

## ***IX. Covenant Ministry***

28-Jan-07 Malachi 2:1-9

*Theme:* True covenant ministry reveres God, respects truth, practices holiness, and teaches godliness, leading to righteousness within the covenant people.

*Key Verses:* Malachi 2:4-7 <sup>4</sup>“Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant with Levi may continue,” says the LORD of hosts. <sup>5</sup>“My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, and I gave them to him that he might fear Me; so he feared Me and was reverent before My name. <sup>6</sup>The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. <sup>7</sup>For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.”

### Review

Last week we looked at covenant hypocrisy – Malachi’s indictment of the vain and empty worship offered by the priests in the temple. The priests were guilty of despising God’s name, of sneering at God’s worship, and of offering worthless sacrifices and expecting God to accept them. But God lets them know He is not pleased with their callous approach to His worship.

Instead of accepting blemished and diseased offerings, God says that those who offer such gifts are cursed rather than blessed. God does not accept their works-religion mentality and rejects both their bribes and their worship. In place of this hypocritical worship, Malachi hints at the day when God will close the temple doors and shut down the temple worship forever. In that day, the name of the LORD will be great and greatly feared among the Gentile nations, since He was not respected in Israel. Furthermore, the nations will offer Him pure and acceptable worship throughout the world, rather than the polluted and defiled sacrifices offered in the temple. Of course, Malachi is looking forward to the day of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His church throughout the world.

It is our privilege and responsibility to worship God carefully, thoughtfully, reverently, and acceptably. “We are spiritually healthy when, unlike the Jews of Malachi’s day, we have an attitude which believes that only the best is good enough for our God. When we honestly offer Him not diseased sacrifices, but the very best of our lives, the best of our hearts, the best of our devotion, that is spiritual health.” Offering Him anything less is vain and empty religion; it is covenant hypocrisy.

### Introduction

In the second section of Malachi (1:6-14), the prophet blasts the worthless worship offered by the priests, and by extension, all those who worship God in such a careless and contemptuous manner. As Malachi enters the third section of his prophecy (2:1-9), his attention remains on the priesthood. However, his focus is now broader than simply pointing out failure in the area of worship; Malachi now condemns the priests for their failures in all other areas of ministry. The Levites were called by God to be His messengers (2:7), a calling at which they have failed miserably. Malachi details the sins of the leadership of the church of his day by describing how priests were supposed to conduct ministry. These priests had a high and holy calling and they were not living up to it.

## Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Malachi

This passage speaks of the responsibilities of Christian leaders today, and indeed of all Christians. We have a high calling – the calling of Jesus Christ – and we are to live our lives accordingly. Covenant ministry is a solemn and difficult task and not to be entered into lightly. Malachi teaches us that true covenant ministry reveres God, respects truth, practices holiness, and teaches godliness, leading to righteousness within the covenant people.

### Exposition

#### **A. Covenant Curse (2:1-3)**

##### *1. Reversed Blessings (2:1-2)*

<sup>1</sup>“And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. <sup>2</sup>If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,” says the LORD of hosts, “I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart” (Malachi 2:1-2).

Verses 1-2 of Malachi 2 form a bridge between this section and the previous one. Malachi reminds us that he is still talking to the priests, his primary audience from chapter 1. One of the chief condemnations of the priests in the previous section was their contempt for the name of God (1:6). Malachi starts out this section with a reminder of this sin – they do not “give glory to My name” (2:2). Furthermore, the previous section ended with a curse on thoughtless worshipers (1:14); this section opens with the pronouncement of a curse upon the priests (2:2).

In the previous section, God was in disputation with the priests. First God would make a pronouncement, and then a rebuttal statement from the perspective of the priests was given. In chapter 1 you had a dialogue of sorts. But not here. God is through with listening to the sinful excuses of the priests and with senseless debating. Now He issues a “commandment.” The time for talking back is over; God is the only speaker in this passage.

