

# OpenTheo

## Malachi 1 - 4



### Malachi - Steve Gregg

In this in-depth exploration of Malachi 1-4, Steve Gregg discusses the reasons why the Israelites were not prospering and were under God's curse, citing their sins, including leaving and divorcing their wives. Gregg also delves into the subject of God's election, using the example of Jacob and Esau to explain that God chose one nation as human instruments on earth to bring forth the Messiah and carry forward the knowledge of God. He interprets various prophecies in Malachi, including the coming of John the Baptist and the judgment that will come upon disobedient people. Overall, Gregg emphasizes the importance of serving God and the reward it brings, even in difficult times.

### Transcript

The book of Malachi, and it is the third of the post-exilic prophets. There were three prophets, as you know, who spoke to the exiles who returned from Babylon, the Jewish exiles who returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. Three prophets spoke to them.

Two of them were contemporaries, Zechariah and Haggai, and we've already looked at their books. Malachi, the exact time of Malachi's prophecy and when he lived is not known with certainty. It is judged by internal evidences that it was probably about 80 years after the return of the exiles, very possibly after the time of Nehemiah.

There is a reference to the governor in Malachi 1.8, and perhaps there's some temptation to speculate whether that governor mentioned there might have been Nehemiah, but it is not likely necessarily that it was. It seems that when Malachi wrote, the spiritual condition of the returned exiles was at a lower point than that which Nehemiah would have permitted. Nehemiah did find problems there when he came there, but he didn't allow them to continue.

We don't have any reference in the book of Nehemiah to Nehemiah having the assistance of a prophet like Malachi. Unlike Zerubbabel and Joshua mentioned in the book of Ezra, Ezra mentions that the prophets Zechariah and Haggai were involved in helping to encourage the project. Malachi probably belongs to a time later than that of Nehemiah, and therefore would be the last book of the Old Testament to have been

written, generally assumed to be almost exactly 400 years before Christ.

With the closing of the book of Malachi, the Old Testament closes, and we enter upon a 400-year period, usually called the intertestamental period for obvious reasons. It spans the time between the close of the Old Testament and the opening of the New Testament. We have in Malachi God's final word to the Jews, with the exception of that of John the Baptist and Jesus, which came 400 years later when God was about to bring on the new covenant.

The book of Malachi closes with the threat that God might come and strike the earth with a curse. But the word earth, obviously, in Hebrew can be translated as land. In fact, the New American Standard translates it as land, lest I come and strike the land with a curse.

So it appears that God closes his inspired remarks in the Old Testament with the threat that the Jews would be in danger of his coming and striking their land with a curse if they do not straighten up. So the Old Testament closes with a rather negative kind of tone, in a way. But that is because, and it's a bit depressing to realize this, after all that has gone on before in the Old Testament history, the warnings of the prophets, the Babylonian exile, the repentance of a remnant and the return of them, and so forth.

But the last word we hear about the Jews in the Old Testament is that they are again drifting from God, and we can see that from what Malachi says. For one thing, they were doubting God's love. They asked the question in verse two, In what way have you loved us? As if to challenge God on that point.

You haven't really loved us, have you? They were teaching or believing that there was no benefit in serving God. In chapter two, in verse seventeen, they say, In what way have we worried him? And they 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? What they're saying is that it appears that those who do evil are treated by God as if they're doing good.

He seems to delight in them because the wicked prosper. Where is the God of justice? Where is the God who rewards goodness and who punishes evil, is what they're asking, implying that God is not rewarding them for their righteousness as they expect it, and that there is perhaps no benefit to be had in serving God. They say it more explicitly in chapter three, verses thirteen through fifteen.

Your words have been harsh against me, says the Lord, yet you say, What have we spoken against you? You have said it is vain to serve God. What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance and that we walk as mourners before the Lord of hosts? So this is their attitude. They figure serving God has been of little value.

There's no profit in it. It's useless. And this they think because, of course, they were not

prospering as they thought they should.

But, of course, Malachi points out that the reason they're not prospering is they're under God's curse for their sins, and people very seldom prosper under God's curse. We find that their worship of God at this point had not been entirely forsaken. They still brought sacrifices to God, but they were definitely half-hearted.

Their worship of God was not vigorous. It was listless. They brought to God animals that were inferior, in fact, animals that would have been disqualified under the law to be brought as sacrifices.

In other words, they were giving God that which was of little value to them, and therefore not a very great sacrifice on their part, which exhibits, obviously, a deficiency in their love for God. Another mark of their listless religion is that they neglected to pay their tithes, which was the means that God ordained for the support of the Levites, the ministers of the nation. These men could not be supported without the other tribes paying their ten percent, and the people were neglecting that, which means the priests and the Levites were having to tighten their own belts.

And perhaps another evidence of their lack of piety at this point was that they were not even upholding their marital vows. They were leaving their wives, divorcing their wives. God had reduced them for this.

It would appear, at least on one interpretation, they may have been leaving their Jewish wives in order to marry pagan wives who worshipped other gods. That depends on how we understand chapter 2, verse 11, which we'll talk about when we get there. In any case, we see these negatives in the Jewish community.

Worshipping God half-heartedly, bringing inferior sacrifices, neglecting to pay tithes, divorcing their wives, possibly marrying pagan women, complaining against God. Now, the prophet Malachi came to warn them that these attitudes they were exhibiting were not acceptable to God and that they were subject to judgment if they did not repent. He frequently levels a charge against them and to show the obstinacy of the people.

They hardly ever have anything accused against them without them challenging it. If you've read Malachi recently, as you should have, you will have noticed one of the most obvious features of the book is that God levels a charge against the people and almost invariably says, Oh, yeah? Prove it, kind of a thing. He starts out in verse 2 of chapter 1, I have loved you so, Lord, yet you say, In what way have you loved us? Down in chapter 1 at the end of verse 6, it says, But you say, In what way have we despised your name? Where he has just told them that they do.

In verse 7, he says, You offer defiled food at my altar, but you say, In what way have we defiled you? That's chapter 1, verse 7. And the same thing occurs many other times. In

chapter 2, in verse 14, Yet you say, For what reason? Or in verse 17, chapter 2, verse 17, You have wearied the Lord with your words, yet you say, In what way have we wearied him? They're not just asking for information. They're defying the prophet.

They're defying God, who is making these complaints, saying, Oh, yeah? We don't see it that way. How do you see it that way? Prove it. In what way have we done what you say? In chapter 3, in verse 7, at the end of there, it says, Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.

But you say, In what way shall we return? In verse 8 of the same chapter, chapter 3, verse 8, he says, Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, In what way have we robbed you? So we see a real resistance even to the prophet's rebukes here. They're not teachable.

They're not soft toward God. They don't love God. And of course, the prophet ends up by saying, Well, if things don't turn around, I'm going to have to come and strike the land with a curse.

And maybe the saddest part is that we don't read of what their response was. Ultimately, it's certainly as the prophecy of the book progresses. They don't seem to be responding favorably.

They seem to be resisting whether they ultimately responded when the book closed. Remains to be considered. And of course, the close of the book actually predicts John the Baptist coming.

We know this because Jesus refers to it and so identifies him in verse at the closing verses of Malachi. Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, this Malachi four verses five and six. I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

This dreadful day of the Lord is God's coming to smite the land with this curse that threatens here. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Lest I come and strike the land with a curse.

So the threat is God's going to send him one more chance to repent before he strikes the land of the curse. If they respond this last time, perhaps he won't strike the land with the curse, but he's going to get one more chance when he sends Elijah, the prophet. We know from Jesus own teaching that Jesus said, John, if you were seated, John is Elijah who is to come.

And he was referring to Malachi because his disciples had asked about it. And so John the Baptist is or was this fulfillment of the coming of Elijah. God said he would send Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Great and dreadful day of the Lord. I love the opinion, and no one will be surprised by this at the great and dreadful day. The Lord came upon Israel in seventy A.D. And when John the Baptist appeared when John the Baptist appeared, he predicted it.

He said the ax is laid to the foot of the tree. His fan is in his hand. He's about ready to purge his threshing floor.

