8-9

### God's Contempt for the Priests (Malachi 2:8-9)

Their Abandonment of God (Malachi 2:8)

Their Abasement by God (Malachi 2:9)

**But** - Every encounter with a **term of contrast** should prompt us to pause to ponder the text and **context**. Malachi has just

presented the "ideal" behavior of a Levitical priest, **but now** presents the reality of their decadent, faithless practice. Beloved, let us not read these descriptions of the unfaithful priests and point our finger at them, forgetting that 3-4 fingers of our hand are pointing back at us! Read and heed is always the call in pithy passages such as these. Our prayer should ever be Psalm 139:23-24. Amen

**As for you** - Jehovah of Hosts now directly addresses the unfaithful priests of Malachi's day.

**The way** - Behavior or conduct Jehovah required (cf marks the turn from the ideal of what the priests should be doing to their contemporary failure. (Ge 18:19; 1Kgs. 2:3; Ps. 25:4; 27:11). **MacKay** explains that **way** "derives from the idiom of life as a journey or 'walk', and may refer to the course in fact taken (Hag. 1:5) or which ought to be taken (see Mal 2:6, 8). Here it specifically refers to the conduct required by the covenant with Levi, and set out in Mal 2:6–7. Unlike the psalmists, the priests had turned from the Lord and his laws (Ps. 18:21–22; 119:102). The idea that is conveyed is that they have deliberately done so."

<b>A STRIKING CONTRAST</b>	
<b>FAITHFUL LEVITICAL PRIESTS</b>	<b>FAITHLESS PRIESTS OF MALACHI'S DAY</b>
"Reverence" shown to the Covenant (Mal 2:5)	"Corrupted the covenant" (Mal 2:8)
"Walked with God" (Mal 2:6)	"Turned aside from the way" (Mal 2:8)
"Turned many back from iniquity" (Mal 2:6)	"Caused many to stumble" (Mal 2:8)

**Jeremiah** has a similar description

Jer 5:31 The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority; And My people love it so!  
But what will you do at the end of it?

**Isaiah** records...

For those who guide this people are leading them astray; and those who are guided by them are brought to confusion. (Isa 9:16)

**G Campbell Morgan** explains that this passage...

teaches us, that at the back of the declension of the people is the declension and corruption of the priest; that the people failed to have a right conception of God, because the priest ceased to give them the true conception. The whole company of the people have passed out of the high spiritual realm of past history, because the priest has tampered with—corrupted as the word is here—the very covenant of God. ([The Spirit of the Age](#))

**Stumble** ([03782](#))(**kashal**) means to stagger or totter as of a man physically falling but used figuratively here to describe "falling into sin! The **Lxx** has an interesting Greek verb, **astheneo**, which means to be weak and in this context to cause to fail (cp **astheneo** in Ro 4:19) and it is used in Hosea 4:5 to describe those who "will stumble (**kashal**; **astheneo**) by day."

**MacKay** - '**Stumble**' usually refers to the result of being unsteady on one's feet, but the prevalent Hebrew conception of life as a journey ('walk' in Mal 2:6 and 'way' earlier in this verse) led to the idea of failing to keep to, or progress along, the path of life. It was the aim of the wicked to 'make someone fall', literally, 'cause them to stumble' (Pr. 4:16), and the worthless idols of Jeremiah's day had made the people 'stumble in their ways' (Jer. 18:15). The idiom lies behind the expression 'cause to sin', literally, 'put an obstacle in someone's way so as to cause them to stumble and fall into sin', that is found in the New Testament (for instance Mt. 5:29–30). Jesus warns sternly about the dangers of leading others astray. 'But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea' (Mt. 18:6).

**Expositor's Bible Commentary** - The priests were the custodians of learning, both the preservers and the pioneers of scholarship. But those who sought to drink at those wells found them either dry or poisoned. Instead of turning men into "the way," the priests did the opposite; they turned men from it.

**Corrupted** ([07843](#))(**shachath**) means to decay, to go to ruin, to corrupt, to destroy. It was used of Israelites who worshiped the golden calf (Ex 32:7; Dt 9:12; 32:5, Hos 9:9) "The verb is used to denote the action(s) of the world (i.e., it is corrupt) and ultimately the reason for God's flooding it (Gen. 6:11, 12 -first use in Scripture)." (Baker) The **Lxx** translates **shachath** with **diaphtheiro** which means to corrupt or decay utterly (through and through so to speak) always signifying a change for the worse.

**You have corrupted the covenant of Levi** - Their unfaithful, sinful attitudes and actions did not abrogate the covenant, but did

result in their forfeiture of their right to continue as God's intermediaries!

**Malachi's** contemporary **Nehemiah** gives us an example of blatant **corruption** by the priests of **the covenant of Levi...**

"Do we then hear about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?" 28 Even one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, so I drove him away from me. 29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. (Neh 13:27-29)

**John Phillips** applies this section - Like the skeptical theologians who today destroy the faith of eager young seminary students, and like the Bible-denying ministers who from their pulpits destroy the souls of millions, the godless religious professionals of Malachi's day evoked the displeasure of God. We know from history where the kind of Bible teaching taking root in Malachi's day led. A cumbersome system of rabbinical interpretation and tradition evolved. To the written and inspired Word of God, the rabbis added what they called the oral law, which in essence consisted of their manmade traditions. Their additions to Scripture included the Halacha, a record of rabbinical decisions on questions of ritual; the Mishna, a code resulting from those decisions; the Gemara, a commentary on the Mishna; the Midrashic commentaries on the Old Testament; and the Haggada, ritual readings for the first evening of Passover. And so the Talmud developed and the Cabbala. The Cabbala consisted of mystical interpretations and far-fetched speculations similar to the allegorizing of Origen. By the time of Christ, much of the oral law was well-developed. It was a vast and still-growing encyclopedic accumulation of sense and nonsense, truth and trash, legitimate commentary and worthless tradition. Attacking the oral law cost Christ His life. After the fall of Jerusalem and the discontinuance of the sacrifices, the oral law took new wings. In spite of efforts by saner Jewish scholars to restrain it, it flourished like a vigorous weed in fertile soil. The oral law stifled any hope that the Jews as a nation might turn to Christ, for it locked them into a pattern of Christ-rejecting unbelief. In Malachi's day, then, besides the problem of priests who regarded their work in connection with the sacrifices as a tedious but well-paying job, there was the problem of priests who, along with the scribes and rabbis, regarded their work in connection with the Scriptures as an opportunity for playing an elaborate game of Bible trivia. Their interpretive theories were as far removed from genuine Old Testament Judaism as modern liberal theology is from New Testament Christianity.

**Malachi 2:9 "So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction.":** (made: Mal 2:3 1Sa 2:30 Pr 10:7 Da 12:2,3 Mic 3:6,7) (before: 1Ki 22:28 Jer 28:15,16 29:20-22,31,32 Eze 13:12-16,21 Mk 7:13,14 Lk 20:45-47) (but: Mal 2:8 Mt 5:21,22,27,28,33-37,43,44 19:17,18 23:16-24 Mk 7:8-13 Lk 10:29 11:42 Ro 7:7-10)

NET Malachi "Therefore, I have caused you to be ignored and belittled before all people to the extent to which you are not following after me and are showing partiality in your instruction."

Young's Literal - And I also, I have made you despised and low before all the people, Because ye are not keeping My ways, And are accepting persons in the law.

**So** (therefore) - Whenever you encounter a **term of conclusion**, always pause and ponder the text and the **context!**

**I also have made you despised and abased before all the people** - The punishment to the priests is viewed here as already having begun ("have made"). MacKay adds that "'I' is emphatic, 'I on my part', and sets the LORD's action over against the priests' failure."

**Despised** ([0959](#)) (**baza/bazah [word study]** is from a root meaning to accord little worth to something) means to disdain or to hold in contempt. Bazah is used in a number of places to mean "despise" in the sense of treating someone or something as totally insignificant or worthless. This verb is used 4x in Malachi (Mal 1:6, 7, 12, 2:9).

**Abased** ([08217](#))(**shaphal**) is an adjective meaning low, deep, humble. It can mean literally physically low or deep (of skin examined for leprosy - Lev 13:20-21, 26), of a low height (Ezek 17:6; 17:24). The most important uses of **shaphal** are figurative and describe abasement, humbling, humility. In Job 5:11 we read "He sets on high those who are **lowly** (Heb = shaphal; Lxx = **tapeinos** = humble). And again in Ps 138:6 we read "He regards the **lowly** (shaphal; Lxx = **tapeinos**)." Pr 16:19 says "It is better to be of a **humble** (shaphal) spirit with the lowly." (cp Pr 29:23 = humble spirit - shaphal; **tapeinophrosune** = humility of mind, Ezek 21:26 = "that which is low" - shaphal; **tapeinoo**)

**Abase** (**Webster**, 1828) - The literal sense of abase is to lower or depress, to throw or cast down, To cast down; to reduce low; to depress; to humble; to degrade; applied to the passions, rank, office, and condition in life.

In one of my favorite passages in Isaiah we read "For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell [on] a high and holy place, And [also] with the contrite and **lowly** of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the **lowly** And to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isa 57:15)

**Lxx** translates **shaphal** here with the verb **pariemi** which in the perfect passive (as it is here) describes a loosened grip of the hands which connotes the ideas of tired, drooping, discouraged, ready to give up (Heb 12:12 = hands that are **weak**).

**Baker** - It refers to a tree being low (Ezek. 17:24) but often refers in a figurative way to low social positions (2 Sam. 6:22). It describes a short tree or a shrub in a parable (Ezek. 17:6). It has the sense of a humble, despondent, meek, or contrite spirit (Isa. 57:15).

**TWOT** - The most frequent use of the root is in those passages dealing with God's threat or promise to bring low and abase those who are haughty and proud, while he exalts those who have walked humbly before him. The humbling and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4 affords a graphic example. Even though this passage is in Aramaic, verse 34, which is part of the king's testimony, uses the root shepol in exactly the same sense as in Hebrew, "He is able to humble those who walk in pride." Similarly Da 5:19, also Aramaic and 1Sa 2:7, Hannah's prayer, and 2Sam 22:28, David's testimony.

**NIDOTTE** - The most frequent use of the root is in passages dealing with God's threat or promise to bring low and abase human haughtiness and pride while He exalts those who have walked humbly before Him. Typical of the tenor of these references is the context of Isa 2:6–22, where the pride that is censured is the lack of humility before Yahweh. Pride is the cardinal sin for Isaiah, containing within it all other sins. Like pride, idolatry is condemned for its failure to observe the right order within society as a whole. Conversely, the implication is that humility sees the universe as ordered, taking its rationale and meaning from God's supreme place in it as Creator and Sustainer. If pride as the root of all evil is the human step of self-assertion that places human beings outside of their proper place in creation, then humility is the acceptance of the distance that separates humankind from God and the awareness of the place designated for it in the scale of being under God's providence.

**Shaphal** - 18v - NAS - abased(1), deeper(2), humble(3), low(3), lower(2), lowest(1), lowly(5), subjection(1), which is low(1). Lev 13:20f, 26; 14:37; 2 Sam 6:22; Job 5:11; Ps 138:6; Prov 16:19; 29:23; Eccl 12:4; Isa 57:15; Ezek 17:6, 14, 24; 21:26; 29:14f; Mal 2:9

**Showing partiality** (אָפֵּיפָּרְטִים אֲפִי) - Young's Literal has "are accepting persons (literally = face) in the law." The Lxx translated literally is "receive face." **Expositor's** explains that "The expression אֲפִי אָפֵּיפָּרְטִים (yísśā pāneyā, "accept you") is an interesting Hebrew idiom. Literally it reads, "He will lift up your face." The picture of Esther before Ahasuerus comes to mind. If he accepted her, he would extend the scepter, and she could lift her bowed head. Rejection meant she would back out the door with head bowed (Esther 4:10–11, 5:1–2)."