Notice how God’s commandment is given in a conditional form, in the form of an “if-then” statement. God gives the priests conditions; if they do not meet the conditions, then they will bear the consequences of their disobedience. However, the way the commandment is given, and the manner in which the consequences are described, already indicates the priests have failed to obey; they have not taken the commandment of the LORD “to heart.”

The priests were specially called to give glory to the name of the LORD. They were to do this by their words and their conduct. But Malachi has already clearly demonstrated that they are not honoring the name of God or His holy worship. Therefore, God promises to curse the priests, their words, and their works.

One of the great privileges of the priesthood was the pronouncement of the Aaronic blessing upon the people of God:

<sup>22</sup>And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>23</sup>“Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:

<sup>24</sup>“The LORD bless you and keep you;

<sup>25</sup>The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

<sup>26</sup>The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.””

<sup>27</sup>“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them” (Numbers 6:22-27).

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We still use this blessing, and others like it, today in our worship. At the end of every worship service, the minister of the Word pronounces a benediction – literally a “good saying” or blessing – upon the congregation. This is one of the great privileges of covenant ministry, to bless the people of God.

However, God says that He has changed their blessings into curses. Whenever the priests would pronounce this blessing upon the people of God, instead of “may the LORD bless you and keep you,” they were really saying “may the LORD curse you and destroy you” (Robertson). This makes sense in an ironic sort of way. Blessing the children of Israel was putting God’s name upon them to protect them. But since the priests treated God’s name contemptuously, they were in practice putting contempt upon those they meant to bless.

These were not just empty words that the priests were saying. The blessing (or in this case cursing) had a tangible impact. God says that not only has He changed the blessings of the priesthood into curses, but that He has already begun to implement those curses in the lives of the recipients. “Every time a priest opened his mouth to bless the people, God would make it manifestly obvious that they were not being blessed. There is nothing so pitiable as a man pretending to be a spiritual leader when God has left him” (Benton).

### 2. Unholy Feasts (2:3)

<sup>3</sup>Behold, I will rebuke your descendants and spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your solemn feasts; and one will take you away with it” (Malachi 2:3).

But God promises greater consequences upon the priests than just transforming their blessings into curses. There are three additional consequences: 1) impact on their descendants or seed; 2) being covered with shame; and 3) being cast out.

First, God says He “will rebuke your descendants” (v. 3a). God is saying that sin has consequences that impact not only the sinner, but subsequent generations. God is threatening to cast out the current Levitical priesthood because of their contempt for His name and their privileges. As a result, their descendants will also lose the privilege of service. We should never forget that our sins have consequences beyond ourselves. Our sin impacts others, especially those closest to us. How often have we seen the sins of the fathers repeated by the children?

Secondly, Malachi says that God will cover the priests with shame. He uses a very graphic image to drive this home – dung on the face. To have the dung of animals smeared on one’s face is an image of the utmost shame and indignity. It is also a most fitting picture, graphically depicting how the priests have been acting towards God. They have treated Him with utter contempt; and now God in turn will visibly shame the priesthood.

The third consequence is linked with the first two. Malachi says that God “will take you away” with the dung. The background of this statement lies in the detailed laws concerning the sacrificial system. God gave the priesthood very specific laws about how to prepare a sacrifice. They were to kill the animals in a certain way, and dispose of the various parts of the animal according to strict instructions: part of the animal was burned on the altar; part of the animal was reserved for the priests to eat; and part of the animal was discarded as refuse.

Another one of the great privileges of priesthood was to dine at the LORD’s table. Only the burnt offering was totally consumed in the fire on the altar of the LORD. The priests received a portion of all the other animal sacrifices to eat with their families. For example, the Law of Moses says the following regarding the sin sacrifice:

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<sup>26</sup>The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting. <sup>27</sup>Everyone who touches its flesh must be holy.... <sup>29</sup>All the males among the priests may eat it. It is most holy (Leviticus 6:26-27a, 29).