John spoke of an imminent judgment on the nation of Israel. Unless he was mistaken, it happened. And there's no question.

I mean, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what the event was that happened shortly after that. That was the judgment of God on the unrepentant. And that was God coming to strike the land with a curse.

And by talking about the curse, you should remember that in Deuteronomy and in other places in the law, Moses had warned the people that if they violate God's commandments and if they violate God's covenant, then a curse, a specific severe curse will come upon them. And Malachi closes the book by saying that God is poised, as it were, to visit them with that very curse that Moses predicted upon their land if they do not repent. And their last opportunity to repent will be when John the Baptist appears, when Elijah appears, as he puts it here.

We'll say more about that when we get to that point in Malachi, but let's start working through the book since we've got only one session to go through all four chapters. The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. The name Malachi means my messenger.

And of course, all prophets were God's messengers, but this one's name actually meant my messenger. The expression, the burden of the word of the Lord, makes this very credibly a book that belongs to the same general period as Zechariah, since the expression, the burden of the word of the Lord is found only two other times in the Bible, both in Zechariah. In Zechariah 12.1 and Zechariah 9.1. I didn't get those in the correct order.

Zechariah 9.1 and Zechariah 12.1 began with the words, the burden of the word of the Lord, and Malachi here gives the only other time when this occurs. It seems to be a distinctly post-exilic prophetic expression. Verse two, I have loved you, says the Lord, yet you say in what way have you loved us? Well, was not Esau Jacob's brother, says the Lord? Yet Jacob I have loved and Esau I have hated and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.

Even though Edom has said we have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places. Thus says the Lord of hosts, they may build, but I will throw down. They should be called the territory of wickedness and the people against whom the Lord will

have indignation forever.

Your eyes shall see and you shall say the Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel. Now this statement found in verse two and verse three, yet Jacob I have loved and Esau I have hated is God's answer to their question. In what way have you loved us? You say you have loved us, but we are not prospering.

Things are not going the way we would like them to. It doesn't seem like it's profited us to serve you. What is the evidence of your love? And he says, Well, compare my treatment of you on the one hand and my treatment of Edom on the other.

Now, when he said Jacob, I have loved Esau, I've hated. He's not talking about the man Jacob or the man Esau, and that's evident by the way he goes on here. He talks about what he did to the Edomites, the people of Esau, in contrast to what he did to the Jews, the people of Jacob.

By now, having gone through the entire Old Testament, it won't. I mean, you'll know well enough that the nation of Israel is sometimes called Jacob. Or Israel, even even Israel is a man's name, not not so much the nation's name.

It's just that a man, the progenitor of a nation, often his name became the name of the nation. The Amalekites, who just had from Amalek, sometimes I would just call that nation Amalek. And so the nation of Israel descended from Jacob, whose name is also Israel.

And so the nation is sometimes called Jacob or Israel. It was not uncommon in biblical times for the founder of a nation to leave his name as the name of the nation that he founded. Likewise, Edom.

We think of it as the name of a of a people who descended from Esau. But you should remember that in Genesis Esau's name was also Edom. And we were told about that in the story about how he sold his birthright.

His name was Esau, and his name was also called Edom. Therefore, his offspring, the nation that came from him, were called by his name, Edom or Esau. In this case, they are called Esau.

Now, it's important to note this for more than one reason. One of the reasons is because Paul quotes these verses in Malachi in Romans, Chapter nine and verse thirteen. And Paul is doing that in a context where he is affirming the doctrine of God's sovereign election.

And he says he actually quotes two verses, one from the last book of the Old Testament, one from the first book of the New Testament, both about Jacob and Esau. He quotes from Genesis. I think it's Genesis twenty five, where God said to Rebecca concerning the

twins in her womb who happened to be Jacob and Esau, said, The older shall serve the younger.

And then immediately after that, Paul quotes this verse before us. Jacob, I have loved Esau, I have hated. Now, since this is in the context in Romans nine of Paul talking about God's election, certain people, especially the Calvinists in particular, have thought that this is a good evidence that God elects people quite apart from their merits or demerits, quite apart from their faith foreseen or faith exercised.

It's an unconditional election since Jacob Esau were both still in the womb, not having either one of them done good or evil when God elected Jacob and rejected Esau. And Paul establishes that point by the quotation from Genesis. The older, which was Esau, shall serve the younger, which is Jacob, obviously choosing Jacob above Esau at that point while they were in the womb.

And then this one, Jacob, I have loved Esau, I have hated. But the problem with applying these scriptures to the doctrine of individual election and by the way, I don't believe Paul is doing that. I believe Paul is talking about national election or corporate election is that both of the verses, the one in Genesis and the one in Malachi, are speaking of Jacob Esau not as individuals, but as nations.

In the passage in Genesis where it says the older shall serve the younger, the verse before that says two nations are in your room, in your womb. They crowded room with two nations, but it would be more crowded womb with two nations. But he said, two nations are in your womb and two peoples shall be separated from you and you.

And he says in that context, the older shall serve the younger. That is, the nation of the older child shall serve the nation of the younger child. It was never the case that the man Esau served Jacob, but it was in their lifetime.

It never happened. If that was a prophecy about individual destinies, then it was not a true prophecy because he saw never served Jacob. But the Edomites did come under tribute to the Israelites at a later date, which is the fulfillment of that prophecy is that God choosing one nation over another nation, not one individual over another individual for salvation.

Likewise, here when Paul quotes Jacob, I love Esau, I hate it. People sometimes think that doesn't seem very nice. These babies were still in the womb, twins, neither done good or even God already hated one of them.

That doesn't seem very nice of God. But again, we can see here, first of all, Malachi is not talking about God's opinion of Jacob Esau when they were in the womb. In fact, he's not talking about the two men Jacob Esau at all.

He's talking about the nation of Jacob and the nation of Esau, just as he was in Genesis

25. Both passages that Paul quotes are about the nation, and therefore, what Paul is talking about is not whether God elected this person for salvation and this person for damnation. But rather, he elected one nation to be his.

His human instruments on the earth to bring forth the Messiah, to carry forward the knowledge of God, to give us the scriptures over. God chose one nation over another nation, and he did so not on the basis of the merits of that nation. That's what Paul is pointing out.

God chose the nation of Jacob without reference to the goodness or badness of Jacob or of Esau. He just he'd made a sovereign choice. He had to choose one.

If he's going to the nation, he had to reject some others, and his choice was of Jacob, and his choice was not Esau. He made that choice, and that has nothing to do with the individual destinies of those men. We do not know what Esau's final spiritual state was or whether he was saved or lost.

We know he did some rather carnal things in his lifetime, but so did Jacob, for that matter. But we believe Jacob is saved, and Esau may well have died saved, too, for all we know. Paul is not in those passages, cannot be by the scriptures he quotes.

He cannot be discussing the question of individual election for salvation or for damnation. He is talking about God's choices of a corporate people to be his earthly instruments for carrying out his temporal purposes before the coming of the Messiah. And he chose Israel, not Edom, as all that is being said by Paul.

And in doing so, he establishes it by this. He points out that God has shown favoritism to Jacob, that is to Israel, but he has not shown equal favoritism to Esau. And in view of the fact that the two were brothers, the two nations come from exactly the same parentage.

They both come from Isaac and Rebecca. Therefore, no one can argue that it's because Jacob had a better pedigree than Esau. It's just because of God's election.

He chose to show his favoritism to Jacob. And by the way, when you find in scripture this contrast between love and hate, I love Jacob, I hate Esau. We need to be reminded from time to time that this mode of expression was used in the Jewish culture.

Not to mean that a person was hated in the sense of absolutely found disgusting and repugnant, like we would use the word hated, but rather loved and hated are an idiom, a Hebraism for preferring one over the other. So that we read in Genesis that Jacob had two wives, Rachel and Leah, and it says he loved Rachel more than Leah. The next verse is when God saw that Leah was hated.

Well, she wasn't hated. I mean, he slept with her. He had six children by her or seven children by her.



At least, I mean, the man didn't find her repugnant, but we're told in the previous verse when it says Leah was hated. Well, the previous verse says he loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. Love and hate in the Bible are relative in many cases, especially when you find the two contrasted in this way.