**Showing partiality in the instruction** - The priests were partial in interpreting the law to the various social classes (Lev 19:15). When they were not fair with all people in applying God's law, they transgressed His law. God is not partial to one group over another (Dt 1:17, Dt 10:17). We must not show partiality either (cf 1Ti 5:21, James 2:1-10).

Micah 3:11 confronted the same problem:

Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, "Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us."

**Steven Cole** - A man who teaches God's truth will not soften the message to cater to the influential or wealthy in the congregation. That is one reason that I purpose not to know who gives what in this church. But even if I knew that you were the largest donor in the church and that you would be offended by what I say, if it is in the biblical text that I'm preaching on, I'm still going to confront your sin. Not to do so would be unfaithful to God. If I'm unfaithful to God, I cannot expect His blessing on my life or ministry.

**Walter Kaiser** - The priests had engaged in such moral corruption that they had lost all respect in the eyes of the people (Mal 2:9)—and in the eyes of God. They had courted popularity by giving the people what they wanted and by modifying God's requirements so that regard for persons and partiality in justice, not God's Word, were the norms. The priests were now reaping what they had sown. Is it any wonder that so many religious leaders and teachers of our day are similarly held in disrepute? Ironically, the esteem for the ministry could not be lower in a day when we have reached for the stars in mega-movements for the Church. Often our ministers are not true servants of God; they do not give a faithful proclamation of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) and do not walk in communion with God. Neither God nor His Word will be mocked without dreadful consequences....When we do not seek first God's glory and totally love and respond to His Word, then our culture is in desperate trouble. "Like minister, like people" could very well be the proverb raised over our nation as well as Malachi's. It is exceedingly important that those who teach remember that they are accountable not only for themselves, but also for those whom they teach (Jam. 3:1).

**Malachi 2:10 "Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?":** (all: Mal 1:6 Jos 24:3 Isa 51:2 63:16 64:8 Eze 33:24 Mt 3:9 Lk 1:73 3:8 Jn 8:39,53,56 Ac 7:2 Ro 4:1 9:10 1Co 8:6 Eph 4:6 Heb 12:9) (Has not: Job 31:15 Ps 100:3 Isa 43:1,7,15 44:2 Jn 8:41 Ac 17:25) (Why: Mal 2:11,14,15 Jer 9:4,5 Mic 7:2-6 Mt 10:21 22:16 Ac 7:26 1Co 6:6-8 Eph 4:25 1Th 4:6) (So as to profane: Mal 2:8,11 Ex 34:10-16 Jos 23:12-16 Ezr 9:11-14 10:2,3 Ne 13:29)

## FIRST THE PRIESTS NOW THE PEOPLE

**Mackay** points out that "Malachi uses the same technique as was employed in Mal 1:6. By means of rhetorical questions, he begins by asserting a general and uncontroversial principle without initially hinting at its devastating application to the situation of his day."

Who is Malachi addressing in this next section (Mal 2:10-16)? It seems that he shifts from addressing the faithless priests (addressed in prior passages as "you") to address the congregation (now the pronouns shift to "we" and "us", thus including himself!). Malachi first addressed the priests who caused the people stumble (morally, as defective teachers, etc) and now shifts to the people who the priests had **"caused...to stumble"** (Mal 2:8) When the spiritual leaders fail to lead in the way of godliness, the people fall short of what is required of them and a general moral decline begins to take place, which is exactly what had already transpired in the Book of Judges (Jdg 21:25-note). Israel's spiritual leaders were to give the people spiritual vision but failed to do so. Malachi describes the "home life" particularly marriage as the "victim" of the failure to faithfully proclaim God's Word of Truth and Life. Dear pastors and/or teacher, is there not a sobering lesson in this scenario of Israel's spiritual declension regarding the gravity and importance of faithfully adhering to proclamation of the pure milk of the Word? Solomon records...

Where there is **no vision** (revelation, no prophetic word from God to His people), the people are **unrestrained** (cast off restraint = NIV, run wild = GWN, HCSB), but happy (blessed) is he who keeps (Lxx = **phulasso**) the law. (Pr 29:18-note)

**Walter Kaiser** outlines Malachi 2:10-16

We Must Be Loyal to the God of the Covenant (2:10)

We Must Be Loyal to the People of God (2:11–12)

We Must Be Loyal to the Partner of Our Marriage (2:13–16)

**Mackay** summarizes Malachi 2:10-16

‘Breaking faith’ (Mal 2:10, 11, 14, 15, 16) is the key theme of this section. It ought not to have occurred because of the unique privileges of Judah (Mal 2:10a), but the community could not be relied upon to be true to one another (Mal 2:10b). This was particularly shown in their attitude to pagan marriages (Mal 2:11–12) and divorce (Mal 2:13–16). The spiritual well-being of the land was undermined by the break-up of the family which was the fundamental unit in the structure of the nation.

**Do we not all have one father?** - Assumes an affirmative answer. The more difficult question is to whom does **father** refer? Some (Calvin, Jerome) favor the patriarchs, for example Abraham who was associated with the cutting of a covenant, which would be in keeping with the phrase "**covenant of our fathers**." Others (including this writer) favor **father** as a reference to God, because of the reference in Mal 2:11 to "a foreign god." The implication is that Malachi is raising the issue of to whom would Judah (Israel) be loyal, to their true God, Jehovah, or the false god of paganism? There is a scriptural precedent in Malachi 1:6 for God being referred to as **Father** - "**Then if I am a father, where is My honor?...says the LORD of hosts to you**" While it is not common to see God referred to as "**Father**" in the OT, there are other OT passages that mention (or indirectly allude to) this title - see Ex 4:22, 23; Deut. 32:6, 18; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 2:27; 3:4, 19; 31:9. The phrase **Do we not all have one father?** should not be interpreted out of **context** to mean that God is the **Father** of all mankind. That is not what Malachi is saying. He is not teaching the "universal Fatherhood of God," in essence saying that all men, whether saved or unsaved, are considered to be God's children and in God's family. God is the **Father** only to those who are born again into His family.

He (Jesus) came to His own (the Jews), and those who were His own did not receive Him (most of the Jews rejected Him as their long awaited Messiah!). But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right (**exousia**) to become **children of God**, even to those who believe (**pisteuo**) in His name, 13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

See how great a love the **Father** has bestowed upon us, that we should be called **children of God**; and **such we are** (cf 1Jn 3:23, 5:13, 20). For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him (cf Jn 8:19, 15:21, 16:3, Jn 7:28-29, 10:14-15). (1John 3:1-note)

**Has not one God created us?** - Again the answer "yes" is assumed. This phrase would also support that **father** is referring to God, not one of the patriarchs. In fact we see this "juxtaposition" in Isaiah...

Isa 64:8 But now, O LORD, Thou art our **Father**, We are the clay, and Thou our potter (Creation is implied); And all of us are the work of Thy hand.



Isa 43:1 But now, thus says the LORD, **your Creator, O Jacob** (Israel), And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!

See also (Isa. 43:7, 15; Dt. 32:6; Ps. 100:3; Isa. 43:21; 44:2, 21

**John Phillips** - God was the Father of the Hebrew people not only as their **Creator**, but also as their **Covenantor**.

**Peter Verhoef** - It is important to note how Malachi has formulated his question. He deliberately uses the word *bāra* "to create," because he wants to stress the exceptional character of Israel's origin as God's covenant people. At the same time he endorses the intimate relationship between the members of that people by stressing the oneness of the God who created them....Against the background of the undeniable fact that God is Israel's Father and Creator, that they have one origin and therefore are intimately related to one another, it is inconceivable that the members of this people should break the faith among themselves. Why then are we faithless to one another? Why do we not honor the exceptional and spiritual unity which binds us together as members of God's covenant people? (NICOT)

**Taylor** - The function of the first two questions is to stress the seriousness of the following charge in Mal 2:10–15a and thus to motivate the command in Mal 2:15–16 not to "break faith. (New American Commentary).

So what is the point of emphasizing that Israel had one Father, one Creator? Their origin from one Father should have created a "family" atmosphere so to speak, in which they would have had special concern for each other.

**Why do we deal treacherously** - ESV = "Why then are we faithless to one another"; NET = "Why do we betray one another"; GWT = "Why are we unfaithful to each other?"

**Deal treacherously** ([0898](#))(**bagad**) means deceitfully, unfaithfully. **Kaiser** explains "Since the people of Israel are sons and daughters of the same covenant, the question arises: "Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?" (v. 10b). Every form of the people's sins, including marrying foreign women who did not believe in their Lord, divorcing the wives they had married in their youth and joining themselves to foreign gods, was an act of treachery against the whole body—not to mention an act of treachery against God. Where was the instruction from the lips of the Levites? How could people profess to be partners in the covenant of God yet commit spiritual and physical harlotry? God had called His people to be His "special possession," a "holy nation" (Ex. 19:5–6), His "son" and His "firstborn" (Ex. 4:22). But look at them now!"

**Profane the covenant** - **Profane** is the Hebrew word **chalal**, the same word translated **violate** in Psalm 89 where God declares..

"My covenant I will not **violate**,  
Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips."  
(Psalm 89:34-[note](#))

God is a God Who "**not change**" (Malachi 3:6-note), so that even though Israel "**violated**" her covenant, **Jehovah**, the "Covenant Keeping God" would not "**violate**" His covenant with them!

**John Piper - Three Reasons Not to Be Faithless to One Another** - 1. We have one Father: "Have we not all one father?" (Mal 2:10). In other words when we betray a trust, we betray the family of God. We deceive our own flesh and we dishonor our Father. 2. We have one Creator. "Has not one God created us?" (Mal 2:10). If I am faithless to you, and break my commitment to you, I act as though you and I are accountable to two different Creators. I act as though my Creator lets me function on one set of terms—like self-indulgence that ignores my commitment to you—while I expect your Creator to hold you to another set of terms—like respect for my rights and stay off my case. But if we are both utterly dependent upon and accountable to one and the same Creator, that double standard will not do. 3. The third reason we should not break faith with others is that it profanes the covenant of our fathers. "Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?" ([Malachi 2:10-16 - Let None Be Faithless to the Wife of His You](#))

**Walter Kaiser** - Malachi's day may have been no different from our own. Many ministers and teachers are intimidated to the point of silence on issues regarding sexual practices of single people, extra-marital affairs of believers and unbelievers, and divorce. One recent cartoon in Leadership magazine showed a pastor appearing before his congregation in a full panoply of knight's armor. As he lifted the hatch over his mouth, he intoned, "My subject today is 'Divorce.'" If that is not a picture of an intimidated pastor, what is?

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**Malachi 2:10-16 A Sad Split (Our Daily Bread)** - The drama played out in a nest of bald eagles monitored by a webcam. A beloved eagle family, viewed by many via the Internet, was breaking up. After raising several offspring in previous seasons, the mother again laid new eggs in the spring. But then a young female invaded their happy home. When Dad started cavorting with her, Mom disappeared and the life in the abandoned eggs died.

In an Internet chat room, questions and accusations flew wildly. Everyone who loved the pair was distraught. Biologists warned the amateur eagle enthusiasts not to attribute human values to birds. But everyone did. We all wanted the original couple to reunite. Everyone seemed to “know” that the family unit is sacred.

As chat room members expressed their sadness, I wondered if they knew that God feels much the same way about human family breakups. I also wondered about myself: Why did I feel more sadness over the eagles than over the fractured human families in my community? Clearly, I need to revise my priorities.

In Malachi 2, we see God’s view of marriage. It symbolizes His covenant with His people (v.11). He takes it very seriously—and so should we.

### Thinking It Over

In Malachi 2:11, what is “profaned” and how?

How does Malachi 2:15 echo Genesis 2:24?

Why is this important? (Mal. 2:15-16).

Put Christ first if you want your marriage to last.