Notice the emphasis on holiness. The sacrifice is holy; the priests are holy; the meal is holy. This is what Malachi is referring to when he describes their “solemn feasts.” Unfortunately, these feasts are no longer holy to the LORD, because the priests are not following God’s regulations regarding the worthiness of the sacrifices.

In addition to the sacrifice and the holy feast, there were also parts of the sacrificial animal that were discarded. For example, God gives the following command regarding the sin sacrifice:

<sup>14</sup>But the flesh of the bull, with its skin and its offal, you shall burn with fire outside the camp. It is a sin offering (Exodus 29:14).

<sup>11</sup>But the bull’s hide and all its flesh, with its head and legs, its entrails and offal—<sup>12</sup>the whole bull he shall carry outside the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned (Leviticus 4:11-12).

In both of these passages, God commands that the skin, entrails, and offal of the bull sacrificed for a sin offering be carried outside the camp and burned. In these verses, the Hebrew word translated as “offal” is the same word that Malachi uses (“refuse”) meaning “dung.” Part of the animal is reserved for a holy feast for the priesthood; part of the animal is burned upon the altar and is received by God as an acceptable substitute for sin. However, the offal or dung is burnt outside the camp because it is unacceptable and must be removed from God’s presence.

So, in this passage Malachi is essentially saying, “You are what you eat.” The priests were supposed to be holy men eating holy food. Instead, Malachi says they are unholy men eating unholy food – in essence, they are eating offal and refuse and dung. They were eating unholy food in a holy place and that had to stop. And that means that the same fate that was reserved for the offal was also going to be meted out to these unfaithful priests – they were destined to be cast out of God’s presence, cut off from His service forever. Jordan comments:

If you eat the body of Christ, you are part of the body of Christ. If you eat dung, then you will be cast out. Incense is sweet-smelling, and obviously dung is the reverse. Incense (worship) and dung are incompatible.

Eventually God enacts this judgment upon the priesthood. They continued to offer unacceptable sacrifices, especially after the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the place of sinners. And so God had to destroy the temple worship and end the Levitical priesthood, replacing it with the superior priesthood of Jesus Christ, “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:20).

### **B. Covenant with Levi (2:4-7)**

#### *1. Covenant (2:4-5a)*

<sup>4</sup>Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant with Levi may continue,” says the LORD of hosts. <sup>5</sup>“My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, and I gave them to him that he might fear Me” (Malachi 2:4-5a).

God now begins to contrast the ministry of the current religious leadership of Judah with the ideal model for covenant ministry, embodied by God’s “covenant with Levi,” a covenant of “life

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and peace.” Malachi the Reformer is calling the priests of his day to remember their calling and return to true covenant ministry. He is calling them to repent of their sins before it is too late. However, we have a small problem; exactly what is the “covenant with Levi”?

The Biblical record regarding the patriarch Levi does not describe anything remotely resembling a covenant relationship with God. In fact, Levi and his brother Simeon were men of violence (*cp.* Gen. 34:25-31). In Jacob’s prophetic oracle upon his death bed, he passed over Simeon and Levi for tribal inheritance, cursing them to be scattered throughout the land (Gen. 49:5-7). Thus, the reference to a covenant with Levi cannot be with the original patriarch.

### *a. With Levi (Ex. 32)*

Instead, the covenant of Levi has to do with the establishment of Levi as the priestly tribe of service to God. The prophet Jeremiah refers to this covenant with the tribe of Levi:

<sup>19</sup>And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, <sup>20</sup>“Thus says the LORD: ‘If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, <sup>21</sup>then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. <sup>22</sup>As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me’” (Jeremiah 33:19-23; *cp.* Nehemiah 13:29).