Jesus used the same Hebraism when he taught no man can serve two masters. He will either love the one and hate the other. Or cleave to the one and despise the other.

Now, to say he'll love one or hate the other doesn't mean is that necessarily so? I mean, if you had two jobs, two employers, you definitely would have to show preference to one over the other, especially if they both wanted to work the same shift. You'd have to say, I'm sorry, this employer, this employer, I'm giving priority to this one over here. I've got to make a choice here.

I prefer this job over this job. I prefer this boss over that boss. I can't give equal treatment to both.

They're both pulling me in different directions. I have to make a choice which I will prefer. But it's not a given that you will love one and hate the other in the sense that we use those words.

You don't have to hate one of them. But Jesus indicated that you would, because he's using that in the idiomatic way of the Hebrews, that you're going to have to show preference to one and not to the other. And there are quite a number of other instances where this kind of dichotomy is found in Scripture between love and hate.

Even when Jesus said, knowing, you know, can be my disciple, if he hates his father and his mother and his wife and children and so forth in his own life also. Obviously, hate in that sense cannot mean what we usually mean by that word in our idiom, in our language, because we're not allowed to hate anyone. He that hates his brother is a murderer, the Bible says, in another place.

And obviously, we're to love everyone, including our wives and our children. So when he says you have to hate them, he's using that in the Hebrew idiomatic way. That means you have to not prefer them over God.

You have to love God more and and and not prefer your family over God. So when God says, Jacob, I have loved Esau, I've hated, according to the ordinary idiom, he's just saying, I gave preferential treatment to Jacob that I did not give to Esau. It's not so much that I despise Esau, although he may have.

That's not necessary what he's saying here. He's just saying, I showed preference to you, Israel, over the way I treated Edom, and he gives the example. He says Esau, verse three, I hate, I laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.

Now that would be when the Babylonians had come in. God had not yet done this through the final destruction of Edom, which did come later through the Nabateans and other nomadic Arab groups came and destroyed Edom altogether. But at this point in time, he must be referring to what had happened in the Babylonian exile.

Well, God had done the same thing to Jacob, by the way. Judah had gone into captivity, too, and Jerusalem was laid waste by the Babylonians. But the difference is God had now restored the people of Jacob.

Esau and Jacob's people both were seriously damaged by the Babylonians, but God restored Jacob. He did not restore Edom. Now, the Edomites were not extinct at this point, and they still endeavored to rebuild their civilization.

And it says that in verse four, even though Edom has said we have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places. God's answer is, well, they might, but I'll overthrow them again. I mean, I have returned with favor to Jacob, but I have not returned with favor to Esau.

My treatment of these two nations reflects that Jacob has something to be grateful for, that I have exhibited my love for Jacob by doing for Jacob what I've not done for Esau. That's what he's saying. And in the description of the ultimate destruction of Edom in verses four and five, especially at the end of verse five, it says, Your eyes shall see and you shall say, The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel.

Now, we'll come back to this as we'll cross reference back to this in a moment, but I just want to say that the expression, the Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel. Beyond the border of Israel might mean just on the other side of the border of Israel, which is where Edom was. And therefore, it might just be saying God was glorified in or magnified in Edom by destroying them.

God magnifies himself by destroying his enemies. And beyond the border of Israel in the land of Edom, when God destroys him, he will magnify himself by having this victory over his enemies. But beyond the border of Israel might be more generic.

It might be saying at that time, you'll have to acknowledge that God has magnified other places besides Israel, that God's activity and God's concern for his reputation is not confined within the borders of Israel. God is magnified beyond the borders of Israel, and it may be more generic of the whole world. And the reason I suggest that is because later on in verse 11, he's going to say something like that, that God's name will be magnified over the whole world, essentially among the Gentiles.

And so what God may be saying in Malachi 1:5 is that when I destroy Edom, this will just be a token of a larger issue, a larger principle. And that is that I'm concerned to glorify myself not only in Israel, but outside Israel as well. In fact, ultimately throughout the

whole world, through all the Gentiles, not just the Edom either, but other Gentiles to God is going to be seen to be the judge of all and will be honored in all parts of the world, not only in Israel.

Verse six, a son honors his father and a servant, his master. If I then am a father, where is my honor? And if I'm a master, where is my reverence, says the Lord of hosts to you, priests who despise my name. Now, a lot of a lot of Malachi, especially the first two chapters, was addressed to the priest, rebuking the priest for their neglect of what they should have been doing.

We'll see later what it is they should have been doing, but he says they despise his name. The word despise needs to be understood as lightly esteemed. Once again, the word despise in modern English means something very strong.

In biblical language, the word to despise generally means to lightly esteem. In fact, a good example of that is in place in 1 Samuel 2 and also elsewhere in the Old Testament where God says something like this. Those who honor me, I will honor, and those who despise me will be lightly esteemed.

Obviously, there's a parallel there. Despising and lightly esteemed are the same concept. So the priests have not really held God in reverence.

They have lightly esteemed God. They have not taken seriously enough their holy calling. They've considered God as one who they can trifle with, a little bit like Nadab and Abihu, the priests who decided to offer strange fire and God burned them up in his presence because they just weren't taking God that seriously.

So God is angry with them. He complains that he doesn't even have so much honor and reverence as a father and a master in human relations usually gets and expects. He says, Where's my honor? Where's the reverence owed to me? Obviously, it was missing.

This is in contrast to verse 5, which said that God can be magnified beyond the borders of Israel. In Gentile lands, God will find honor, but in Israel, he's not being honored. He's not being revered.

And this is the same old story so often found in the biblical narratives, that the Gentiles often are depicted as more receptive to God and more responsive to God than even the people of God. Yet you say, at the end of verse 6, In what way have we despised your name? He tells them, You offer defiled food on my altar. This is the priest's principal function is offering sacrifices, and they offered defiled food.

Now, defiled food would mean unclean, and that simply means not qualified to be offered. In particular, he tells us what he means by defiled food a little later on. You offer defiled or unclean or inappropriate, disqualified food on my altar.

But you say, In what way have we defiled you? By saying, The table of the Lord is contemptible. Once again, contemptible means to be despised or to be lightly esteemed. They're not taking seriously the holy furniture, the holy ordinances, the holy calling that they have as priests.

And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor. Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably, says the Lord of Hosts? But now entreat God's favor, that he may be gracious to us while this is being done by your hands. Will he accept you favorably, says the Lord of Hosts? The offering of the blind and the lame, which he mentions they were offering as sacrifice, is forbidden in a number of places in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 15.21 forbids this. Also Deuteronomy 17.1. Also Leviticus 22.21-25 lists the kinds of animals that cannot be offered. Blind animals, lame animals, cannot be offered.

One reason this is so insulting to God is because, of course, if you offer that which costs you nothing, it doesn't in any way reflect reverence or love. Love in all relationships involves commitment to make certain sacrifices, to lay down your rights or your goods or whatever for someone else. That's how love is seen, in that you sacrifice what's yours for the person that you love.

And to love God means that you're willing to sacrifice something. But if you sacrifice a blind animal or a lame animal, what you sacrifice is an animal that's probably not going to survive anyway. It's probably an animal you're going to have to put down.

In the flock, you just can't have blind animals bumping into everything, and lame ones aren't going to be able to function. A shepherd would ordinarily, or a man with cattle would ordinarily just put those animals down anyway. They are not going to be of value.

They won't be good for breeding or for resale or for anything like that. So if they say, well, let's offer this one to God, you know, since we're going to lose it anyway. It's sort of like, I used to fast one day a week when we were in band and living in community and stuff.

We always ate at the dining hall. And at first I caught myself looking at the menu for the week and deciding what day I would fast on the basis of what was being served. Because there were sometimes things on the menu I didn't like much or wouldn't eat anyway.

And it made it easier for me to fast on the day when they were serving something I didn't want anyway. I wouldn't eat anyway. And I didn't do that for very long before I realized what I was doing.

This is like offering to God the blind and the lame. That which I can't keep anyway, I might as well give to God. That which I don't want, I might as well sacrifice.