**Malachi 2:11 "Judah has dealt treacherously, and an 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.":** (and an: Lev 18:24-30 Jer 7:10 Eze 18:13 22:11 Rev 21:8) (profaned: Ex 19:5,6 Lev 20:26 Dt 7:3-6 14:2 33:26-29 Ps 106:28,34-39 Jer 2:3,7,8,21,22) (And has: Ge 6:1,2 Jud 3:6 1Ki 11:1-8 Ezr 9:1,2,12 10:2 Ne 13:23-29 Ho 6:7 2Co 6:14-18)

## MIXED MARRIAGES

NET Malachi 2:11 Judah has become disloyal, and unspeakable sins have been committed in Israel and Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the holy things that the LORD loves and has turned to a foreign god!

**Judah has dealt treacherously** - They people had not lived up to the standards of the covenant. This was not new behavior, for "in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah stern measures had been taken to put an end to a renewed tendency to marry into pagan families (Ezra 9:1-2; 10:1-4; Nehemiah 13:25-27), but now the practice was again widespread." (Phillips).

**Dealt treacherously** ([0898](#))(**bagad** apparently from an Arabic root meaning to deceive) means to act deceitfully, unfaithfully, to commit faithlessness.. This word describes a traitor, one who violates his allegiance and betrays something or someone (e.g., God). **Bagad** means to ‘break faith’ which speaks of one who does not honour the terms of an existing agreement.

The root idea of **bagad** is to cover or cloak things over, and so to act covertly or falsely, perfidiously (acting untrue to what should command one’s fidelity or allegiance and adds to faithless the implication of an incapacity for fidelity or reliability!). "The verb connotes unfaithfulness in relationships like marriage (Ex. 21:8; Jer. 3:20; Mal. 2:14); Israel’s covenant with the Lord (Ps. 78:57; 119:158); friendships (Job 6:15; Jer. 3:20; Mal. 2:10); leadership (Jdg. 9:23)." (Baker)

The Septuagint translates bagad in this verse with **egkataleipo** which means to abandon, desert or forsake.

In English **treacherous** describes one likely to betray trust and thus one who is unreliable, even implying a mental readiness to betray trust or confidence. That which is treacherous does not provide secure footing or support. **Webster’s 1828** say **treacherous** = "Violating allegiance or faith pledged; faithless; traitorous to the state or sovereign; perfidious in private life; betraying a trust. A man may be treacherous to his country, or treacherous to his friend, by violating his engagements or his faith pledged."

**Kaiser** notes that **bagad** "is related to the word *bege*d, “garment.” In effect, what the people were doing in their treacherous dealing was involving themselves in a “cover-up” job. They were masking their covenants with God and their wives. Therein lay the insidious nature of their treachery!"

**Bagad**- 39 verses (note emphasis in Malachi) - Ex 21:8; Jdg 9:23; 1Sa 14:33; Job 6:15; Ps 25:3; 59:5; Ps 73:15; 78:57; 119:158; Pr 2:22; 11:3, 6; 13:2, 15; 21:18; 22:12; 23:28; 25:19; Isa 21:2; 24:16; 33:1; 48:8; Jer 3:8, 11, 20; 5:11; 9:2; 12:1, 6; Lam 1:2; Hos 5:7; 6:7; Hab 1:13; 2:5; Mal 2:5, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16 Usage: acted deceitfully(1), acted treacherously(2), betrayed(1), betrays(1), deal(1), deal treacherously(10), deal very treacherously(1), deals treacherously(1), dealt treacherously(8), dealt very treacherously(1), faithless(2), treacherous(15), treacherous one still deals treacherously(1), treacherous deal(1), treacherously(1), unfairness(1). Here are some samples to help you get a sense of the meaning of the Hebrew verb bagad...

**Judges 9:23** "Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem **dealt treacherously** (Lxx = atheteo = 'to act toward anything as though it were annulled'; hence, to deprive a law of force by opinions or acts opposed to it, to transgress it") with Abimelech."

**1Sa 14:33** Then they told Saul, saying, "Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have **acted treacherously**; (How? They broke the law, the Old Covenant stipulations against eating blood - see Lev 17:10-11, 12-14) roll a great stone to me today."

**Ps 25:3** Indeed, none of those who wait for Thee will be ashamed; Those who **deal treacherously** (Lxx = anomeo [see anomia] in the present tense referring to this as their lifestyle = be lawless, act lawlessly, be wicked, be corrupted by sins - Isa 24:5, sin exceedingly or flagrantly) without cause will be ashamed.

**Ps 59:5** And Thou, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, Awake to punish all the nations; Do not be gracious to any who are **treacherous** (Lxx = asuntheteo [see asunthetos] = to be faithless to, in present tense = continually, as their lifestyle. Asuntheteo is used in Neh 13:27 of marrying foreign women!) in iniquity. Selah. (**One of those pithy imprecatory prayers** of David - cf Ps 59:1! The target? Those how deal treacherously. And how do they do so? By "immersing" themselves in iniquity - in a sense their the "water in which they swim" is that of iniquity or sin! Woe!)

**Ps 78:57** (Context - Ps 78:55, 56) But turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers; They turned aside like a treacherous bow. (**From the context** we see acting treacherously includes testing God, rebelling against God, not keeping His Word, all aptly summed up in the phrase "they turned aside.")

**Ps 119:158** I behold the **treacherous** (Lxx = asuntheteo [see asunthetos] = to be faithless to, in present tense = continually, as their lifestyle. Asuntheteo is used in Neh 13:27 of marrying foreign women!) and loathe them, Because they do not keep Thy word. (Note this excellent "working definition" of the meaning of dealing treacherously with someone, in this case God Himself! **Personal Application: Do I think of myself as "treacherous" toward God when I willfully, wantonly disobey His Holy Word? Probably not, but it's a good "perspective" to keep in mind to give us godly motivation to not sin willfully! Let this mind be in us O Lord. Amen**)

**Jer 3:8** "And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless (backsliding) Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her **treacherous** sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.

**Jer 3:11** And the LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than **treacherous** Judah. (So that treachery is not just faithless, but worse!)

**Jer 3:20** "Surely, as a woman **treacherously** departs from her lover, So you have dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," declares the LORD.

**Hos 5:7** They have dealt **treacherously** against the LORD, For they have borne illegitimate children. Now the new moon will devour them with their land.

**Hos 6:7** But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt **treacherously** against Me. (Treachery is associated with breaking covenant, similar to what is described here in Malachi 2.)

**Solomon** teaches us much about the attitude, actions and the fate of the **treacherous**...

**Pr 2:22** But the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the **treacherous** (Lxx = paranomas [see paranomia] = pertains to that which is contrary to the law, lawless, against the law, wicked) will be uprooted from it. (**Note** the "synonym" for treacherous and the final demise of the treacherous!)

**Pr 11:3** The integrity of the **upright** will guide them, But the falseness of the **treacherous** (Lxx = asebes = ungodly, irreverent, godless) will destroy them. (Note the heart attitude of the treacherous and to whom the treacherous are contrasted. Clearly the antonym of treachery is uprightness - see also Pr 11:6 below)

**Pr 11:6** The righteousness of the **upright** will deliver them, But the **treacherous** (Lxx = paranomas [see paranomia] = pertains to that which is contrary to the law, lawless, against the law, wicked) will be caught by their own greed.

**Pr 13:2** From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good, but the desire of the **treacherous** (Lxx = paranomas = pertains to that which is contrary to the law, lawless, against the law, wicked) is violence.

**Pr 13:15** Good understanding produces favor, but the way of the **treacherous** (kataphroneo - one who despises, looks down upon, "thinks down" on another) is hard.

**Pr 21:18** The wicked is a ransom for the righteous, And the **treacherous** is in the place of the upright.

**Pr 22:12** The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, But He overthrows (Lxx - phaulizo - despises, considers worthless, disparages) the words of the **treacherous** man (Lxx = paranomas [see paranomia] = pertains to that which is contrary to the law, lawless, against the law, wicked).

**Pr 23:28** Surely she lurks as a robber, And increases the faithless among men.

**Pr 25:19** Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a **faithless** (Lxx = paranomas [see paranomia] = pertains to that which is contrary to the law, lawless, against the law, wicked) man in time of trouble. (**Bagad** here describes an unreliable person, one you cannot count on when you need them most!)

An **abomination** has been committed in Israel and in **Jerusalem** - Malachi uses the word abomination, a term reserved for the worst of evils (e.g., immorality, idolatry, witchcraft, etc).

**T V Moore** - The greatness of the sin (of marriage **'to the daughter of a foreign god'**) arose from the fact that it tended to defeat one of the purposes of the Mosaic economy. God isolated the Jews from all other nations (Ex 19:6), that they might be a nursery for the great ideas of religion that were to be elaborated in the history of the world, and a stock from which he would bring forth the Messiah. All mingling with other nations who had not been trained in this way and preserved for this purpose, tended to defeat this design. Especially was this true of matrimonial alliances. Heathen women retained a natural longing for the indulgences of their own religion, and easily led their husbands into guilty compliances. The women of Moab and Philistia, and the wives of Solomon, furnish mournful proofs of this fact. They led their infatuated husbands and paramours into the grossest idolatry. Hence these connections were grievous sins against God; but as they led to cruel treatment of the Jewish wives, they were also sins against humanity. The prophet strikes at once at the heart of the sin, and shows that it is want of fidelity to God that lies at the root of it all. Whoever violates the theocratic law, rebels against God who made it. They, therefore, who chose heathen wives, thereby rejected the God of Israel. (**Malachi 2 Commentary 1856**)

**Abomination** (08441) (**toebah**) is a feminine noun describing that which is abhorrent, repulsive, disgusting, repugnant. **Toebah** signifies things and acts which are abominable in the sight of God, such as idolatry, impurity, etc. It describes that which is loathsome (disgusting) and frequently referred to idols (Dt 7:26, Dt 32:16; 2Ch 34:33; Jer 16:18; Eze 5:9; 7:20; 11:18, 21; 16:36).

**Abomination** in English is that which is a cause of extreme disgust and hatred. Webster's 1828 - "Hence, defilement, pollution, in a physical sense, or evil doctrines and practices, which are moral defilements, idols and idolatry, are called abominations. The Jews were an abomination to the Egyptians; and the sacred animals of the Egyptians were an abomination to the Jews."

Israel had been clearly warned before entering the promised land filled with the Canaanites and their detestable practices...

When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the **detestable** (**toebah**) things of those nations (Now he lists some of these abominations). 10 "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire (child sacrifice!), one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 "For whoever does these things is **detestable** (**toebah**) to the LORD; and because of these **detestable** (**toebah**) things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. 13 "You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. (Deut 18:9-13)

**Verhoef comments** that "By using this significant word (**toebah**) Malachi equates Judah's faithlessness with the defection into paganism."

The Egyptians considered it "is loathsome (abomination)" to eat with the Hebrews (Ge 43:32). More often **toebah** refers to God's response of extreme loathing of Israel's covenant disobedience and also the abhorrent practices of the Canaanites. "Such abominations in the sight of God include: unlawful sexual practices (Lev. 18:22 ff.); intermarriage with pagans (Ezra 9:1, 11, 14); shrine prostitution (Dt 23:18); dishonesty, wickedness, and lying in various contexts (Pr 6:16; 8:7; 11:1; 12:22; 15:8; 20:23; 29:27, etc.). By far the most common use of **toebah**, however, is in reference to God's abhorrence of idolatry in all its forms. Idolatry is a mixture of ethical and religious malpractice on the part of both Israel and the Gentile nations. The term is used in this way in about fifty different places." (Renn)

**Vine** - **toebah** is used in some contexts to describe pagan practices and objects (Deut. 7:25-26). In other contexts, **toebah** describes the repeated failures to observe divine regulations (Ezek. 5:7, 9). **Toebah** may represent the pagan cultic practices themselves, as in Dt. 12:31, or the people who perpetrate such practices (Deut. 18:12). If Israelites are guilty of such idolatry, however, their fate will be worse than exile: death by stoning (Deut. 17:2-5).

The Lxx translates **toebah** with **bdelugma** which describes something that is extremely hated, detested or abhorred, as is the case with anything connected with idolatry (cf Rev 17:4) or with worship of the Antichrist (Mt 24:15). Both **toebah** and **bdelugma**

emphasize idolatry and blasphemy as the fundamental catalysts for the outpouring of divine wrath.