The inauguration of Levi as the priestly tribe occurs at Mt. Sinai in the aftermath of the golden calf incident. Moses comes down from the mountain holding the tablets of the Ten Commandments in his hands. However, his wrath burns at the idolatry and faithlessness of Israel, and so he smashes the stone tablets, indicating that God’s covenant has already been broken by their spiritual harlotry. In a procedure that echoes the ordeal of jealousy in Numbers 5, Moses grinds up the golden calf into a powder, puts the powder in their water supply, and makes the children of Israel drink it (Ex. 32:20). Jordan explains:

In the ordeal of jealousy, the priest puts dust from the floor of the tabernacle into a vessel of holy water (Num. 5:16). This corresponds to the dust of the idol being put into the mountain water at Sinai. In addition, the words of the curse are scraped off and put into the bitter water (Num. 5:23), corresponding to the broken word of God at the foot of the mountain (Ex. 32:19). At Sinai, the sons of Israel are to drink this bitter water because they swore covenant loyalty (marriage) to God but they have been unfaithful. God has a spirit of jealousy because His name is jealous. Those who are guilty of spiritual adultery will have their abdomens swell and their thighs fall (Num 5:21-22).

Moses then calls the faithful to his side, and the Levites respond. They are called to execute the guilty and three thousand were killed that day (Ex. 32:26-29). How did the Levites know who was guilty? Apparently they suffered some ill impact after drinking the water of jealousy that revealed their spiritual infidelity. It is because the Levites rallied to the side of Moses and executed the just wrath of God’s jealousy that they are rewarded with the opportunity to serve God in His sanctuary as the priestly tribe (*cp.* Dt. 33:8-11). Although the Pentateuch does not explicitly call this a covenant, a covenantal relationship is clearly implied.

The whole golden calf episode has to do with spiritual adultery and jealousy. God is a jealous God (Ex. 34:14), and He will not suffer His people to worship other gods or in ways other than

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He has commanded. Because the Levites guard the purity of God's worship, they are thus rewarded with a covenant of service as God's ministers.

### *b. With Phinehas (Num. 25)*

This covenant with Levi is exemplified by and expanded with Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron in Numbers 25 at Baal Peor. Again, we have a situation of spiritual infidelity, this time coupled with physical adultery. The anger of the LORD burned against Israel for their sin, because He is a jealous God who will brook no rivals. Once again, death strikes the camp as God sends a plague that kills twenty-four thousand. The plague is stopped by the zeal of Phinehas, who spears an adulterous couple through the body or "belly" (the sign of adultery in the ordeal of jealousy – Num. 5:21-22). God then says of Phinehas:

<sup>11</sup>"Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. <sup>12</sup>Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; <sup>13</sup>and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel'" (Numbers 25:11-13).

Because of the zeal of Phinehas, because of his jealousy for the LORD, God rewards him with a "covenant of peace." This is the covenant that Malachi refers to in 2:5. Jordan explains:

Phinehas understood what true peace was. True peace is not absence of the battlefield, it is union with God. Here in Malachi it is a covenant of "life and peace." Life and peace are products of covenant loyalty. You cannot have them otherwise. You must be jealous for God and hate God's enemies. Like Phinehas, they must fear God and hate evil, or else He will curse their blessings. The curse is to have the thigh swell up and be put to death. The blessing was to be consecrated for the service of the priesthood. The promise to Phinehas was that he and his seed after him would continue to be priests. But Malachi says that the seed of the priests will be rebuked (2:3) and will fail because of their sin.

The situation in Malachi's day was similar to that at Mt. Sinai or at Baal Peor. In the next section, Malachi will describe the marital infidelity of Israel that mirrors their spiritual unfaithfulness (2:11). Marital unfaithfulness and spiritual adultery go together, and God's anger burns against both of them (2:16).

Malachi is saying that what was needed were men like Phinehas, men who burned with zeal for God and were consumed with the holiness of the LORD. What a far cry from Phinehas were the priests of Malachi's day! Phinehas served God and worshiped Him in fear and reverence. Meanwhile Malachi's contemporaries had nothing but contempt for their privileges and their responsibilities. They didn't guard God's holiness; they didn't revere His name; they weren't zealous for spiritual purity; they didn't protect the worship of the LORD.