I don't want that meal, so I'll sacrifice that one. I'll fast on that day. And that was forbidden in principle under the law.

Not because God is so staunch on the question of animals and the quality of animals, but he's concerned about the heart attitude that that reflects. To give God that which is of no value to you is to reflect no reverence at all. When David purchased the land upon which the temple was later rebuilt from Arana, the last chapter of 2 Samuel, I think it might not be in the last chapter.

It's the last chapter in 1 Chronicles has it. And you'll recall that Arana or Aravna or Ornan, he's variously referred to, he offered it to David. It's not the last chapter.

I'm afraid. And David wouldn't accept it because he said he would not offer the Lord that which cost him nothing. I don't have a cross-reference here, but it would not be very hard to find.

I think it's probably near the end of 2 Samuel. It's not the very last chapter. I need to turn there to find out.

No, it's not. Yeah, it is the very last chapter. And that's the second Samuel 24, 24.

But the king said to Arana, no, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord, my God, with that which cost me nothing. And that is, in principle, the same thing. I don't want to give to God that which reflects no sacrifice on my part, because it's meaningless.

It's not a sacrifice at all. Now, Malachi says, if you offered that kind of a gift to your governor, if part of your taxes that you paid your governor was in the form of livestock and you brought livestock that the governor could tell at a glance that was defective and it was of no use to you anyway, would he be pleased with you? And he says, well, and you expect God to be pleased with you? You're showing less respect to God by doing this than you would show to your governor in such a case. Verse 10.

Who is there even among you who would shut the doors so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts. Now he's speaking of the priest shutting the doors probably refers to the doors of the temple or the gates of the temple. And in all likelihood, what he means is, as the people are bringing these defective animals, the priest should be rejecting them as the priest job to examine the animals, make sure they were OK to be used.

You know, one could say it's the people's fault for offering these things. And it was. But it's also the leader's fault.

The priest should have been turning animals away. I said, no, you can't come with that kind of a thing. One is qualified.

But they didn't. They just left the doors open. I mean, the priest were hungry.

They weren't getting their time. They had to eat something. Blind animals better than none.

The meat's good. And rather than stand on principle and say, wait, we can't accept these sacrifices from you. They they left the doors wide open and accepted the false, the inferior sacrifices.

And that is no doubt because the priests were hungry and a sacrifice with food for priests. But God is saying, is there anyone among you priests who's got enough principle, enough backbone to shut the doors so that you don't keep offering these vain sacrifices, shut the doors to this kind of don't let people in with those kinds of sacrifices, insist that they come with the right kind. You may go hungry, but it's still a matter of principle.

He says, who is there even among you who would shut the doors so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, nor will I accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, my name shall be great among the Gentiles in every place. Incense shall be offered to my name and a pure offering for my name shall be great among the nation, says the Lord of hosts.

Now, from the rising of the sun to its going down is an expression that we might take to mean from dawn till dusk, but that's not what it means. In the Hebrew, the rising of the sun means the East, and the going down of the same refers to the West. Always you will find this in some Psalms and some other parts of the Old Testament where the expression is, and you can tell that it means that because there'll be times some passages in the scriptures say, from the rising of the sun, even into the West, obviously contrasting the rising of the sun with the West, rising of the sun is East.

Also, you'll find from the East, even to the going down of the sun, this expression is found in Scripture, the going down of the sun is the West. It's a reference to a geographical direction rather than to a time of the day. So what he's saying is, from the East to the West, the whole expanse of the world, I am going, my name is going to be great.

Now, it's said in verse five, his name is going to be, the Lord's going to be magnified beyond the border of Israel. Now we're told how far beyond the border, from the East to the West, from every nation, the Gentiles, among the Gentiles, my name shall be great among the Gentiles. And he's saying this as a rebuke, because it's clear he's saying, my name is not great among you Jews, the priests, even the priests are despising my name.

He says in verse six, but the Gentiles who you despise will in fact honor my name.

Incense will be offered to me and sacrifice a pure offering. Now, of course, this is, I understand, spiritual, because what he's referring to is the fact that the gospel has gone out to the nations and the nations have received it, whereas most of the Jews rejected it, and the incense and the offerings that we offer up are in the scripture spiritualized.

In Revelation 5.8, it says the incense is the prayers of the saints. Revelation 5.8 says that the incense is the prayers of the saints. And as far as sacrifices are concerned, Hebrews 13.15, Hebrews 13.15 says that we offer up the sacrifice of praise to God.

So our prayers and our praise in the New Testament are equated with incense and sacrifice. And so when God says among the Gentiles in every place, incense shall be offered in my name and a pure offering for my name to be great among the nations, he's referring to the church, really the Gentiles, offering up their praise and their prayers to God acceptably, as in contrast to the way that the Jews were doing at that time. But you profane it, that is, you profane my name, in that you say the table of the Lord is defiled and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.

You also say, oh, what a weariness, as they're getting wearier serving God, and you sneer at it, says the Lord of hosts, and you bring the stolen, the lame, the sick. Thus you bring an offering. Should I accept this from your hands, says the Lord? But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male and makes a vow but sacrifices to the Lord, but is blemished.

For I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is to be feared among the nations, and especially the nation of Israel. Now he says there's a curse on the person who has a better animal in his flock, and he owes God an animal because he's made a vow of some sort and has to fulfill his vow by offering an animal. And instead of taking the qualified animal from his flock, he takes a blemished animal.

Now the curse is not upon those who offer blemished animals who have nothing else but blemished animals, and there probably weren't many people like that. If you only had one animal, the likelihood is not great that it was blemished, unless you're incredibly poor and could only afford to buy an inferior animal. And if you offered that, I imagine, even though it was blemished, God would have accepted it because it would be like the woman who gave her two mites is all she had.

It wasn't a big gift, but it reflected a great deal of devotion. And so he's condemning those who actually have the capability of offering better, but prefer to give something inferior. Chapter two, he speaks, continues to speak to the priests and now, oh, priest, this commandment is for you.

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 him already because you do not take it hard. This curse in their blessings may

have to do with drying up their finances, which he says I've already done.

How? Well, they're not getting their tithes. That comes up later on. Now, God blames the people in chapter three for not bringing their tithes, which would have supported the priest.

So you kind of get two signals here. On one hand, God has cursed the priest and dried up their finances, which is, of course, accomplished by the people not paying their tithe. On the other hand, the people are blamed for not bringing their tithe.

This is kind of balanced out of the middle road between is found in verse nine of chapter two. It says, therefore, I also have made you contemptible and based before all the people because you've not kept my ways that you should, and you've shown partiality in the law. That is God, because the priest is dishonoring him.

God has made the people not respect the priest, which, of course, is why they don't bring their tithes to support the priest. If ministers find that the offerings are not all that could be desired in the church they minister in, there's a number of possible answers to that problem. One may be the church needs less than they think they need, and maybe they've got some expensive projects that God isn't interested in financing, and so there's enough money.

Another is that maybe people just aren't being fed at that church, and when people are fed, if you go to a restaurant and you like what they serve, you don't mind paying the bill, even leaving a good tip if you're served well. I mean, especially the tip. That's gratuity.

That is out of your generosity. A big tip is most of us. I don't mind leaving a very generous tip if I've received very good service at a restaurant, and I think people would respond the same way they typically have in churches that feed well and serve well their spiritual needs.

People are quite eager to make sure such needs are able to keep being met by that church and to finance its perpetuation. I'm thinking principally of the church that has had the most impact on me in history, and that is Calvary Chapel, close to Mesa. Chuck never asked for money.

They passed an offering plate on Sunday mornings, but every night of the week they had service, but they never passed a plate. Then they just had a box in the back if you wanted to give. He never made money an issue.

He never begged. All he made his business do was just feed the flock. Just feed them, just keep teaching them.

He never had to make an issue of money, never had to even mention it. He's got one of



the most prosperous churches probably in the world. They're incredibly wealthy.

This without ever trying to manipulate or urge or put guilt trips on people. When people are well served, when their spiritual needs are well served, there's a tendency to respond to meet the financial needs of those who are serving them. That wasn't happening with these priests.