**Ronald Youngblood** says *toebah* is an **abomination** which "may be of a physical, ritual or ethical nature and may be abhorred by God or man. Sharing a meal with a Hebrew was ritually offensive to an Egyptian (Gen 43:32), as was offering certain kinds of sacrifices (Ex 8:22). homosexuality and other perversions are repugnant to God and fall under his judgment (Lev 18:22–30; 20:13). Idolatry (Dt 7:25), human sacrifice (Deut 12:31), eating ritually unclean animals (Dt 14:3–8), sacrificing defective animals (Dt 17:1), conducting one's business dishonestly (Dt 25:13–16), practicing ritual prostitution (1Kgs 14:23f.), and similar acts of disobedience (for seven more abominations, see the list in Pr 6:16–19) were sure to bring God's wrath on those who perpetrated them. Twelve times the book of Proverbs uses the phrase, "is an abomination to the Lord." In Ps 88, a prayer for help written by a man close to death, the physically repulsive appearance of a *tôebâ* is stressed; the man's former friends avoid him because they consider him to be a thing of horror (Ps 88:8). Sometimes *tôebâ* is used as a synonym for "**idol**" as in Isa 44:19, or even for a specific pagan deity, as in 2Kgs 23:13 where Milcom is called "the abomination of the Ammonites," parallel to "Ashtoreth the abomination (*šiqqû*) of the Sidonians" and Chemosh the abomination (*šiqqû*) of Moab." At the other end of the spectrum, even prayer is an abomination if offered by one who refuses to obey God's Word (Pr. 28:9)." (TWOT)

**Toebah** - 112 verses - Ge 43:32; 46:34; Ex 8:26; Lev 18:22, 26f, 29f; 20:13; Deut 7:25f; 12:31; 13:14; 14:3; 17:1, 4; 18:9, 12; 20:18; 22:5; 23:18; 24:4; 25:16; 27:15; 32:16; 1Kgs 14:24; 2Kgs 16:3; 21:2, 11; 23:13; 2Chr 28:3; 33:2; 34:33; 36:8, 14; Ezra 9:1, 11, 14; Ps 88:8; Pr 3:32; 6:16; 8:7; 11:1, 20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:8f, 26; 16:5, 12; 17:15; 20:10, 23; 21:27; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27; Isa 1:13; 41:24; 44:19; Jer 2:7; 6:15; 7:10; 8:12; 16:18; 32:35; 44:4, 22; Ezek 5:9, 11; 6:9, 11; 7:3f, 8f, 20; 8:6, 9, 13, 15, 17; 9:4; 11:18, 21; 12:16; 14:6; 16:2, 22, 36, 43, 47, 50f, 58; 18:12f, 24; 20:4; 22:2, 11; 23:36; 33:26, 29; 36:31; 43:8; 44:6f, 13; Mal 2:11. **Usage:** abominable(5), abominable act(1), abomination(39), abominations(60), detestable(2), detestable act(1), detestable thing(3), detestable things(3), loathsome(2), object of loathing(1).

**For** - Notice this **term of explanation** (always pause and ponder). In this case Malachi is explaining the significance of the atrocity just described..

**Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD** - The effect of dealing treacherously and committing an abomination is that the sanctuary was profaned. **Mackay** explains that "**the sanctuary**" is literally 'holiness of the LORD' (KJV). This may be understood of the Temple as the holy place. The sin of pagan marriages would thus be an affront to the presence of God in their midst, which was symbolized by the Temple. Alternatively, 'holiness of the LORD' may refer to the people themselves. As those set aside to the service of the LORD they are called 'holy' and 'holiness' (Ex. 19:6; 31:13; Lev. 20:26; Deut. 7:6; Jer. 2:3). 'Judah became God's sanctuary' (Ps. 114:2), the people he loves (Mal 1:2). So by their actions they had profaned their national dedication to the LORD and his service."

**Verhoef** - This interpretation (sanctuary = people rather than the temple) is reflected in the translation of the Targum: "Because the house of Judah desecrated themselves, who have been sanctified by the Lord, and whom he loves." As such it is of the utmost significance. Malachi reminds his people of what is implied in connection with their breach of faith. They are violating and desecrating the intimate bond with God as their Father and Creator, as well as desecrating themselves, since they are the sanctuary of the Lord. What a deep and striking exposure of the nature and effect of the covenant people's breach of faith. All are involved in the transgression of one, and every relation is detrimentally affected thereby. (NICOT)

**Profane** ([02490](#))(**chahal - word study**) means to defile, pollute, desecrate. **Profane** means to treat (something sacred) with abuse, irreverence, or contempt. The Lxx uses the verb **bebeloo** (see **bebelos**) which means disregarding what is to be kept sacred or holy. **Bebeloo** means to cause something highly revered to become identified with the commonplace and thus to violate its sanctity,

**John Piper** writes that "by consistently using this little word **bagad** and tracing faithlessness through in all the relationships of the text, Malachi makes clear for us two alternative ways for people to try to live in a community. One way is what you might call covenantal order—it's what the OT means by shalom. All relationships are made peaceful and pure by the fulfillment of covenants and promises and oaths and contracts and commitments. Children to parents, and parents to children. Husbands to wives and wives to husbands. Employer to employee and employee to employer. Citizen to state and state to citizen. The peace and prosperity and joy—the shalom—of the community is held together by the deep strong spirit of covenant-keeping that pervades the community. The very fabric of the community is the trustworthiness of its people. Do they keep their commitments? The other way for people to try to live together in community is the opposite of covenantal order; it's what you might call the disorder of self-indulgence. In this community the spirit of commitment-making and commitment-keeping has been replaced by a spirit of emotional and physical impulse. The moral fabric of faithfulness to covenants and promises and contracts is unraveled and what's left are the individual strands of private gratification." ([Malachi 2:10-16 - Let None Be Faithless to the Wife of His You](#))

**Daughter of a foreign god** (strange) **god** - More literally "dependent of a strange god" which describes the woman as an idolatress. They had not become converts to Jehovah but continued in their pagan beliefs, which is what God had warned would occur "For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He

will quickly destroy you." (Dt 7:14) The **desires of their flesh** far outweighed their **fear of the Lord**, the result of which is always sin! Can we not all identify with them at least to some degree? We need to continually recall the principle that "by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil." (Pr 16:6-[note](#)) and that "the fear of the LORD is to hate evil." (Pr 8:13) Indeed "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death." **Dear reader, be wary and beware, if your "titer" of godly fear is on the decline!**

**Mackay** - A mixed multitude had left Egypt with Israel, but they had been circumcised and kept the Passover (Ex. 12:48; Num. 9:14). Ruth had come from Moab, but she had allied herself to Israel's God (Ruth 1:16).

**Married the daughter of a foreign god** - Did you hear what Malachi said? They did not just marry the unbelieving woman, but they also "married" her idolatrous gods! The NET Bible renders it "Judah has profaned the holy things that the LORD loves and has turned to a foreign god!" BDAG says Judah "has lived his life with an eye toward" other gods. The Greek verb can mean to make an object of one's purpose. **Ryrie** explains that these "heathen girls brought foreign gods into Jewish homes and said, in effect, "Marry me, marry my religion." Mixed marriages had been reported in Ezra 9:2-6; 10:18-19 and Neh 10:30; 13:23-27, but had been clearly forbidden in Ex 34:11-16; Dt 7:3; and 1Ki 11:1-2. The warning against mixed marriages was clearly repeated by Paul in a series of five rhetorical questions (all calling for a definitive "None!")...

**Do not be bound together** (present imperative with a negative = stop doing this) with unbelievers; for (term of explanation - explains this strong warning) what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial (the devil), or what has a **believer** in common with an **unbeliever**? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple (cf one of the interpretations of the people as the **sanctuary of the LORD** in Mal 2:10) of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. (2Cor 6:14-16-[note](#), [note 2](#))

**David Levy** - The concept of being "unequally yoked" is taken from Deuteronomy 22:10, where the Israelites were told not to plow with an ox (a clean animal) and an donkey (an unclean animal) yoked together. Their natures and temperaments made them incompatible and uncooperative for plowing. The same is true for a believer who tries to establish a harmonious walk through life with an unbelieving partner! (**Ed**: An ox and a donkey yoked -- What a picture of a spiritually unequal marriage!)...Believers do not realize the web they weave for themselves by marrying unbelievers. They often look back in deep sorrow over their actions, wishing they had thought twice before entering into such unholy relationships.

Moses reminds us in Numbers 25 of how serious a sin intimate interrelationship with pagan society was in ancient Israel...

While Israel remained at Shittim, the people **began to play the harlot** (commit illicit sexual intercourse) with the **daughters of Moab**. 2 For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and **bowed down to their gods**. 3 So Israel **joined themselves to Baal of Peor**, and the LORD was angry against Israel. 4 And the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." 5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have **joined themselves to Baal of Peor**." 6 Then behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 7 When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand; 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked. 9 And those who died by the plague were 24,000. (Numbers 25:1-9)

**Steven Cole** on believers marrying unbelievers - I want you to hear me loud and clear: It is never God's will for a Christian to marry a non-Christian! Period!! No exceptions!! You should no more pray about marrying a non-Christian than you should pray about whether it is God's will for you to commit adultery or murder your neighbor. God has made it abundantly plain that it is sin for His children to marry an unbeliever. It is never God's will for you to sin! Someone may be thinking, "But I know of cases where a believer married an unbeliever and everything has turned out fine. The unbeliever came to faith in Christ and today they have a fine Christian family." Yes, God is often gracious in using even our sins for good when we repent. I've heard of people who tried to commit suicide, but God spared their lives and saved them. But that should not encourage us to sin that grace may abound!

**Malachi 2:12 "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.:** (cut: Lev 18:29 20:3 Nu 15:30,31 Jos 23:12,13 1Sa 2:31-34) (1Ch 25:8 Ezr 10:18,19 Ne 13:28,29 Isa 9:14-16 24:1,2 Eze 14:10 Ho 4:4,5 Mt 15:14 2Ti 3:13 Rev 19:20)(cuff off: Nu 24:5 Zec 12:7) (Who presents: Mal 2:10 Ge 4:3-5 1Sa 3:14 15:22,23 Isa 61:8 66:3 Am 5:22)

## INTERMARRIAGE CALLS FORTH AN INVOCATION OF A "CURSE"

**As for the man who does this** - Marries a pagan wife which invariably includes her idols. Even Solomon fell into this deadly trap with tragic results - read 1Ki 11:1-12. Clearly mixed marriage opens the door to apostasy and idolatry, which explains the severity of the punishment for which Malachi prays.

**May the LORD cut off** - This is expressed as a prayer calling for "excommunication" of the offending parties, resulting in their separation from the covenant people of God and by "default" from God Himself. Note that Malachi no longer identifies himself with this group (cf "we" and "us" in Mal 2:10) We see a similar zeal in Ezra 9:3 and Neh 13:25-29 in a similar context of mixed marriages.

**Cut off (03772)(karath - word study)** means either to die (which speaks of separation - cf Ge 9:1) or to be excluded (effectively "dead" because they are separated) from the covenant community and the land of promise (Ex 12:15, 19), which would obviously include his lineage, so that he would have no descendants in the covenant people (cf 2Sa 20:1, 1Ki 12:16)!

**Everyone who awakes and answers** - The interpretation of this Hebrew phrase (presumably an idiom) is very uncertain as reflected by the wide variation in the English translations (KJV = "the master and the scholar." Young's Literal = "Tempter and tempted." NAB = "both witness and advocate." Moffatt = "kith and kin." NEB = "nomads or settlers"). Here is the **NET Note** - The idea seems to be a **merism** expressing totality (**Ed**: by means of describing two opposite categories), that is, everybody from the awakener to the awakened, thus "every last person who does this" (NLT similar); NIV "whoever he may be."

**T V Moore on awakes and answers** - The Arabs have a similar proverbial expression, "No caller and no answerer." The meaning is, whatever or whoever he may be; being an idiomatic phrase for universality, like our English one "root and branch."