### *2. Conduct (2:5b-7)*

<sup>5</sup>So he feared Me and was reverent before My name. <sup>6</sup>The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. <sup>7</sup>For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts (Malachi 2:5b-7).

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Becoming the priestly tribe was a great privilege for Levi, but of course with great privilege comes great responsibility. Malachi describes four areas of conduct that were expected of God's ministers, traits that were exemplified by Phinehas, the priest *par excellence*.

The first responsibility of the priests was to *revere God*: "So he feared Me and was reverent before My name" (2:5b). The priests were the worship leaders of Israel. Their primary responsibility was to lead the worship of God in holy fear. They were to revere the name of God and all that it stands for. But as we have already seen, Malachi has already condemned the priests for failure in precisely this area (1:6-7).

The second responsibility of the priests was to *respect truth*: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips" (2:6a). This means more than simply telling the truth or abstaining from lies. Negatively, it is a warning against partiality. God's ministers are not to show favoritism to one group over another (James 2:8-9). They are to treat each and every individual with respect.

Positively, it refers to speaking the truth contained in the Word of God. The priests were to be students of the Law, students of the Word, students of the Bible. They were to understand the Word of God and apply it to practical situations. Priests were called upon to be impartial judges in legal disputes (Dt. 17:8-9; 19:17). They were to apply God's Word to these situations and render fair judgments. How does this apply today? Well, for starters, ministers and elders should be wise in God's Word and its application. Ministers and elders are called to administer church discipline and act as agents of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19). When church leaders work to correct sin and restore broken relationships, they are acting as true ministers of the Word of God.

The third responsibility of the priests was to *practice holiness*: "He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity" (2:6b). All Christians are called to lead holy and blameless lives. This calling is exemplified by the patriarchs Enoch, Noah, and Abraham:

<sup>22</sup>After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup>So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. <sup>24</sup>And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him (Genesis 5:22-24).

<sup>8</sup>But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. <sup>9</sup>This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:8-9).

<sup>1</sup>When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. (Genesis 17:1).

"To walk" with God or before God is to lead a life of obedience and submission to God's revealed will. It does not mean sinless perfection, for that is impossible in this life. But it does mean an ever-increasing commitment to God and His Word. The true Christian becomes more and more sanctified, more and more conformed to the image of the Son (Rom. 8:29).

A prerequisite of spiritual leadership is to live a holy life. It is only when a Christian practices what he preaches that he will see spiritual fruit in his life. In this case, Malachi describes the fruit of a godly, holy ministry: to turn "many away from iniquity." Benton comments:

The great work, above all other works for spiritual leaders, is to influence people towards God and away from sin. Therefore shepherds of the flock, elders must not be frightened to talk to people about their sins. We are not appointed simply to keep the peace in the

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churches. We are appointed that Christ might truly have a godly church which walks the narrow road to heaven. We are to be engaged in doing all we can to turn many from sin.

The final responsibility of the priests was to *teach godliness*: “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (2:7). The priests were supposed to be instructors of God’s Word; they were the teachers of Israel (Dt. 33:10). Because the priests were granted special access to God, they were given the responsibility to teach God’s Word to the people of Israel. What an awesome responsibility it was to be God’s messenger, God’s *malachi*! The only problem, of course, is that the priesthood was failing in this responsibility as well as in all the others.

### C. Corrupted Covenant (2:8-9)

<sup>8</sup>“But you have departed from the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” says the LORD of hosts. <sup>9</sup>“Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways but have shown partiality in the law” (Malachi 2:8-9).

Malachi now applies the standard of priestly conduct to the priests of his generation and finds them sorely lacking. They have failed in all four of their priestly responsibilities. Instead of showing reverence for God and worshiping God properly, they have shown contempt for His name and His ordinances (1:6-7). Instead of respecting truth and judging without bias, they “have shown partiality in the law.” Instead of practicing holiness and walking a life of piety, they “have departed from the way” and not kept the ways of the LORD. Rather than teaching the law and being a messenger of true knowledge, they have “corrupted the covenant of Levi.”