They were not serving the spiritual needs of the people. Therefore, they were contemptible in the sight of people. God made them contemptible, and therefore the people weren't paying the tithes.

So he says, I will send a curse, chapter two, verse two, upon you. Yes, I have cursed them already because you do not take it to heart. 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.

Now, refuse here actually means dung. It means animal poop, and one will take you away with it. What he's referring to here is that when an animal is sacrificed, there are certain parts of the animal that weren't sacrificed.

There are some parts that were just considered unclean, and that would include the contents of the intestines. The feces was not generally offered on the altar. It and some other parts of the body, the head frequently, were put aside.

They weren't cooked and eaten like the rest. They were carried out to some particular place for unclean things to be dumped. So it was on a daily basis, all this animal poop and stuff that was taken out of these animals that they sacrificed was carried out of the city, out of Jerusalem, and dumped in some particular disposal place.

Now, when he says, I'm going to spread the poop on your face, and they're going to carry you out with it, he's saying, basically, you are as unclean as those parts of the sacrifice that are always recognized as unclean, and you're going to be disposed of just like you dispose of those parts of the sacrifice. That's what he's saying to them. Now, when did this happen? He said, I'm going to rebuke your descendants, the descendants of the priests.

What is the fulfillment of this? Well, I honestly can't be certain, because there were a number of times after this that the priests had serious problems, and Titus Epiphany certainly treated them badly. We know that the chief priests were the ones who condemned Jesus, and Paul pronounced a curse on the high priest in his day, and of course, 70 A.D. brought an end to the whole priestly system. The priests were taken away from the temple, like the unclean stuff from the altar.

The priests were removed from the altar permanently, and maybe this is the descendant of the priest that this was fulfilled on. I mean, it was some later generation,

not Malachi's own generation. He says, I'll rebuke your descendants, and he says, I'll treat them in this way.

Verse four, Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, that my covenant with Levi may continue. Again, Levi isn't a man in this case, but the tribe, just like Jacob and Esau earlier were not the men, but their nations, so here Levi clearly does not refer to the man Levi, as we can easily see from what is said about him. That my covenant with Levi may continue, says the Lord.

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. That certainly isn't true of the man Levi.

He was one of the worst of Jacob's sons. He and his brother Simulus, who wiped out the whole city of Shechem and was deprived of the birthright for it. This does not describe the man Levi, but it is a reference to the Levites, not in any particular generation of Levites, necessarily, but when at their best.

When the Levites were at their best, and there were moments, they had their moments when they were pious, and of course there were other periods of time when they weren't pious. He may be referring to the occasion when Moses, on the occasion of the golden calf incident, said, Who's on the Lord's side? And the Levites came to him, and he dispatched them out to judge those who were idolaters, implying that the Levites themselves either didn't commit idolatry, or if they did, they repented of it, and they came over to the Lord's side. Moses and Aaron, of course, were both Levites as well.

So it may be referring to that generation of Levites, or it may just refer to the Levites, the best Levites when they're at their best, the idealized Levite, the kind of Levite God intended his covenant to be with. He says, The Levites feared me and was reverent before my name. 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. Again, it's not entirely clear at what point in time this would apply to the Levites. It certainly never applied to Levi himself.

It's not even really clear that it ever applied to Aaron, since he's the one who did the golden calf thing, although that's really just about the only. There's one other sin remembered against him when he complained against Moses, married to an Ethiopian. But it may be that Aaron, in general, is in view here as the good guy.

Anyway, verse seven says, For the lips of the priest should keep knowledge, and the people should seek the law from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts, just like Malachi was a messenger. His name is my messenger. The priest is to be

recognized as God's messenger to know what's interesting here is that Malachi was probably not a priest.

He might have been, but we're not told that he was. He was a prophet. That's one kind of messenger.

God sends his people as prophets. The priests, on the other hand, were also supposed to be messengers of God, and they bear the message of God, but not in a prophetic sense, but in the sense that the people learn the law from them, the written word of God. The priests were the ones commissioned by God to teach the law, because most people didn't have copies of it.

They couldn't read it at home. They couldn't go home and pull out their concordance and their four versions of the Bible in parallel and commentaries and word studies. They didn't have Bibles at home.

They didn't have copies of it, so it was necessary for the priests who did. They were the custodians of the copies of the law. It was important that they regularly teach the people the law so that people would not live in ignorance of it.

In Leviticus chapter ten, after Natan and Bihu were killed for their wickedness, God tells Aaron and Moses what the priests are supposed to do. And he says in Leviticus ten, beginning of verse nine, he spoke to Aaron and said, Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink. You know your sons with you.

That's the priests. When you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die, it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations that you may distinguish between holy and unholy and between clean and unclean, that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses. So here God commissioned Aaron and his sons, the priests, to teach the children of Israel all the statutes, the laws of God.

It was the duty of priests to teach the word of God to people. The written word. They weren't prophets.

They didn't come up with new oracles from God, except in the few cases where certain priests were also prophets like Ezekiel and Zechariah and some others. But for the most part, the priest was a messenger of God of another kind, but equally a messenger of God. We shouldn't think that one is more important than the other.

The one who communicates the written word and the one who brings a current living oracle from God, both in their own way, are messengers of God, carrying God's message. First thing that you have departed from the way you've caused me to stumble at the law. You've corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts.

Therefore, I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept my ways and have shown partiality in the law. Now, there's many people who think that in the last days, God's going to restore the liberal priesthood. You know, when the temple is restored and the sacrifices restored, they think there's going to be a restored liberal priesthood.

And this, they think, is predicted in Scripture and or is at least implied, because God had made promises to the Levites that they would walk before him as priest forever. And, you know, when God says I'm supposed to forever, it seems like it ought to be even now if it's forever. But I would point out to you that God in other places makes clear this is conditional.

It is forever. Assuming you meet the conditions, if you don't meet the conditions, that's another story. Look at First Samuel, Chapter two.

And verse thirty, First Samuel, two and verse thirty. God sends a prophet to Eli, who is the high priest at the time about himself and his sons, the priests and the prophet says to Eli and First Samuel, two and verse thirty. Therefore, the Lord God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house, that's the family of the priest and the house of your father would walk before me forever.

Well, there's the promise that the priest would be the Levites would be preached forever. I said that. I surely did say that.

I said, indeed, that your house and the house of your father walk before me forever. But now the Lord says, far be it from me for those who honor me, I will honor and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. In other words, I did make this promise, but you got to realize this is not unconditional.

You have to honor me in order for me to honor my promise to you. If you don't honor me, I don't I don't have to do that, and it is also stated here Malachi chapter two. He says.

In verse four, then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you that my covenant with Levi may continue. Notice the condition of this God. If the people of the priest recognize God's word and accept it, then God's covenant with Levi can continue.

Otherwise, it is implied his covenant with Levi can't continue. Sure, it was an eternal covenant, but only eternal conditionally, just like any other covenant God makes. God can make all kinds of promises, but they're dependent on faith for their realization or obedience or whatever, depending on what he states.

In this case, the priest had to be faithful to him or else the covenant with Levi would be defunct. And obviously, we know the priest did not stay faithful to him since they eventually crucified Christ. Therefore, the covenant with Levi is over in the book of Hebrews.

Make that evident beyond reasonable doubt. OK, Malachi 2:10. Have we not all one father? Has not God one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? Judah has dealt treacherously and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem for Judah has profaned the Lord's holy institution, which he loves, and he has married the daughter of a foreign God.

May the Lord cut off from the tent of Jacob, the man who does this being awake and aware, and who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts. And this is the second thing you do. You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and crying, so he does not regard the offering anymore nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.

Yet you say, for what reason? Because the Lord has been witnessed between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously. Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did he not make them one having a remnant of the spirit? And why one? He speaks godly offspring.

Therefore take heed to your spirit and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit that you deal not treacherously.

I read the whole passage because it's not entirely clear. You have to see the whole passage to make a decision. Verses 10-12 is a paragraph, and verse 13 begins another paragraph and says, And this second thing you do.

Now, in saying this second thing you do, it certainly gives the impression that verses 13-16 is on another subject than verses 10-12. Verses 10-12 talk about something they do, and they say, And another thing you do. And then he talks about that, as if there are two separate subjects here.