**Who presents an offering to the LORD of hosts** - There are two possible interpretations, although the substance of both is that this sin could not be atoned for (cf defiant sins, Nu 15:30, contrasted with unintentional sins in Nu 15:22-29). One interpretation is that if another individual presented an offering on behalf of the guilty party (the one who intermarried), he would also incur the perpetrator's punishment! God is serious about the danger of this practice! How many times have we heard stories about a born again believer marrying an unbeliever and the tragic consequences that almost invariably followed! **Keil & Delitzsch** agree writing "May God not only cut off every descendant of such a sinner out of the houses of Israel, but *any one* who might offer a sacrifice for him in expiation of his sin." **Bible Knowledge Commentary** on the other hand writes that this description "emphasizes the hypocritical and insensitive attitude of those who committed this sin of intermarrying. One is shocked to read that despite the abomination such a person committed he still brought offerings to seek the Lord's favor."

**Phillips** - In spite of this practical denial of the true faith, the Jews were making a hypocritical attempt to keep up the appearance of orthodoxy. So Malachi looked next at their sin of mockery. They continued to bring offerings "unto the Lord of hosts," but the Lord threatened to "cut off" anyone who thought he could deceive God in this brazen way (Mal 2:12). No matter who the hypocrite was-master or scholar-God would not tolerate such mockery.

**Malachi 2:13 "This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.":** (cover: Dt 15:9 1Sa 1:9,10 2Sa 13:19,20 Ps 78:34-37 Ec 4:1)(because: Dt 26:14 Ne 8:9-12 Pr 15:8, 21:27 Isa 1:11-15 Jer 6:20)

## DIVORCE IN THE CAMP

**David Levy** - The United States has the highest divorce rate in the world-almost 50 percent. Many more couples are emotionally divorced from each other and would like to terminate their marriages. They stay together because of economics, children, or religious belief. Amazingly, 85 percent of divorced people try marriage a second time within five years. None of this is new. Twenty-five hundred years ago, divorce was a major problem in Judah....In the previous section, Malachi presented the sin and then the judgment that would follow. In this section he reversed the order, mentioning the judgment and then the sin.

**This is another thing you do** - Malachi moves past the topic of intermarriages to breakage of marriages.

**Matthew Henry** makes the excellent point

This also have you done; this is the second article of the charge. For **the way of sin is down-hill**, and one violation of the covenant is an inlet to another.

**You cover the altar of the LORD** - Who is "you?" Is it the divorced wives? That seems less likely because why would God cease to regard their offering? More likely as **Phillips** says "It seems that the guilty parties thought that an offering or two on the altar would

square accounts with God." They were wasting their time for the Word says "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination (same strong word used in Mal 2:) to the LORD." (Pr 15:8-note) There offerings were external and were unaccompanied by internal change - no brokenness, no contrition, no repentance. David understood clearly the "sacrifice" Jehovah desired from a sinner writing...

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. (Ps 51:17-note)

Through **Isaiah** God asks faithless Israel...

"What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, And the fat of fed cattle. And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. 12 "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? 13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— **I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.** (Note the juxtaposition of evil and good, dark and light, unholy and holy! Such "sacrifices" are always unacceptable to the Most High and Holy God!) 14 "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them. 15 "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. (Why?) Your hands are covered with blood. (Isa 1:11-15-note)

The **tears...weeping and...groaning** are their reaction to God's punishment for their sins (intermarriage, divorce) and specifically the fact that He rejects their offerings.

**Levy** - Here we see the epitome of hypocrisy and insensitivity. This calls to mind the judgment that struck Eli. He and his family were cut off from the priesthood because he refused to discipline the wicked practices of his two sons regarding their Tabernacle service (1Sa 2:29-35).

**He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor** - Verhoef says "This, of course, is of great significance. The *pleasure* of the Lord is the very *raison d'être* of every offering. When an offering is not accepted with pleasure it fails in its intention to restore or affirm the communion with God. Their religious activities amounted to nothing. The communication with the Lord was broken. That is why they now cover the altar with tears, with weeping and wailing. We have every reason to believe that this sorrow did not come from a broken spirit and a contrite heart. It was not a "godly sorrow" that brings repentance and leads to salvation (2Co 7:10; cf. Hos 7:14), but rather a "worldly sorrow," such as that of Cain (Ge 4:13, 14)."

How were they made aware of the LORD's displeasure? For one thing Malachi, God's messenger, tells them, not to mention the crop failures described in Mal 3:10-12 which may have contributed to their understanding.

**See In Depth Sermons from Steven Cole on this section**

[Malachi 2:10-12 God's Will for Whom You Marry](#)

[Malachi 2:13-16 How to Avoid Divorce \(Part 1\)](#)

[Malachi 2:13-16 How to Avoid Divorce \(Part 2\)](#)

**Malachi 2:14 "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.:** (For what reason: Mal 1:6,7 3:8 Pr 30:20 Isa 58:3 Jer 8:12) (Lord: Mal 3:5 Ge 31:50 Jud 11:10 1Sa 12:5 Jer 42:5 Mic 1:2)(wife: Mal 2:15 Pr 5:18,19 Ec 9:9 Isa 54:6)(companion: Ge 2:18 Pr 2:17 Song 1:15 Eze 16:8)

## **DIVORCE COURT IS IN SESSION THE CHIEF WITNESS IS CALLED!**

NET Malachi 2:14 Yet you ask, "Why?" The LORD is testifying against you on behalf of the wife you married when you were young, to whom you have become unfaithful even though she is your companion and wife by law.

**For what reason?** - They ask why God had rejected their sacrifices. The answer is crystal clear.

**The LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth** - This needs little explanation. Matthew Henry writes that "The Lord has been Witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, has been witness to the marriage-covenant between thee and her, for to Him you appealed concerning your sincerity in it and fidelity to it; He has been a Witness to all the violations of it, and all thy treacherous dealings in contempt of it, and is ready to judge between thee and her."

**Mackay** - God was the "divine witness...called on to note and watch over the pledges given. It is not just to the fact that they have



been entered into, but also to monitor that they were carried out. Now the LORD is indicating that the pledges given were not being fulfilled....Broken marriage vows concern not only the human partners to the bond, but God as well."

**Wife of your youth** (first of three graphic descriptions of the wife who has been divorced) -**Matthew Henry** "She is the wife of thy youth, who had thy affections when they were at the strongest, was thy first choice, and with whom thou hast lived long. Let not the darling of thy youth be the scorn and loathing of thy age."

**Dealt treacherously** (0898)(**bagad**) means they had acted deceitfully and unfaithfully, violating their marriage allegiance and thus betraying their wife and their God! **Bagad** means to 'break faith' which speaks of one who does not honour the terms of an existing agreement.

**She is your companion** - **Matthew Henry** notes "She is thy **companion**; she has long been an equal sharer with thee in thy cares, and griefs, and joys." The wife is to be looked upon, not as a servant, but as a **companion** to the husband, with whom he should freely converse and take sweet counsel, as with a **friend**, and in whose company he should take delight more than in any other's; for is she not appointed to be thy companion?"

**Companion** (02278)(**chabereth** from **chabar**) is used only here. NIV = "partner." This feminine noun, used as a synonym for wife, signifies the type of close relationship which the root verb **chabar** (be joined, coupled, have fellowship with) expresses. A **companion** is a close friend with whom interests are shared. The Septuagint translates **chabereth** with **koinonos** (see also **koinonia**) which describes one who participates with another in an enterprise or matter of joint concern. It is one who fellowships and shares something in common with another. He or she takes part in something with someone else.

**Webster's 1828** definition of **companion** - One who keeps company with another; one with whom a person frequently associates, and converses. One who accompanies another; as two persons meeting casually and traveling together are called companions (**Ed**: Think of life as a "journey")." **Dear husband, in light of this definition, can you honestly say that the wife of your youth is your companion?**

**Walter Kaiser** - In that magnificent allegory on marital and conjugal fidelity in Pr 5:15–21, Solomon had similarly enjoined couples to "rejoice with the wife of your youth" (Pr 5:18). No doubt when Malachi uses the word "**companion**" in Mal 2:14, he is calling on the "one flesh" teaching of Ge 2:24, for the word for "**companion**" means "united," or "joined together." "Companion" implies harmony and working together to achieve life's goals while sharing all the hardships and pain—and joys!

**T V Moore** has a powerful, soul penetrating, conscience stirring, accusation to all men who have abandoned (or who are considering such a stupid, foolish action!) the **wife** of their **youth** - "She whom you thus wronged was the **companion** of those earlier and brighter days, when in the bloom of her young beauty she left her father's house and shared your early struggles, and rejoiced in your later success; who walked arm in arm with you along the pilgrimage of life, cheering you in its trials by her gentle ministry; and now, when the bloom of her **youth** has faded and the friends of her **youth** have gone, when her father and mother whom she left for you are in the grave, then you cruelly cast her off as a worn-out, worthless thing, and insult her holiest affections by putting an idolater and a heathen in her place." ([Malachi 2 Commentary 1856](#))

**Your wife by covenant** - This is one of the places that leaves little doubt that God considers the union of a man and a woman to be a covenant. Marriage is also treated as a covenant in Proverbs 2:17 and Ezekiel 16:8 (cf Ge 31:50). Keep in mind that in the ancient world **covenant** was considered very solemn and completely binding (**See Discussion of Covenant Solemn & Binding**).

**See Related Resource: Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage**

**Matthew Henry** speaking of the marriage covenant writes "She is the **wife** of thy **covenant**, to whom thou art so firmly bound that, while she continues faithful, thou canst not be loosed from her, for it was a **covenant** for life. It is the wife with whom thou hast covenanted, and who has covenanted with thee; there is an oath of God between you, which is not to be trifled with, is not to be played fast and loose with." **Married people should often call to mind their marriage-vows, and review them with all seriousness, as those that make conscience of performing what they promised.**" (**Have you ever repeated your marriage vows with the wife of your youth? Have you done so before witnesses?**)

**Covenant** (01285)(**berit/berith/beriyth**) refers to a treaty, compact, agreement between two parties (first use God's covenant with Noah - Ge 6:18, 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). **Beriyth** was symbolized by two parties making a compact by passing between pieces of flesh, saying in essence, "May it happen to me what has happened to this animal if I break the covenant!" Thus covenant was not taken lightly but represented a solemn, binding arrangement between two parties, and entailed a variety of responsibilities, benefits and penalties, depending on the specific covenant. OT covenants were made between God and man (eg, God with Noah - Ge 6:18, with Abram - Ge 15:18) or between men (Abraham and Abimelech - Ge 21:27, Isaac and Abimelech - Ge 26:28, Jacob and Laban - Ge 31:44) (For summary of covenants see - **Covenant in the Bible**).

**Malachi 2:15 "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.":** (Ge 1:27 2:20-24 Mt 19:4-6 Mk 10:6-8 1Co 7:2) (Spirit: Ge 2:7 Job 27:3 Ec 12:7 Jn 20:22) (While he was seeking: Ge 24:3-7,44 26:34,35 27:46 28:2-4 Dt 7:4 Ezr 9:4 Ne 13:24 Jer 2:21 1Co 7:14 Eph 6:4 1Ti 3:4,5,11,12 Tit 1:6) (godly offspring: Ge 6:2 Ho 1:10 Ac 3:25 2Co 6:18) (take: Mal 2:14 Pr 4:23 6:25 7:25 Mt 5:28,29 15:19 Jas 1:14,15)

## **REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE WIFE OF YOUR YOUTH**

There is marked variation in the rendering of the Hebrew by the English versions. OT scholar Walter Kaiser remarks that "Mal 2:15 is regarded by many as one of the most difficult verses in the Bible!" MacKay writes that "Its general import is clear: husbands should remain true to their first wife."

**ESV Malachi 2:15** Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

**NET Malachi 2:15** No one who has even a small portion of the Spirit in him does this. What did our ancestor do when seeking a child from God? Be attentive, then, to your own spirit, for one should not be disloyal to the wife he took in his youth.