What is the sum result of their failures? Instead of turning “many away from iniquity” (2:6), they have had the opposite impact; they “have caused many to stumble at the law” (2:8). No wonder Malachi comes down so hard on these priests! They have completely forgotten who they are and whose they are. They have lost sight of their calling and of their four great responsibilities, so beautifully expressed by Moses in his final blessing upon Israel:

<sup>8</sup>And of Levi he said:

“Let Your Thummim and Your Urim *[respects truth]*  
be with Your holy one,  
Whom You tested at Massah,  
And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah,

<sup>9</sup>Who says of his father and mother,

‘I have not seen them’;  
Nor did he acknowledge his brothers,  
Or know his own children;  
For they have observed Your word *[practices holiness]*  
And kept Your covenant.

<sup>10</sup>They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, *[teaches godliness]*

And Israel Your law.  
They shall put incense before You, *[reveres God in worship]*  
And a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar.

<sup>11</sup>Bless his substance, LORD,  
And accept the work of his hands;

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Strike the loins of those who rise against him, [zealous for the LORD]  
And of those who hate him,  
that they rise not again” (Deuteronomy 33:8-11).

### Conclusion

Although this passage is directed at the priests of Israel, I believe it applies not only to church leaders, but to all Christians. The Levitical priesthood has been replaced by Jesus Christ, a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:20), and the priesthood of all believers (*cp.* 1 Pe. 2:9, the church is a “royal priesthood”). We no longer need a Levitical priest to intercede between us and God; we can approach the throne of grace boldly and directly through prayer (Heb. 4:16).

All Christians are called with a high calling – the calling of Jesus Christ – and we are to live our lives accordingly. Covenant ministry is a solemn and difficult task and not to be entered into lightly. Therefore, we are first and foremost called to *revere God*, treat His name with respect, and worship Him as He commands. “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name” (Mt. 6:9). Secondly, we are to *respect the truth*, especially in our interactions with others. We should not show partiality or favoritism, but love everyone with the love of Jesus Christ. Third, we must *practice holiness*, living godly and righteous lives, becoming more and more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Finally, we must be *teachers of godliness*. Even if you do not have the gift of teaching, you have a responsibility to study the Scriptures, know the Word of God, and apply it to your life. If we practice these four principles of covenant ministry – revering God, respecting truth, practicing holiness, and teaching godliness – Malachi promises it will lead to righteousness within the covenant people.

Malachi does more, however, than excoriate the priesthood and exhort the church. He also anticipates the covenant ministry of Jesus Christ. Malachi says that the priest was supposed to be “the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (2:7). However, the priesthood as a whole has failed in this responsibility. Therefore, in the parallel section of his book, Malachi will tell us about another messenger (3:1), the “Messenger of the covenant” who will come and be everything that these priests were not.

Jesus Christ is that Messenger of the covenant, the LORD Himself who comes to earth to purify the sons of men and make them acceptable in the sight of the LORD. Jesus is the only One who perfectly revered God. Jesus was zealous for the LORD’s name and the LORD’s house (Mt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-17). Jesus respected truth and justice, not showing partiality but loving the downtrodden and the unlovely. On the other hand, He did not excuse sin, but called sinners to be accountable (*cp.* Mt. 23:1-36). Jesus practiced holiness – in fact, He was the only One who lived a perfect life. And Jesus taught true godliness – after all, He is the eternal Word of God (Jn. 1:1-3). Through His life, and death, and resurrection, He has “turned many away from iniquity” (2:6) and guaranteed eternal life for all those who put their trust in Him. Jesus Christ “has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant” (Heb. 8:6). Jesus Christ is the greater Phinehas, the perfect example of covenant ministry.

Next week: Lesson 10 – Covenant Infidelity – Malachi 2:10-16

Close in Prayer.