And that is a possible way of understanding it. If so, then verses 10-12 may not have anything to do with the people divorcing their wives, because verses 13-16 is about them divorcing their wives, but that's the second thing they do. There's something else in verses 10-12.

So if that is the case, then verses 10-12 is not talking about divorce, it's just talking about them, generally speaking, being idolatrous. Marrying themselves to the daughter of a foreign god could be a figurative way of speaking that they committed adultery with foreign gods instead of with God. Now, that is a possible way of understanding it, but I also want to suggest that the whole of verses 10-16 could be about one subject.

In verse 13, it says, This second thing you do, he might just be adding another dimension to the offense that he's describing. This is wrong because of this, and secondly, it's wrong because you're doing this. And I guess all things considered, I think the evidence

is that verses 10-12 also are talking about divorce.

Some of the things that make the whole section seem united is, for example, he says in verse 11, near the end of that verse, You have profaned the Lord's holy institution, which he loves. Now, the holy institution could be the tabernacle, could be the sacrificial system, or it could be marriage. In favor of it being marriage, the holy institution which God loves, I'd point out that in verse 16 he points out that he hates divorce.

And this would seem a very natural contrast. If God loves marriage, then he hates divorce. And when it speaks of the holy institution that God loves in the context where it later says he hates divorce, it sounds as if it may well be suggesting that very thing, that the institution he loves is marriage.

God loves it. Furthermore, we find that in verse 10 he accuses the people of dealing treacherously with one another, and then he specifies that they're particularly treacherous toward their wives in divorcing them. He says in verse 14 that you've dealt treacherously with the wife of your youth, and after saying he hates divorce in verse 16, he says, Therefore, take heed and don't deal treacherously.

So treachery is the common theme of the whole section from verse 10 through 16. These things suggest to me that we're looking at the subject of their divorces, their unlawful divorces in the whole section from verse 10 through 16. If so, then he's referring to their divorces as an abomination in verse 11.

An abomination has been committed in Israel and Jerusalem, and Judas profaned the Lord's holy institution and married the daughter of a foreign god. Married the daughter of a foreign god would mean married a foreign woman who worships other gods. Married pagans.

Solomon did this, but he didn't divorce any wives, did he? He just kept all the previous ones and added more. These people, I guess, lived at a time where polygamy was not as either economically feasible or maybe was frowned on more at that particular time in their history, and so instead of keeping their older wives that they'd married when they were young to wife their youth, they divorced them and took new wives instead who happened to be pagans. Now, by the way, this is another mark of the diminished love for God.

Anyone who would marry a pagan does not have love for God as a very high priority in their life. I remember when I was just in the ministry and one of my first assignments was to answer questions for new converts. One thing new converts learned rather quickly, single people, was that they were not allowed to marry non-Christians.

But a question that frequently came up was, well, what about dating non-Christians? And in those days, I didn't have my current views about dating in general. I don't believe in

dating at all now, but in those days I had not really questioned whether dating as an institution needed to be challenged, but I was just astonished they'd ask the question. Listen, you're not allowed to marry a non-Christian, and you wonder if you can date a non-Christian.

First of all, why would you date somebody that you can't marry? You're just using them. You don't plan to make an honest relationship of it ever. You're just using them for temporary pleasure.

Or if you think you're going to convert them, there's better ways to convert people rather than missionary dating. It sometimes works, but more often than not, it doesn't. And if it seems to lead to a conversion, it's usually a shallow one that doesn't stick.

But more importantly, I thought, what is the attraction? If you love Jesus with all your heart, if everything in your life you see through the lens of Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, everything in your life is just doing the will of God, serving Jesus, pleasing the Lord, loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind, what in the world would you find in common with someone who doesn't care about Jesus at all? The desire to have a meaningful, deep, intimate, bonded relationship with someone who doesn't love the Lord suggests that you don't love the Lord as much as you should. I mean, if your whole thing was football, and all you cared about was football, and you ate, drank, and slept football, that's all you could ever think about, can you imagine having a meaningful relationship with someone who couldn't stand football, didn't ever want to hear it mentioned, found it utterly boring and repugnant? I mean, obviously, whatever you are most obsessed with, you will want to have in common with the one that you share your life with. And the fact that someone would even consider having a bonded relationship with somebody who doesn't love the Lord suggests that maybe your love is a little cold in itself.

And that these people would marry heathen women suggests that they weren't picking wives on the basis of the wives' love for Jehovah, and that's an indication that the men's love for Jehovah wasn't very great. Another indication was that they divorced their wives treacherously. It's a wicked thing.

Now, it's interesting that God says that even though they had divorced their wives... By the way, the way I understand verse 13 about how they've covered the altar of the Lord of Tears, that's the tears of their jilted wives. Their wives are left high and dry by their husband's treachery, and the wives go to God and weep before God, and they cover God's... Your conduct has God's altar. We cover the tears of your wronged wives.

And he says, listen, she's still your wife. He says, she's still your wife by covenant. The covenant... You're not free from that covenant.

You did not divorce that wife on proper grounds. Jesus indicated that if anyone divorces his wife except for the ground of fornication and marries another, he's committing

adultery. He's not in a marriage.

He's in an adulterous relationship. The state may have authorized it and put a stamp on it that says this is a second marriage. It's not a second marriage.

It's just an adulterous relationship if there was not a clean break of the first marriage. And there are conditions that do provide a clean break of the first marriage and do allow a second marriage. But in this case, he says that you didn't have those grounds, and therefore she's still your companion, the end of verse 14 says, and your wife by covenant.

Then he reminds them that it was God who made them one. That's also something Jesus reminded the Pharisees when they asked, can we divorce our wives for any cause? Well, don't you remember God said they're one flesh? What God has joined together, don't let man put asunder. That's the best argument against divorce is that God's the one who made the marriage.

God's the one who made them one. Verse 15, did not he make them one? And he even asked the question, this is important for Christians to consider, why did God make them one? He asked in verse 15. Why one? Why did God marry two people together? Why did God create marriage in the first place? Well, he was seeking godly seed.

God entered marriage because he was interested in the offspring. Most people think God made marriage because Adam was lonely. The Bible doesn't say Adam was lonely.

God did say it's not good that man should dwell alone. That doesn't say why it's not good. We just assume it's because he didn't have a sex partner.

We just think he had these pent-up sexual frustrations. It wasn't good to be in that condition, or he was lonely and needed someone to talk to. Well, he might have needed those things, but that's not the only reasonable explanation of it's not good for man to be alone.

It seems the real most important reason it's not good for man to be alone is he couldn't do what he was made to do. Be fruitful and multiply. He could not do that alone.

He needed a partner for that. And the kind of partner God made for him was not just someone he could talk to, but someone he could cooperate with in the process of being fruitful and multiplying. God made marriage instead of just friendship.

See, if man was lonely, God could just make him a friend. He doesn't need a male friend. It could solve the loneliness problem.

God didn't make him a male friend. He made him a wife. Why? Why do you make marriage? Because he was seeking godly seed.



He was looking for reproduction. Now, of course, in the fallen world, some people can't reproduce. That doesn't mean their marriage is without validity.

There are other advantages to marriage besides fruitfulness, besides reproduction. But this passage says the reason God made them one is because he was concerned about their offspring, that he wanted to generate more godly people in the world who have godly offspring. So he talks about hating divorce.

By the way, in verse 16, I'm convinced that God hates divorce. But many people who've never been through a divorce and just look at the idea abstractly as someone just trying to make some kind of a judgment about divorced people forget that though God hates divorce, he doesn't necessarily hate divorced people. He hates certain activities, and he may well even hate the people who perpetrate them.

There are places in the Bible that talk about God hating certain people because of certain actions they do. But we have to remember that in every divorce, well, not every divorce, but in most divorces, there's a person who perpetrates the divorce, and there's another person who may not have wanted it, didn't approve of it, was a victim of that divorce. And a lot of Christians who haven't been in the situation, haven't thought through clearly enough that not everyone in the divorce approved of it.

