

MALACHI 2:10-16
God's Denunciation of the people for Perversion of Marriage

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In this section of Malachi, the prophet begins to rebuke the people of Israel for their immorality, especially in the area of marriage. The priests and the people were guilty of unholy and unsanctioned marriages.
- B. Due to the rugged task of restoring the wall and the temple which had been destroyed, the Jews, when they went back to the land under Ezra and Nehemiah, were predominantly men. As the population increased, there were not enough Jewish women to go around. The Jews took Gentile wives who were idolaters.

II. DENUNCIATION FOR MARRYING UNBELIEVERS (2:10-12)

- A. **"Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?"** This verse is not speaking of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man as liberals would sometimes lead us to believe. The context is about Israel who was created as a national and spiritual entity by God to form the covenant people (Isa. 43:1,7,21; 44:2,21,24; 60:21).
 NOTE: God created the unity of Israel; therefore they dare not introduce divisive elements into the national life.
- B. **"Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother"** The creation of Israel by God, as His people, gave them a new existence, a new relation to each other; so that every offence against each other was a violation of their relation to God, who had given them this unity.
- C. **"By profaning the covenant of our fathers"** They were violating the Mosaic Covenant which the Lord made with them to ensure that they would be a separate people from the Gentile nations (Ex. 19:5-6; Lev. 20:24,26; Deut. 4:32-38; Amos 3:1). These stubborn Israelites were profaning the law of Moses by marrying Gentile women.
- D. **"Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem"** Israel violated her end of the Mosaic Covenant and failed to obey, for a sin against a brother is sin against God because there is a spiritual unity. Treachery is treason and an abomination in this context is idolatry which is putting anything before God (Ex. 0:26; Lev. 18:26; 20:13). NOTE: Israel's desire to fulfill her own flesh through fornicacious marriages was idolatry in God's eyes (Col. 3:5). NOTE: Notice the titles "Judah, Jerusalem, Israel" which shows that this holy nation had lowered itself to the common level of unholy mankind.
- E. **"For Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved"** This refers to Israel who is called holiness (Jer. 2:3) for she had been set apart as a holy nation to God (Ex. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; 14:2). NOTE: Unlawful marriages and unlawful lusts were in themselves a special profanation of their holiness. In accepting Gentile wives, Israel broke the relationship that Jehovah had with her through His covenant.
- F. **"And hath married the daughter of a strange god."** The Mosaic Law forbade all marriages with Gentiles (Deut. 7:4; Ex. 34:11-16) as a safeguard against the importation of idolatry into Israel (Ezra 9:1-2; 10:1-4; Neh. 13:25-27). Such marriages were forbidden primarily because of the danger of seduction to idolatry. NOTE: An old Jewish saying: "He that marries a heathen woman is as if he made himself son-in-law to an idol."
- G. **"The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts"** So grievous and abominable is this sin in the sight of the Lord that He threatens to destroy completely the offender and all his family. "Master and scholar" speaks of the fact that the judgment will hit high and low, learned and unlearned alike. The judgment will come even on those who are hypocritically offering sacrifices, for God will have none of this disobedience in marrying unbelieving Gentile

women (cf. II Cor. 6:14-18; I Cor. 7:39).

III. DENUNCIATION FOR DIVORCING THEIR WIVES (2:13-16)

- A. "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand."** The marriage of men in Israel with idolatrous women had another aspect to it. There was a second sin. Such marriages often involved divorcing their Jewish wives to marry Gentile women. These forsaken wives came to the altar of the Lord and covered it with their tears. When the former husbands came with their offerings, the Lord would not receive them. God regarded the tears of the oppressed, not the sacrifices of the oppressors.
- B. "Yet, ye say, Wherefore?"** Once more the stubborn self-righteousness of these Jews is manifested. They were so hardened by sin that they did not know how they had dealt treacherously or done abomination before God.
- C. "Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously"** The subject of divorce is now brought up. Those who had Jewish wives saw men bringing in these foreign women who were probably blond beauties. They desired to fulfill the lust of the flesh and found some excuse to divorce their wives so as to marry these foreign girls. NOTE: God says he witnesses to the marriage not the divorce. Furthermore, this marriage was made before God first. Husband and wife are one, a union that only death can sever, a union which the husband shall cleave to his wife (Gen. 2:24); cling in love and affection to the wife of his youth. Age is not to destroy or even weaken marital love; it is to purify, solidify and deepen it.
- D. "Yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant"** The wife is a companion in that she shares the sorrows, joys, hopes, fears and interests of the husband. As the years go by husband and wife, in ever higher degree, are to become one, united in mutual affection and love. How foolish it is to throw over a faithful wife, for an unbelieving Gentile idolater! Besides she is the wife of "thy covenant." Marriage is a lifetime commitment to another. It is a bond or a contract that is to be broken only by death. But these men "dealt treacherously" with their Jewish wives. They were traitors, broke their marriage covenants, violated their solemn word; all this for other women who would destroy them spiritually and morally.
- E. "And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit"** The prophet is speaking about divorce in terms of the original institution of marriage by God Himself (Gen. 2:24 - "one flesh"). In the original marriage of Adam and Eve, God made two into one. One wife was provided for one man, though God had the residue of the Spirit, He still had the creative power of the Spirit to have made Adam a number of wives. NOTE: God's ideal has been and always will be one man for one woman for a lifetime.
- F. "And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed"** God made just one woman for one man because he was seeking a godly seed; He wanted to carry on a godly remnant. 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. NOTE: The purpose of God in a godly seed was being counteracted and set aside by their intermarriage and divorce.
- G. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."** These Jews are not to degenerate what they had received from Adam and Eve in the original marriage.
- H. "For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away (divorce)"** Divorce is not the perfect will of God. Divorce was permitted at times, not because it was pleasing to God, but because of the hardness of Israel's heart (Deut. 24:1). NOTE: The ideal is still one man for one woman for a lifetime as it was originally set up by God in

the first marriage of Adam and Eve.

I. "For one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit that ye deal not treacherously." Covering with a garment is figurative for marriage (Deut. 23:1; 27:30). Those who divorce their wives cast their garments over wives of a foreign god. This is a social corruption in God's plan for marriage.