**CSB Malachi 2:15** Didn't the one God make us with a remnant of His life-breath? And what does the One seek? A godly offspring. So watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously against the wife of your youth.

**NIV Malachi 2:15** Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

**NKJ Malachi 2:15** But 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.

**NLT Malachi 2:15** Didn't the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth.

**RSV Malachi 2:15** Has not the one God made and sustained for us the spirit of life? And what does he desire? Godly offspring. So take heed to yourselves, and let none be faithless to the wife of his youth.

**John MacKay** summarizes the four major interpretations of this verse, in decreasing order of probability (in his estimation)..

(1) The first three elliptical words 'and not one he made' may be understood as a rhetorical question referring to the institution of marriage related in Genesis 2. This underlies the rendering in the NIV text, Has not (the LORD) made them one? (2:15). 'One' in the context of marriage would remind a Jew of the words 'they will become one flesh' (Gen. 2:24). It was to this same text that Jesus appealed when he was in dispute with the Pharisees regarding the permissibility of divorce (Mt. 19:3–9). The strength of a similar reference here to the creation ordinance is that it suitably reinforces the argument in the context. They should not be divorcing the wife of their youth in that it is improper to sever the bond whereby God has united the two — the man and the woman — and made them one. The problem for this interpretation arises in the following words, which literally are 'and remainder of spirit to him'. The NIV deals with this by changing one vowel of the text (there is no change in the consonants which were all that was originally written) to read 'flesh' instead of 'remainder', though the word for 'flesh' is different from that found in Genesis 2:24. 'Him' is understood of God, and the translation becomes, In flesh and spirit they are his. This makes good sense. As created by God, the man and woman are not independent of him in any aspect of their being, and so they are answerable to him for what they do in marriage. (Note an alternative without emendation suggested under the next interpretation.) And why one? Why is it the case that God has structured marriage in such a way that there is this exclusive bond between man and wife? Because he (that is, God) was seeking godly offspring. That aim would be threatened by a man having more than one wife at a time (polygamy), or by his divorcing his wife and breaking the marital bond to marry another (serial polygamy). Only when both partners remain true to the structure God has designed for marriage will it be the case that the children are provided with the environment of security and upbringing with a respect for God and his commands, which is what he wants.

(2) Another possibility is to understand the mention of 'one' as picking up the theme of 'one Father' and 'one

God' in Mal 2:10 with its implications for the oneness of the nation which should not be disrupted. 'And not one he made' would then assert by means of a question, 'Did not (the LORD) make (us) one (nation)?' 'And remainder of spirit to him' might then be understood of the Spirit as God's creative power. Having formed one nation, it was not lack of power that prevented him from forming others, but rather his intention to form a single people, separated to himself from the nations of the earth. (A similar proposal could be made for the phrase in terms of interpretation (1). It was not from lack of power that God did not create other partners for Adam, but because it ran contrary to his intention.) But 'why one?', literally, 'the one', that is the one nation being talked about. 'Because he was seeking godly offspring', and this was more likely to be achieved if marriages were formed within the covenant nation pledged to him. In this way the nation would not in succeeding generations be tempted to be disloyal to the covenant, and so would be fit to be the one from which the Messiah might come. Marrying pagan wives imperiled this divine mission.

(3) A third interpretation stems from the fact that 'and not one he made' is an unusual way to express a negative question in Hebrew. Understanding 'one' as the subject of the verb, and taking it to refer to a typical individual who was loyal to his covenant commitment, the passage may be rendered, 'But no one has done (this), and (while) he had a remnant of the Spirit'. Those in whose hearts the Spirit was active to any extent at all would not engage in such unworthy behaviour. 'And what does the one seek? An offspring from God.' Faithful to the covenant, he seeks the realization of the covenant promise by raising up children in the way of covenant truth.

(4) The fourth interpretation is found in the NIV footnote. It too understands the initial 'one' as the subject and not the object of 'make', and takes the reference to be to Abraham. 'But the one (who is our father) did not do this, not as long as life remained in him. And what was he seeking? An offspring from God.' A supposed objection is being countered. In the first sentence the people argue that divorce is permissible because of the precedent set by Abraham sending away Hagar (Ge 21:8-21). To this the prophet counters with a question which shows that the parallel is not exact. That incident only happened after Isaac was born, and because Abraham did not want to compromise his covenant inheritance. The people of Malachi's day were not concerned about their heritage, but about indulging their passions. This explanation is least likely because the introduction of Abraham as 'one' requires explanation (though note the possible reference in 2:10 footnote), and the argument from what he did is not immediately convincing. Abraham did not send away the wife of his youth, but a concubine who was not a covenant wife but a pagan one. ([Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi Focus on the Bible Commentaries- John L. Mackay](#)) ([Digital - Wordsearch](#)) ([Digital - Logos](#))

Regardless of how one interprets the first portion of Mal 2:15, the concluding exhortation by Malachi to his readers (especially the Hebrew married men) is crystal clear...

So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless (**bagad**) to the wife of your youth. (ESV)

**Therefore** - Not found in NAS but is found in other translations. A **term of conclusion** based on what Malachi has just stated, difficult as it was for us to interpret.

**Take heed** (08104) (**shamar**) means to keep, to watch to preserve, to guard. Lxx uses **phulasso** (to guard) in the aorist imperative (command calling for urgent, immediate action).

We see a similar charge by Solomon in Proverbs (and tragically something this wise king did not do in the area of foreign wives - 1Ki 11:1-12)...

**Watch** over your heart with all diligence, **for** (**term of explanation** = explains why we need to guard our hearts) from it flow the springs of life. (Pr 4:23-note)

**Take heed to your spirit** - The root of their problems with marital fidelity is a problem with their spiritual life, their hearts. "Marital problems are first solved spiritually, and then they are worked out practically and personally. If one's spiritual relationship with God is always correct, he will never have marital problems." (KJV Bible Commentary)

**Mackay** - If '**spirit**' picks up the earlier mention in the verse, then it favors understanding it there also as referring to the inner consciousness of man with which he has been divinely endowed. It is in the spirit that an individual longs for God (Isa. 26:9). The man in whose spirit there is no deceit is blessed (Ps. 32:2), and so it is necessary to watch our inner attitudes and desires. It is from within that sin and uncleanness come (Mt 15:16-20). When there are so many influences seeking to divert from loyalty to God, we need to watch ourselves very carefully not to be drawn into impure practices, but rather keep ourselves in the love of God (Dt. 4:15; Josh. 23:11). (Ibid)

**Deal treacherously** ([0898](#))(**bagad**) or act deceitfully and unfaithfully, violating the marriage covenant, thereby betraying their wife

and their God!

**The wife of your youth** - Second mention (see [notes Mal 2:14](#))

**Malachi 2:15** Guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. - Author Phil Waugh offers this insightful summary of what is involved in a committed, Christ-centered marriage. "When a couple shares their wedding vows, they are vowing to God, each other, their families, and the community to remain steadfast in unconditional love, reconciliation, and sexual purity, while purposefully growing in their covenant marriage relationship. God's intent is to bring wholeness to families through covenant marriage relationships." - Today in the Word

**TODAY IN THE WORD** - Ask almost any couple married for a long time for the secrets of their success, and they are likely to have one thing in common. Those who stay together over the years, when it's fun and when it isn't, never have the word divorce as part of their marital vocabulary. One Christian couple married for forty-three years put it this way: "Stick to the basics: love, perseverance, commitment. Be true to each other in everything you do and say."

**Malachi 2:16 "For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.":** (the Lord: Dt 24:1-4 Isa 50:1 Mt 5:31,32 19:3-9 Mk 10:2-12 Lk 16:18) (covers: Pr 28:13 Isa 28:20 59:6 Mic 7:2,3)

### **GOD'S CLEAR DECLARATION: "I HATE DIVORCE!"**

For I hate sending away, said Jehovah, God of Israel, And He who hath covered violence with his clothing, said Jehovah of Hosts, And ye have been watchful over your spirit, And ye do not deal treacherously. (Young's Literal Translation - Malachi 2:16)

**For** (See **discussion** of the importance of pausing to ponder and query this **term of explanation**) - Explains how they were dealing treacherously (unfaithfully) with their wives. They were "putting them away!"

**I hate** ([08130](#))(**sane - word study**) means to abhor, detest, loathe, be hostile, have a feeling of open hostility and intense dislike. The Lxx translates sane with the Greek verb **miseo** which mean to hate, detest, express hostility toward.

**Hate** means to dislike greatly; to feel extreme enmity toward; to have a great aversion to. Hate expresses an intense hostility toward.

**Divorce** (KJV = putting away)(07971) (**shalach**) this verb is used almost 790x in the OT and primarily means to send forth or send away. In some uses it means to cast out someone (Lev. 18:24; 20:23; Jer. 28:16). To dissolve the marriage covenant between a husband and wife.

**NET Note** - Though the statement "I hate divorce" may (and should) be understood as a comprehensive biblical principle, the immediate context suggests that the divorce in view is that of one Jewish person by another in order to undertake subsequent marriages. The injunction here by no means contradicts Ezra's commands to Jewish men to divorce their heathen wives (Ezra 9:1-Ezra 10:11 - **Ed comment:** Lxx in Ezra 10:11 = diastello = draw asunder, divide, dispose - cf Ge 30:40 "separated", Dt 10:8 "set apart", Dt 29:21 "single...out"; Ru 1:17 "parts you and me" - Lxx "divide between me and thee.")

**The LORD, the God of Israel** - This Name is found 66x -Ex 5:1; 32:27; Josh 7:13, 19f; 8:30; 9:18f; 10:40, 42; 13:14, 33; 22:24; 24:2, 23; Judg 4:6; 5:3, 5; 6:8; 11:21, 23; Ruth 2:12; 1 Sam 10:18; 14:41; 20:12; 1 Kgs 1:30, 48; 8:15, 17, 20, 23, 25; 11:9, 31; 17:1; 2 Kgs 9:6; 10:31; 14:25; 18:5; 19:15, 20; 21:12; 1 Chr 16:36; 28:4; 2 Chr 2:12; 6:4, 7, 10, 14, 16f; 34:23; Ezra 1:3; Ps 41:13; 106:48; Isa 17:6; 24:15; 37:21; 45:3; Jer 11:3; 13:12; 25:15; 30:2; 42:9; 45:2; Mal 2:16

**KJV Bible Commentary** - If one would be like God, he will hate what God hates—divorce—and will not engage in it or anything that will hurt the wife of his youth. Rather, he will give all of his effort to the cultivating of the bond between him and the wife of his youth.

**Him who covers his garment with violence** - NET Note says "**garment** is a metaphor for appearance and "violence" a metonymy of effect for cause. God views divorce as an act of violence against the victim."

**Craig Blaising** - A man's covering himself with his garment symbolizes marriage (cf. Ru 3:9; Ezek. 16:8). But covering himself with **violence** describes violating the marriage relationship, which is what divorce does.

**Walter Kaiser** - It is important to note that Dt 24:1 does not contradict this verse. Dt 24:1 should not be read as approving of divorce; rather, it should be read as discouraging divorce by calling for the husband to provide his wife some protection by declaring in writing his intentions to divorce. A written declaration would make impossible any devious schemes of wife-swapping—wherein the wife's marital status would depend on the whims of her husband—that could have occurred under the prior system, which required only the husband's thrice uttered oral statement of divorce witnessed only by the husband and wife. Of course, Jesus harkened back to

the normality of Genesis 2:24 when He spoke in Matthew 19:3–8 on the subject of divorce. His reference to **covering one's garment with violence** (v. 16c) recalls the story of Ruth, in which Boaz spread a garment over Ruth (Ruth 3:9; cf. Deut. 22:30; Ezek. 16:8), thereby indicating his intentions to claim her as his wife. The act of spreading a garment over another person had the same idiomatic meaning as our word "bed" has for conjugal relations today. But when the garment was covered with violence the idiom spoke instead of acting unfaithfully and unjustly towards one's conjugal promises.