Not every divorced person is a criminal before God. He hates the divorce because divorce is treachery. But in so many cases, a divorce occurs because one person is treacherous against the other, not because both are treacherous to each other.

Now, there are cases where both are treacherous. Of course, God hates that, the actions of both parties. But the church or people in general in the church have often not thought clearly enough in how they're to deal with people who are divorced.

God does not hate people who find themselves against their will the victims of a divorce because their spouse is treacherous. Some people forget that or just don't think about that much. Now, the last verse of chapter two, I believe, really belongs better with chapter three.

It says, You have wearied the Lord with your words, yet you say, In what way 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? These are two things they were saying that God seems to favor the wicked. It seems like everyone that does wickedness, God favors him and delights him.

They're judging from the way that the wicked get away with what they do. And another aspect of this question is where is the God of justice? Why doesn't God do the right thing? Why doesn't God judge? Where's the justice of God anyway? Notice in all this complaint, they're assuming that they are on the side of justice, that they're the good

guys. Why isn't God vindicating us? Well, what he's been pointing out throughout this book is they're not so good.

And he says, Behold, I send my messenger again, my messenger, which is Malachi's own name. In this case, we find, because it's quoted in all four gospels, is about John the Baptist. John the Baptist is the messenger in this case, and he will prepare the way before me.

And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight. Behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. Now, since my messenger here is perhaps an echo of chapter two, verse seven, which says the priest is supposed to be the messenger of the Lord.

John the Baptist was a priest. Actually, he never served as a priest. His parents were priests, or his father was a priest.

His mother was a daughter of Aaron, the Bible says. He was a priestly line, and certainly at age 30, he would have become a priest if he had not become a prophet at that moment. He was called like Ezekiel at age 30.

When he would have become a priest, he became a prophet instead. But here we have a priest who is God's messenger. The priest was supposed to be my messenger, but this priest, John the Baptist, is God's messenger in another sense, not by serving in priesthood, but by serving as a prophet.

He prepares the way before me. As I said, this verse is quoted essentially in all the gospels as being fulfilled in John the Baptist, so there's no question about its interpretation, except the part, the Lord whom you speak will suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant. That's another messenger.

That's the Messiah in whom you delight. Behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. Now here's the coming of the Messiah, but what coming to his temple is this? For years I thought this was a prediction of Jesus coming with a whip to the temple and driving out the money changers.

The Lord is coming to the temple. Suddenly he just burst on the scene and came in and drove out those money changers. But it always seems strange to me that verse 2 would follow this if that was the case, but who can endure the day of his coming and who can stand when he appears for he is like a refiner's fire, like a fuller soap.

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. He will purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. Now, Jesus going in and driving money changers out with a whip hardly refined or had any effect at all on the sons of Levi, and it was not such a crisis as would elicit the who can stand when this happens, who will endure it? I mean, the only people who really

suffered anything about were a few money changers.

The rest of the people didn't. There's no problem to them. They probably cheered him on.

Even the priests were not seriously affected. And yet, when it says the messenger of the covenant will come suddenly to his temple and who will endure that as if few will. To my mind, it's suggesting coming to the temple that is greater and more violent and much more destructive than anything Jesus did with his little whip of cords and driving animals out of the temple.

And of course, my understanding is that this again, perhaps a second time in Malachi, and it comes up again later, is the destruction of the temple. When Jesus came in judgment, he didn't come physically from the sky, but that language doesn't require that in the Bible. The Bible speaks of God coming in judgment many times, but it's not an actual appearance of God.

It's rather armies or some other temporal judgment that is described throughout the prophets and in Revelation also as the coming of Lord. It's interesting, too. There's a passage in Revelation that I believe is about the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. and it ends in Revelation six.

It ends with the question, who shall be able to stand the very same question that's asked here, who will stand when he's coming? I think, and of course, I don't have a serious interest in forcing you to understand my way either, but I believe this is a prediction of the judgment that the messenger John the Baptist will come. And the next thing that you look forward to is judgment on their temple. That comes up in chapter four.

Also, you got the coming of Elijah, who's John the Baptist, and then the great and terrible day of the Lord, which is the destruction of the temple. These two things are linked by Malachi. They're also linked in the New Testament.

OK, we've got to move along here. Verse four. Now, in what way were the sons of Levi purged? Well, God purged the priesthood.

He replaced the old corrupt priesthood with a pure priesthood, a kingdom of priests, spiritual priests who offer up spiritual sacrifices. The same thing that was predicted in Malachi 1.11, where incense and a pure offering would be offered by the nations, by the Gentiles in all places. That's the purging of the worship system of the Levites.

He wiped out the Levitical system and left behind those who will offer to the Lord, the new Levites, the new priests who offered Lord an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, verse four says, as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near to you for judgment.

Now, see, they're coming to them doesn't necessarily mean his physical coming. He's coming near for judgment, as it were. And I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against all those that were doing those things in Israel, even in Malachi's time.

They were all doing them, of course, in Jesus time to against those who exploit wage earners and widows in the fatherless and against those who turn away an alien because they do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts, for I am the Lord. I do not change. Therefore, you are not consumed.

Those kinds of Jacob. Now they had asked the question in chapter two, verse 17, where is the God of judgment? He says, You want to know I'm coming. The messenger of the covenant that you delight in him.

Who are you ready for? Who will be able to endure the day of his coming? And in verse five, I will come near you in judgment is his response. Where's the God of judgment? I'm coming. I will come near you in judgment, but the God of judgment when he comes and judge you, you think the God of justice is going to judge your enemies.

You're the ones who deserve it. And I'm coming near to you in judgment. The God of justice.

You wonder where he is. You don't have long to wait. I'll be coming.

And he says the reason that you have not been destroyed yet is simply because I'm an unchanging God. You think I've changed my mind or defaulted on the promises? Hardly. It's only because I've kept my promises.

They've been Isaac and Jacob. I haven't destroyed you yet, which you greatly deserve. Verse six.

I am the Lord. I do not change. Therefore, you are not consumed.

Those kinds of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers, you have gone away from my ordinances. You have not kept them returned to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.

But you said, In what way should we return? So we come to the question of tithing. Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, In what way have we robbed you in tithes and offerings? You are cursed with a curse for you have robbed me.

Even this whole nation. Now, earlier he said he had cursed the priests in chapter two, verse two, by cursing their blessings, their tithes. But now the people who are not bringing the tithes, their curse to the whole nation.

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house and prove

me now in this or test me, God says. If I will not open to you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it, and I will rebuke the devourer for your sake so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground. Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for the field for you in the field, says the Lord of hosts, and all the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land, says the Lord of hosts.

God is so generous. These people have been insulting him, neglecting him, thumbing their nose at him all the time, but he still offers blessing if they will just kind of turn around. If you just make the first moves toward obedience, start bringing your tithes.

It will change everything. Your economic situation will turn right around. I will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing more than you can receive.

Your crops will not fail. You will be recognized in the whole world. People will recognize that you are blessed and a delightful land.

This is all possible, and that God would say this to such disobedient people is a manifestation of his never exhausted grace, it seems to me. Now, of course, Christians have often taken these verses, especially verse 10, and tried to make this a doctrine of tithing for Christians. I remember tithing.

The word tithe means 10. Tithing is not identical to giving. Giving, of course, is generic.

You may give any percentage and you'd be giving. You may give food or you may give clothing. You may give money and you're giving tithing is specifically taking 10% of whatever you've gotten and bringing it to the temple for the support of the Levites.

That was what the tithe was for, and he tells them to bring the tithe in the storehouse. Now, a lot of Christians, I say, well, the storehouse is where you go to get your food, and since you go to a local church and you get fed there by the local church, that's where you have to pay your tithe. Well, I'm sorry.

Frankly, I do go to church, but that's not where I get fed. I get fed other places, but even if that were true, the storehouse is not where you go to get your food. The people who paid their tithe didn't bring their tithe to the place that they got their food.

They brought their tithe to the place that the Levites got their food. They didn't go to the temple because they, the worshippers were fed there. They went there in order to feed the Levites who were fed there.

