

MALACHI 2:1-9**God's Denunciation of the Priests for Perversion of the Law****I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Priests in the economy of Israel were divinely appointed leaders of the people. They were mediators between God and His people (Ex. 28:1ff) and teachers of Israel (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10; II Chron. 15:3). Priests were supposed to know the law and teach it to the children of Israel.
- B. The source of the evil in Malachi's time was the priests and God rebuked them for their carelessness about sacred things. God will punish priests more grievously if they are careless or scandalous in their office. NOTE: It is a serious thing to be appointed a teacher of the Word of God, for with this office comes the greater discipline from God (James 3:1).

II. JEHOVAH'S WARNING (2:1-3)

- A. **"And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you."** The Lord made a warning or threat against the priests. NOTE: God holds them more responsible because they are leaders among the people.
- B. **"If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name"** The chief end and aim of the priests was to bring glory to God in their ministry, but they would not obey or have a right heart attitude towards God. NOTE: Ministers are to do their ministry unto God and not to men (Gal. 1:9-10).
- C. **"Saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart."** The "blessings" refers back to the "fruit" and "meat" (1:12). God says He would curse the blessings because of their disobedience. The very revenue the priests got out of the sacrifices and tithes would become a curse to them. Because the priests refused to glorify God, Jehovah, based on His Word, cursed them (Deut. 27:15-26; 20:15-68).
- D. **"Behold, I will corrupt your seed,"** This refers to the physical crops. While the priests never tilled the soil, their whole livelihood came from the tithe of the people who did till it. Since the priests were dependent on the increase of the harvest for their tithe, they would inevitably suffer if God cursed the seed. God cursed these priests by giving them little to fill their bellies. NOTE: The minister who teaches and preaches the Word of God faithfully will be blessed by God and He will meet all his material needs.
- E. **"And spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and (one) shall take you away with it."** "Dung" was animal refuse and there was a great deal of it on feast days when there was much sacrificing of animals. This dung would be scattered on their faces and this would be rather embarrassing and disgraceful. Animal dung was taken outside the camp and burned (Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:11; 8:17; Num. 19:5). These priests would be taken away with the refuse to the dung pile as an abhorrent thing which is the proper place for such filthy people. NOTE: These priests were disgracing God secretly but God will disgrace them openly.

III. JEHOVAH'S EXAMPLE (2:4-7)

- A. **"And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment (warning) unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts."** God made a covenant with Levi and established the priesthood (Num. 25:12-13). This was an institution which they were not free to twist and bend according to their own whims.
- B. **"My covenant was with him of life and peace"** Malachi contrasts the despicable conduct of the ungodly priests of his day with the godly character and manner of life of their ancestor with whom the Lord had made the priestly covenant (Ex. 32:25-29; Deut. 33:8-11). "Life" must refer to physical life, especially to longevity, so it speaks of the Levitical priesthood and its continuance. "Peace" speaks of the happiness and prosperity that comes from God. NOTE: The thought of losing this high gift by disdain or carelessness was too horrifying to Levi, and the preservation of this covenant by

faithfully attending to its duties was to be his anxious concern.

C. "And I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name" Levi had fear for Jehovah which is the beginning of wisdom and the basic condition for experiencing life and peace.

D. "The law of truth was in his mouth" Levi taught the true law or Word of God (Ps. 119:161; John 17:17), but these false priests perverted the law. Levi and his true followers spoke the true word, for what comes out of the priest's mouth is the Word of God (Ezra 7:10; Deut. 33:9ff; Lev. 10:11; II Chron. 15:3; Micah 3:1). NOTE: What people know and do will be what the minister tells them, for sheep follow the shepherd. The sheep must sit under faithful shepherds (II Cor. 4:1-2).

E. "And iniquity was not found in his lips" Levi did not depart from that which was right, for turning from the law is lawlessness. NOTE: Deviation from the Word of God leads to false doctrine and practice (Ezek. 33:1-9). A minister is not only a betrayer of the truth when he transgresses but when he fails to teach the truth he knows or when he fails to defend the truth when it is challenged or broken. Laetsch says,

They taught not their own views, human theories and speculations, but the infallible, invariable truth the Lord had revealed in His Word. They taught without addition or diminution, without fear or favor. They were reliable, trustworthy witnesses of God's will.

F. "He walked with me in peace and equity" Levi had a spiritual walk with God that resulted in inner joy and a life free from obstacles; that is, nothing was put before service to God.

G. "And did turn many away from iniquity" The priests had a testimony before sinful men. This is speaking about conversion which is turning from evil to God (Jer. 18:8; Mal. 3:7) and is initiated by God (Jer. 31:8) and carried out by man (Jer. 24:7); yet God always holds man responsible for not turning (Hosea 5:14). The first priests were concerned for the salvation of souls (I Cor. 9:19-22).

H. "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge" The priest must live and love the knowledge of God. NOTE: Ministers should be educated in God's Word before they are permitted to teach it to the people.

I. "And they should seek the law at his mouth" Priests should constantly be seeking God's will from God Himself. They should observe, guard and keep God's knowledge. As the divinely appointed teachers of God's people, they shall teach God's Word, no more, no less.

J. "For he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." Priests are God's messengers, a great honor which neither the priests nor the people were to forget or ignore. The priest is a messenger because he intervenes between God and man, and announces the things of God to the people. Therefore, priests ought to be learned men and heralds of God's truth.

IV. JEHOVAH'S DISGUST (2:8-9)

A. "But ye are departed out of the way" They had become rebellious and stubborn towards God. NOTE: Every priest knew that a rebellions son was to be stoned to death (Deut. 21:18).

B. "Ye have caused many to stumble at the law" By their false interpretation of the law and their bad example, they induced others to violate the law. The people were led astray by the priests. The people did not know what was right and wrong but the priests were responsible to teach the people God's law.

C. "Ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts." They violated the covenant of Levi by making

it inoperative through their disobedience. They were covenant breakers and revolters against God's charter with Levi.

D. "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people." Because the priests treated the law of the Lord with contempt, the Lord made them base before the people. They lost the respect of the people and they would not listen to the priests. NOTE: Laxity in applying the law of God and partiality in its administration will naturally lead to contempt of the law.

F. "According as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law." The people's contempt for the priests was in direct proportion to the priests' contempt for God. God would repay them "measure for measure." NOTE: Whatever a person or minister sows that is exactly what he shall reap (Gal. 6: 7-8).

The vilest of creatures is a wicked man,
The vilest of men is a wicked Christian,
And the vilest of them is a wicked minister.
(Matthew Henry).