**Feinberg** - Polygamy and divorce are not conducive to nurturing children in the fear of God. And ultimately these practices were not helpful to obtain the godly seed in the stock of the promised Messiah. The purpose of God in a godly seed was being counteracted and set aside by their intermarriage and divorce. In view of all this, Malachi warns them to take heed diligently to themselves that they refrain from such godless deeds. In short, God declares unequivocally that He hates divorce, the putting away of wives. This verse is not at variance with Deuteronomy 24:1, where divorce is allowed. This was countenanced because of the hardness of their hearts. (See Mt 19:3-8) The hatred of God is also expressed against the one who covers his garment with violence. The reference is to the old custom of putting a garment over a woman to claim her as wife. (Note particularly Dt 22:30; Ruth 3:9; and Eze 16:8.) Instead of spreading their garment to protect their wives, they covered their garment with violence toward their wives. The garment symbolized wedded trust and protection. Again they are warned to take heed to themselves in this vital matter.

## **ILLUSTRATIONS ON DIVORCE**

**DIVORCE** - According to researcher George Barna, the ratio of Christians who have been divorced is higher than the percentage of non-Christians. In his sample of almost 4000 adults, Christians led non-Christians in divorce by a margin of 3 percentage points, 27% to 24%. Perhaps the number of non-Christians that live together, without the benefit of marriage, and the number of Christians that find their faith after divorce should be taken into account. Nevertheless, the numbers are frightening. (REV Magazine, May-June, 2000 Illustration by Jim L. Wilson)

**DIVORCE** - Best-selling author and marriage and family therapist Michelle Weiner-Davis perceptively states in *Divorce Busting* that "you can't make a person want the marriage to work if he or she is determined to get out.... You may be doing everything [almost] right and it still doesn't work." (*Divorce Busting* (New York: Summit Books, 1992), p. 230. Illustration by Jim L. Wilson) For more information on *Divorce Busting*, go to <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0671797255/freshministry>

**DIVORCE** - Conventional wisdom has taught for years that divorce is the best option for a bad marriage, but a study recently conducted by the University of Chicago is shattering that myth. Linda Waite, lead author of the report said, "Staying married is not just for the children's sake. Some divorce is necessary, but results like these suggest the benefits for divorce have been oversold." The primary conclusion of the study was that divorce did not increase the level of happiness of individuals in troubled marriages. There was "about the same proportion of couples who avoided divorcing despite an unhappy marriage ended up happy five years later as those who split up." Has divorce been oversold in our culture? I'd agree with the author of the study. What hasn't been oversold though is the concept of keeping wedding vows. (Illustration by Jim L. Wilson)

**DIVORCE** - Divorce has always been relatively easy for a Moslem male, all he had to do was tell his wife "I divorce you" three times and it was done. But now it's gotten a lot easier. An Islamic court recently ruled that men could now divorce their wives by sending them a text message over their cellular phones. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad commented on the ruling by saying, "I think if people want to divorce their wives, they should resort to a much more personal approach." (*Newsweek*, August 11, 2003, p. 21 Illustration by Jim L. Wilson) I'd agree that a personal approach is better than an impersonal one, but would prefer men not stop there but also take a spiritual approach. Marriage should never be taken lightly and marriage vows should be honored at all costs. Even though divorce isn't as simple in non-Islamic countries as "sending a text message" it is easy enough. Divorce should be the last resort, not the first option.

**DIVORCE**- Jessica Squier of Montrose, PA has an opinion on divorce that deserves a hearing. She said, "I'm sick of seeing selfish parents trying to reason that divorce is for 'everyone's good.' The best thing to do for your child is to work out your problems in the marriage. We kids become very insecure when our world is shaken. And even though it may not show up on the outside when our parents break up, it leaves a scar. Trust me I'm 14 and I know." (*Reader's Digest*, April 2002, p 16 Illustration by Jim L. Wilson)

**DIVORCE** - John Steinbeck got his first divorce when he was 38 after falling in love with Gwen Conger, a 20-year-old singer. He invited Conger to his house, sat her down in a room with his wife and said, "I want you two gals to talk this out, and the one who feels she really wants me the most, gets me." Steinbeck then left the room. Conger got him. When they divorced 9 years later, Steinbeck said, "Well there goes that experiment." (*Biography Magazine*, Feb 2002, p. 85. Illustration by Jim L. Wilson) With such a cavalier attitude about marriage, no wonder his relationships headed toward divorce.

Andrew Comes - Divorce is always a bombshell. However much it has been anticipated and even thought through, it almost invariably turns out to be much harder for both partners than either ever imagined.

Dorothy Dix - So many people who think divorce a panacea for every ill find out when they try it that the remedy is worse than the disease.

Terence Kelshaw - Divorce tells us the truth about man. It tells us nothing about marriage.

Lawrence S. Kubie - Divorce is always a tragedy no matter how civilized the handling of it may be. It is always a confession of human failure, even when it is the better of sorry alternatives.

Martin Luther - I have such hatred of divorce that I prefer bigamy to divorce.

**William Secker** - Marriages are styled matches, yet amongst those many that are married, how few there are that are matched! Husbands and wives are like locks and keys, that rather break than open, except the wards be answerable

**Story from Pastor Brian Bill** - A man and a woman who had been married for more than 60 years kept no secrets from each other and shared everything. Well, almost everything. The wife kept a hidden shoebox on her closet shelf and had told her husband never to open it or ask her about it. For more than six decades, he had never thought about the box, but one day, his sweet wife got very sick and the doctor said she would not recover. In trying to sort out their affairs, the harried husband took down the shoebox and took it to his bride's bedside. She agreed that it was time for him to know what was in the box. When he opened it, he found two crocheted doilies and a stack of money totaling \$25,000. When he asked for an explanation, his wonderful wife replied, "Before we got married, my grandmother told me that the secret of a happy marriage was to never argue. She mentioned that if I ever got angry with you I should just keep quiet and crochet a doily." The man was so moved that he had to fight back tears. Only two precious doilies were in the box. She had only been angry with him two times in all their years of living and loving! He almost burst with happiness. "Honey," he said, "that explains the doilies, but what about all of this money? Where did it come from?" "Oh," she said, "that's the money I made from selling all the other doilies." That reminds me of the man who said that he and his wife of 50 years had only been in one fight in their marriage. That's the good news. The bad news is that the fight started on their wedding day and never ended! Last week we focused on six ways to guard our marriages so that we don't end up as a statistic. Let me list them quickly by way of review:

Take responsibility to grow spiritually

Stay committed no matter what

Set up some practical hedges

Commit to communicate

Think the best of your spouse

Be a servant

**Malachi 2:17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?":** (wearied: Ps 95:9,10 Isa 1:14 7:13 43:24 Jer 15:6 Eze 16:43 Am 2:13) (How have we wearied You: Mal 2:14. 1:6,7. 3:8) (Everyone: Mal 3:13-15 Job 34:5-9,17,36 36:17 Ps 73:3-15 Mt 11:18,19) (Where: Dt 32:4 1Sa 2:3 Ps 10:11-13 Ec 8:11 Isa 5:18,19 30:18 Eze 8:12 Eze 9:9 Zep 1:12 2Pe 3:3,4)

## THE PEOPLE COMPLAIN GOD ANSWERS

Malachi 2:17-3:6

As you are aware, chapter breaks are not inspired and here we encounter an example of a poor chapter break. Most commentator's take Malachi 2:17 as the beginning of the next section, for the first six verse of Malachi 3 (through Mal 3:6) serve to answer the false charges in Malachi 2:17. **Paul Apple** sums up the "big idea" in this section - "God promises to demonstrate His justice and purify His people when He sends His special Messenger of the covenant to establish righteous worship." ([Ref](#))

**Pulpit Commentary** - This is the introduction to the new section. The prophet makes his charge. The faithless multitude have, as it were, worn out God's patience by their murmuring and discontent. Because their expectations of prosperity and glory were not at once fulfilled, they called in question God's justice and holiness, and even the future judgment. ([Malachi 2 Commentary](#))

While one might use this section to preach a sermon on why do the evil prosper (eg, Cole's sermon -[What to Do When Evil Prevails](#)), that is not really the primary intent of this passage. Verhoef explains that "The reproach of the people must not be interpreted in a positive sense. The contents of their words were different from that of Asaph (Ps. 73:1 answered in Ps 73:17, cf Ps 73:25-26), Habakkuk (Hab 1:2-4, 12-17), or "the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had

borne" (Rev. 6:9, 10). Their "words" were not intended to remind the Lord of His promises (Isa. 62:6, 7). They lack the character of true piety and devotion."

## **OUR SINS "WEARY" GOD WHO DOES NOT GROW WEARY OR TIRED!**

**You have wearied the LORD** - "You" refers to the community of Israel as a whole. Israel in her manifold rebellions had become weary of following the Lord, Isaiah recording "you have not called on Me, O Jacob, but you have become weary of Me, O Israel" (Isa 43:22) and in turn they had "**wearied**" Him again Isaiah recording "You have bought Me no sweet cane with money. Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices. Rather you have burdened Me with your sins. You have **wearied** Me with your iniquities. (Isa 43:24). The nations in their rebellions weary themselves against the Lord, Habakkuk asking "Is it not indeed from the LORD of hosts that peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing?" (Hab. 2:13). This begs the question - have I wearied the Holy One with my repeated rebellious acts against Him? **Have you ever thought of your sins as something that could "weary" the all powerful God? It would do us good to remember that we are no different from Israel in respect to our depravity inherited from Adam, and that our sins might have the same impact on God as their sins did! Praise God for the Cross of Christ and the blood of Christ which offers the assurance of God's compassion when we forsake our iniquities** (Pr 28:13-note). **Praise God for the privilege of daily confession of our "wearying" sins** (1John 1:9-note).

**Wearied** (03021)(**yaga**) primarily means to work until one is tired or exhausted, and so to become weary with work or to grow tired, in the sense of physically exhausted. The majority of the OT uses of **yaga** are translated in the **Septuagint (Lxx)** with the verb **kopiao** (see below). To be **wearied** means to have one's patience, tolerance, or pleasure exhausted. To be or become in need of a state of rest, caused by either physical or emotional needs (Eccl 10:15). The Hebrew word for "**Wearied** usually refers to the exhaustion that comes from hard work. Isaiah reminds us "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable." (Isa 40:28) And so it is indeed a travesty that He Who does not become weary like men is now **wearied** by persistent unbelief and sin. Here are some passages that allude to God's weariness with His chosen people ...

Isa 1:14-note "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them.

Isa 43:2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

Jer 15:6 "You who have forsaken Me," declares the LORD, "You keep going backward. So I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am tired of relenting!

Amos 2:13 (for context go back and read Amos 2:1-12 - this is Jehovah speaking) "Behold, I am weighted down beneath you as a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves.

**APPLICATION: Have I wearied or tired the LORD with my persistent sins, some secret sin I'm unwilling to release or some sin which so easily entangles me and trips me up, preventing me from running the race of holiness for His glory (cf Heb 12:1-note)? It's a question we all do well to pause and ponder!**

**Verhoef** - The Hiphil of **yāga**, "make weary," is also found in Isa 43:23-24, where it is parallel to the Hiphil of **ābad**, "compel to labor as a slave," "cause to serve," "burden someone with something": "You have burdened [db] me with your sins and wearied [yg] me with your offenses" (Isa 43:24). Here the perfect tense has the meaning of a present tense, and indicates that the conduct of the people was not only a fact of history but continued until the present day.

The Lxx translates **yaga** in Malachi 2:17 with **paroxuno** which means to provoke, irritate, prick, exasperate and the present tense speaks of this as His continual attitude. **Paroxuno** is in the **present tense** indicating that they were continuing to weary Him right up to the time of the writing of the prophecy of Malachi.