The storehouse or the storehouse of the temple where the Levites portion of the land produce was kept for them to eat. This is to equate the storehouse in this property with the place where you get freshly fed is irrelevant. You see, the local church, as we call it today, is not the parallel to the temple in the Old Testament.

It's parallel to the synagogue. Every town had local synagogues, but there's only one temple and the temple, the one temple in the Old Testament has its antitype in the one temple in the New Testament, which is the body of Christ. Where there are needs in the body of Christ, we should help support them, though it is, it's not necessarily the case that we have to give 10%.

The 10% figure was specifically for Israel and their Levites who numbered approximately 10% of the population. And therefore, it was the right amount to support them. The Christian is not ordered to give 10% ever in the Bible, but sometimes more than 10%, but maybe less if that's all they can afford.

But a Christian should not feel condemned about compliance or noncompliance with the law of the tithe. However, it is clear that the people's failure to tithe was an evidence of their failure to love God. They didn't love God enough to pay for his service to continue.

And we could say without reference to tithing, just with reference to giving in general, where your treasure is, that's where your heart is, Jesus said. And if your heart is, if your treasure is in earthly things, it proves that that's where your heart is, your heart's in earthly things. If your treasure is going into the support of missions, the support of the church, the support of ministries that are doing the will of God toward helping the poor, then that gives evidence where your heart is.

You know, it's an interesting thing. All Christians, of course, because they're Christians, claim to love the Lord, but it's an easy test. So easy to test whether that's a lie or not.

Just figure, where's your money going? Where does your, where's your treasure? If you love God, then your treasure will be at his disposal. All of it. Jesus said, you can't be my disciple unless you forsake all that you have.

In Luke 14, in verse 33. So, tithing is not the standard of giving for Christians, though it was for the Jews. But giving or tithing, either one, still is a barometer of devotion to something.

Whatever you give to, whatever you spend your money on, is what you're devoted to. Of course, I'm referring to what your elective money is. There's some bills you have to pay, whether you like it or not.

But we're talking about money that, you know, after your bills are paid and you've gotten this extra money to do with what you want, what you spend it on will show where your heart is. And that's an unbreakable rule. You can always tell where a person's heart is by where their elective money goes.

Now, verse 13, your words have been harsh against me, says the Lord. Yet you say, what have we spoken against you? You've said it's vain to serve God. What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance and that we've walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts? So

now we call the proud blessed and those who do wickedness are raised up.

Yes, those who tempt God go free. What they're saying is the same thing they said in the last verse of chapter two, that it seems like the bad guys get away with it. It doesn't seem like it does any good to serve God.

Well, what if we what if what if anything could go wrong for us? Would we be right to conclude that there's no profit in serving God? Serving God is rewarded itself. There may be additional rewards that sometimes accrue, but serving God, if you love him, his service is a delight. His virtue is its own reward.

If you love goodness, if you love God, serving God is your reward. If he gives you other words, that's just abundance of generosity on his part. But those who say it doesn't do us any good to serve God.

It's clear they weren't serving him out of love. And that's, again, one of the sad indicators of where they were at for God here. Verse 16.

Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them. So a book of remembrance was written before him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on his name. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, on the day that I make them my jewels and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.

Then you will again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve him. Now, this little passage here, verses 16 through 18, is about the remnant, obviously, and this is in the past tense. It sounds like it's talking about an actual group of people who heard Malachi.

See, most of the people are saying, oh, yeah, prove it. Oh, yeah, prove it. Oh, yeah, prove it.

There were some soft-hearted few, those who feared the Lord. They talked to each other about what Malachi said. Do you hear what he said? What do you think about that? I think he's right, don't you? Yeah.

And the Lord heard them, and he wrote their names in his book of remembrance, those who feared the Lord. And they are his. And although he's going to bring judgment on the nation, he will gather them up like a person gathers and protects his jewels or his children.

They will be mine in the day I gather my jewels up. Well, why do you gather his jewels up when I leave them where they are? Because the house is burning down. When the house is burning down, you grab the things most valuable to you and bring them to safety.

Israel, the house of Israel, was about to be destroyed, not immediately in Malachi's time, but that was what's predicted in Malachi. And at the time that God sees his house aflame and sees it going down, he's going to gather up his remnant like a man gathers jewels or like he gathers his children out of their beds from a burning house. He won't leave without him.

And therefore, while the general message of Malachi is one of judgment on the nation, there is, as always in the prophets, at least a little bit there, a few verses about the remnant and the remnant will be rescued. The remnant will not succumb to the judgment. Now, really, the chapter division of chapter four is unfortunate.

In fact, I think in some foreign versions, while there are only three chapters, Malachi, because these last six verses are included in Chapter three, they should be included in Chapter three, because he's continuing to talk about the remnant and the judgment. He says in Chapter four, For behold, the day is coming burning like an oven and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts that will leave them neither root nor branch.

But to you who fear my name, the son of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings and you shall go out and grow fat like stall fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this, says the Lord of hosts. Now this to me is so clear what this predicting.

The day is coming to burn like an oven. He's been talking about that when the messenger suddenly comes to his temple, who can endure it? He's going to purge the sons of Levi like silver or gold with fire. Who can endure it when he comes? This is the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now, he has already said he's going to rescue his ones that fear him like jewels or like his own sons who who call on him. He's going to rescue them. But that's not going to prevent the coming of this horrible day of judgment that will burn like an oven.

And as far as the proud are concerned, they're not going to survive it. Neither root nor branch will remain. But again, the remnant in verse two, to those who fear my name, the same ones that were in verses sixteen, thirteen.

There's going to be something the son of righteousness will arise with healing his wings. He did. Jesus came with healing.

His ministry was characterized by healing. And you, that is, the remnant shall go out before the destruction of Jerusalem. The remnant escaped because Jesus had come.

He had healed them both physically and spiritually. He had changed their lives and he led them out to safety before the judgment of you shall go out like a man leaves out without his fault. His stall fed calves.



He feeds them in the stall. They leave them out to graze afterwards. After they've been fed in the stall, he can take them out when they're old enough to graze.

And, you know, the church in its infancy was nurtured in Jerusalem. But when it came time for the stall to burn it, when the barn was on fire, he let him out and brought him out where they would graze more at large. And eventually they trample on the wicked.

That's what the church is busy doing. Paul said that in Romans 16, 20. The God of peace shall trample, shall tread Satan under your feet shortly.

Same thing is predicted here. Now, the last verses. Remember the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel with the statutes and judgments.

Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Lest I come to strike the land with a curse.

Now there's turning of the hearts of the people back to where they should be. The children respecting their parents, the fathers, disciplining their children and rearing them in the admonition. Or this is what needs to be done.

If the nation is going to be saved, if Elijah fails in this, then God will have to fight the nation with a curse. Many people believe Elijah has yet to come. The Jews believe that and dispensation believe that.

But Jesus said that Elijah had already come. And he said that in a couple of places in Matthew, Chapter 11, verse 13 and 14, it says, For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you're willing to receive it, he is Elijah, who is to come.

He that has ears to hear, let him hear. And Jesus said something very similar in Matthew 17, verses 12 through 13, where Jesus said, But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him, but they did him whatever they wished. Likewise, the Son of Man is also about to separate his hands.

So it says the disciples understood that he spoke to them of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was Elijah, according to Jesus. He was referring back to Malachi, the only place in the Old Testament that he could be referring back.

He says, John is Elijah, who is to come. What do you mean he's to come? He's predicted where Malachi. He is who Malachi predicted, and Malachi said, I'll send Elijah to turn them around lest I come to smite the land with the curse.

John did not succeed in turning them around. Therefore, God came and smote the land with the curse. But not before he let out those who feared him, like the stall fed calf.

He led them out. He arose. The Son of Rises arose with healing in his wings and saved

the remnant.

Their names were written in his book, and he saved them like jewels are saved out of a burning house. So that is how we're to see those that last generation from the coming of John the Baptist to the destruction of Jerusalem. That is how it is predicted, and that is what John announces.

The time has come when you open Matthew and see the mystery of John. Okay, we have got to stop there. Rather rapid treatment of some important and deep text, but we have no other choice because of the restraints on our time.