**TWOT** - The root is used to convey two basic thrusts:1) an emphasis on the toil of work, and 2) the weariness that results from labor. God meant that toil should result in the benefits of the end product. This is especially true in farming (Josh 24:13). **However, whenever Israel "toiled" in idolatry and "grew weary" of God's ways** (Isa 57:10; Mal 2:17), **she reaped the product of her labor: God's judgment.**

**Baker** - **Yaga** indicates putting forth great effort and exertion to accomplish something (Josh. 7:3), especially in battle (2Sa 23:10), so that one becomes enervated or exhausted. It takes on the idea of putting forth effort to continue to function in the face of great obstacles (Job 9:29). It indicates the loss of energy or spirit from one's hopeless responses to illness (Ps. 6:6; 69:3) or adversity (Jer. 45:3). Wise persons are told not to use up their energy just to acquire wealth (Pr 23:4). A foolish person's labor is so poorly structured that it weakens him or her excessively (Eccl. 10:15).

**Yaga** - 26x - Josh 7:3; 24:13; 2 Sam 23:10; Job 9:29; Ps 6:6; 69:3; Pr 23:4; Eccl 10:15; Isa 40:28-31 **note**; 43:22, 23, 24; 47:12, 15; 49:4; 57:10; 62:8; 65:23; Jer 45:3; 51:58; Lam 5:5; Hab 2:13; Mal 2:17

**Usage:** become weary(1), get tired(1), labor(1), labored(4), tired(3), toil(4), toiled(1), wearied(4), wearies(1), weary(5), worn(1).

Here are some representative uses...

Ps 6:6 I am **weary** (Lxx = **kopiao**) with my sighing; Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears.

**Comment: Kopiao** (from **kopos** = labor, fatigue used in secular Greek of “a beating,” “weariness” as though one had been beaten) was the proper word for physical tiredness induced by work, exertion or heat. Kopiao means to to exhibit great effort and exertion, to the point of sweat and exhaustion. To physically become worn out, weary or faint. To engage in hard work with the implication of difficulty and trouble.

Ps 69:3 I am **weary** (Lxx = **kopiao**) with my crying; my throat is parched; My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

Isaiah 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or **tired** (Heb = yaga; Lxx = kopiao). His understanding is inscrutable. 29 He gives strength to the weary (different word - yaeph), And to him who lacks might He increases power. 30 Though youths grow weary and **tired** (Heb = yaga; Lxx = kopiao), And vigorous young men stumble badly, 31 Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get **tired** (Heb = yaga; Lxx = kopiao), They will walk and not become weary. (**See commentary on Isaiah 40:31**)

The Israelites had wearied God their acts of rebelliousness and their **words**, specifically their frontal attack on God characterized by a series of false charges: (1) God considers evil doers good; (2) God actually delights in evil doers; (3) Where is the God of justice regarding these evil doers?

**Preacher's Homiletic Commentary - Wearying God.** Spoken after the manner of men. God is said to be tired, fatigued—1. With their formal worship. 2. With their blasphemous words; and 3. with the justification of themselves in sin. God is infinitely patient with our infirmities and prayers, but wearied with our sins and impenitent hearts. “Thou hast made me to serve (burdened, overcome by labour) with thy sins, thou hast wearied (disgusted) me with thine iniquities” (Is. 43:23, 24). ([Notes](#))

**Yet you say** - The Israelites respond with amazement to Malachi's accusation that they had wearied God. Sin is deceptive and when one is deceived it does not even know it. So we should not be surprised at their surprise!

**Pulpit Commentary** - These words are directed against the spirit of scepticism and discontent which prevailed amongst the Israelites in the time of the prophets, and they lead us to offer two remarks on the words of skepticism. I. THEY ARE WORDS OF COMPLAINT AGAINST GOD. II. THEY ARE WORDS UNGRATEFUL TO THE EAR OF GOD. “I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” Every idle word. Not merely the profane and impious language of the scoffer and blasphemer, but every idle word—words that have little or no meaning, the most airy words of wit and humour spoken in jest, not to delude or pain, but simply to please.

**Biblical Illustrator** - Where is the God of judgment? A startling question! Times of abounding wickedness have been times of unbelief. Evil hinders the manifestation of God in the world. His laws seem to have no executive force; His righteousness is obscured; His very existence is questioned. (W. Osborne Lilley) ([The Biblical illustrator; or, Anecdotes, similes, etc...](#))

**Biblical Illustrator** - God is a God of judgment -There was lately a judge in England, whom I need not be afraid to name as the honour of his robe and profession, namely, Judge Doddridge, whom they commonly called “the sleeping judge.” Indeed, he had an affected drowsy posture on the Bench, inasmuch that many persons unacquainted with his custom, and having cases of concernment to be tried before him, have even given up all for lost, expecting no justice from a dormant judge; when he all the while did only retire himself within himself, the more seriously to consult with his own soul about the validity of what was alleged and proved unto him, as appeared afterwards by those oracles of law which he pronounced. Wicked men, in like manner, erroneously suppose God to be a sleeping God,. . . but in due time He will assuredly confute their mistake. (Thos. Fuller.) ([The Biblical illustrator; or, Anecdotes, similes, etc...](#))

The sin of confusing moral distinctions.

**Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD**- Verhoef explains that Israel had been clearly “prohibited to do **evil** in the eyes of the Lord and to provoke him to anger (Dt. 4:25; 9:18); they were charged to do what is right and **good** in the Lord's sight (Dt. 6:18; 12:28). On the basis of their own “experiences” the speakers have come to the blasphemous conclusion that God now has



contradicted His own injunction: in His eyes, that is, according to His perception and evaluation, it is **good** to do **evil!**"

**John Phillips** - The Jews attacked the **providence of God** by bringing up the worn-out argument of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. Malachi's response indicated that God was sick of hearing the same old slanders served up by immoral people to justify their evil lifestyles.

**Ryrie** - Not only had they tried to make **evil...good**, but they implied that God delighted in evil because He did not dispense immediate justice.

## **THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN**

**How have we wearied Him** (cf Mal 1:6, 7, Mal 3:8) - Their response is one of surprise and amazement! They fail to see themselves as God sees them (and don't we all do the same from time to time)! They wanted more specific details, confident that none would be forthcoming. So, instead of a humble, sorrowful response to the divine accusation they want an elaboration (implying that in their sin-stupefying state they had no idea of how they had wearied God!) As **Moore** writes "the extent of their depravity is evinced by the mode in which this charge was met. It was not met with penitent regret, or even silence, but with the insolent challenge." Sin is deceptive (Heb 3:13-note), and here we see the sinners oblivious and blind to their own sin, even to the point of questioning the righteousness and justice of God! See related discussion - **Discussion of Deceitfulness of sin** and **Illustrations of Deceitfulness of sin**.

**Where is the God of justice?** (See discussion of His attribute - **Justice**) - While this is framed as a question, it is better viewed as their deceptive assertion that God is no longer interested in what is happening. Such a thought directly attacks not only His attribute of being **Just**, but also His attribute of **Sovereignty**, the truth that He is in control and has not vacated His throne or authority over all Creation. Pulpit Commentary paraphrases their question "Why does not God perform His promises to Israel, and execute vengeance on the enemy?" Malachi will explain He is present and His judgment is swift! (cp Mal 3:1-6).

Isaiah reminds Israel...

Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you.  
**For the LORD is a God of justice**; How blessed are all those who long for Him. (Isa 30:18, cf God's promise of justice in Isa 13:11)

Sometimes when we do not see God act swiftly to bring about justice, we fall into the trap of thinking He is not going to mete our justice, even as Solomon warned...

Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil. (Eccl 8:11)

**MacArthur** - Malachi 2:17–4:6 The denunciation of Israel's sins was followed by a declaration of the judgment on the unrepentant and subsequent blessing on the faithful remnant. Mal 2:17 is the introduction to the rest of the book. These faithless, disobedient priests and people had worn out God's patience by their skepticism and self-justification, so judgment is on the way.... God was coming, but to refine and purify (cf. Malachi 3:1, 5). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Woodrow Kroll** comments on their wearisome words - "Where is the God of judgment?—the Lord must not exist, or He would judge the evildoers instead of prospering them. All three complaints are familiar. Jehovah graciously answers their complaint in the opening verses of the succeeding chapter by showing that **One is coming Who will indeed right all wrongs**—including those in the priesthood and the people of Israel!"

**Kelley** - The great and terrible day of the Lord was about to break on the people's heads (Mal 3:2). After a forerunner had been sent to prepare the way, the Lord would come suddenly to His Temple, (Mal 3:1) His appearing would answer critics and would silence complainers once and for all. . . . At the heart of their complaint against the **justice of God** was a denial that God was involved actively in the affairs of history. He was regarded as being outside history and indifferent to what went on within it.

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### **Malachi 2:17 Reality Or Illusion?**

You say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord." —Malachi 2:

I had just started to back the van away from the loading area. In my rearview mirror I saw two semi trucks side by side. I had plenty of clearance. Just then it appeared that one of the trucks was moving into my path. I stopped. But then I realized that the other truck was actually backing up, creating the illusion that the standing semi was moving forward.

An illusion, according to the dictionary, is an "erroneous perception of reality." Sleight-of-hand artists use it to "do the impossible." Most illusions are harmless, but some can be fatal. In a desert, chasing a mirage that looks like water can lead to death.

But the most dangerous illusions are the spiritual and moral ones that people are so prone to believe. In Malachi 2, the Israelites were breaking their marriage vows (vv.14-16). They knew that God hates divorce (v.16), yet they were saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord" (v.17).

Doesn't that sound like today's culture? People believe that things like abortion, extramarital sex, and divorce for other than biblical reasons are morally right. Even some Christians believe in such illusions.

It's crucial that we allow the Bible to be the standard by which we distinguish reality from illusion! —Dennis J. De Haan

The Word of God declares what's right

And what is pleasing in His sight;

It also shows that deep within

What we call good may be a sin. —Hess

One of life's greatest illusions is that sin has no consequences.

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### **Malachi 2:17 Illusionary Living**

You say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord." —Malachi 2:17

An illusion is defined as "an erroneous perception of reality." Magicians depend on it to trick their audiences. But some illusions can be fatal. If I chase a mirage in the desert, thinking it's water, I could die of thirst.

The most dangerous illusions of all are spiritual. In Malachi's time, men no longer saw the seriousness of the marriage covenant and were divorcing their wives without just cause. God's people said, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them" (2:17). They were not seeing things as God sees them.

We are all prone to this kind of self-deception. Sin clouds our ability to see right and wrong. "The heart is deceitful above all things, . . . who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Living under such illusions must be replaced by reality. And this can happen through hard times. Adversity and pain have a way of ridding our lives of falseness. We are then better able to fill the emptiness with truth.

As we depend on God's Spirit to help us learn and obey the Bible's teachings, illusions are replaced by the truth of God's love and forgiveness in Christ. This is the only reality that truly satisfies the deepest longings of our hearts and leads us to a desire to be like Him.—Dennis J. De Haan

If we would love what's good and right,

We must be pure within;

But if we compromise the truth,

We lose our sense of sin. —D. De Haan

To avoid being drawn into error, keep a firm grip on the truth.

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**Malachi 2:17** - During the first day of Boy Scout camp, a scoutmaster was called home because of an emergency and was not planning to return until the following day. As he prepared to leave, he gathered his charges together and made Joe, one of the patrol leaders, the acting scoutmaster until he returned. As soon as the scoutmaster was out of sight, the newly appointed leader began to give orders. He had the younger boys set up his tent, sent another after candy, and told the rest to clean up the area, even though it was recreation time. "You can't do that," they said. "Mr. Whitten said it was recreation time!" Joe was not impressed. "I can do whatever I want to. And furthermore, I don't care what Mr. Whitten said, because Mr. Whitten isn't here!" He must have seen the smiles on the Scouts' faces, because he turned around to see Mr. Whitten standing there. He had returned for his car keys, had heard everything, and, needless to say, appointed a new acting leader. Joe assumed what the priests of Malachi's day assumed,

that they could act in any way they chose because the one who guaranteed justice was nowhere to be seen. But both Joe and the priests found out otherwise. The keeper of justice was seeing their deeds and hearing their words and would ultimately set things right. (1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching - Michael)