

“A Priesthood Gone Corrupt”

Malachi 2:1-9

Message by Michael J. Barnard

September 7, 2025

Teaching Aim: To encourage every believer to take to heart the LORD’s warnings to the unfaithful priests in Malachi’s day and to honor Him with the proper reverence and respect due to His name today. To understand that these warnings also apply to us today. To encourage every believer to fulfill their priestly duties (See **1 Pet. 2:9-10**) out of a heart of love for Christ and a desire to reach others for Him.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: An ominous warning to the unfaithful priests of Israel (Mal. 2:1-4)

1. According to **Mal. 1:7-14**, list several ways that the Israelites had offended God. How are many Christian churches still guilty of doing the same today?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
2. Who does the LORD give this ominous warning to in **verse 1** of **chapter 2**? What do we find the LORD warning the Jewish priests of in **verse 2**? Note: God was extending His grace to Israel even as He gave this ominous warning. In what way was this warning a gracious act on God’s part? What is the definition of the word, “*grace*?” What makes the availability of God’s grace so important to every person in the world today?
3. Just as the people of Israel were preparing to enter the Promised Land in **Deuteronomy chapters 27 & 28**, we find the Hebrew people called upon to recite the “*blessings*” and the “*curses*” of the covenant. What would happen to the Hebrew people if they refused to listen to God’s direction and would not give Him the glory due His name (**vs. 2**)? Name at least two ways God would “*curse their blessings*” according to **Deut. 28:4-6, 16-20**. How would these curses negatively affect the Jewish priests?

4. The King James Version of the Bible translates **Mal. 2:3** as, “*Behold, I will corrupt your seed....*” What are two possible interpretations for this verse? (See Commentaries)
 - 1.
 - 2.

5. In **verse 3**, “*The refuse of your solemn feasts*” refers to the dung of the animals sacrificed at Israel’s feasts. This dung was normally carried outside of the camp and burned once the sacrifice was completed. What graphic imagery does God use here to portray the worthless service of the unfaithful priests? Would a desecrated priest be allowed to continue to serve in God’s holy temple? Is there ever a time when a fallen pastor, priest, elder, or deacon has disqualified himself from holding certain offices within the church? If so, when? (See **1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 5-9; 1 Tim. 5:19-20**) What should every Christian do the moment they realize they have sinned? (See **1 John 1:9**)

6. According to **verses 3-5**, what would the priests realize once they were removed from ministry in this horrible way? What unique covenant did God make with Levi (as he represented the tribe of Levi) that He didn’t make with any other tribe in Israel? (See **Exod. 32:25-35; Num. 1:47-54; 3:11-13; Deut. 33:8-11**)

Part II: God’s covenant with Levi and the proper role of the priests (Mal. 2:5-7)

1. What would it take for God’s covenant with the Levites to be “*one of life and peace*” (**vs. 5**)? In **Num. 25:1-14** we find the story of Aaron’s grandson Phinehas bringing peace to Israel at a time of crisis. How did he do it? (See **Num. 25:7-13**) How was the response of Phinehas like that of the Levites when Israel sinned with the golden calf in **Exod. 32:26-28**? How could such a violent act bring peace? What violent act historically has brought greater peace than any other? (See **Rom. 5:1,8-9**)

2. Does the kind of violent action committed by both the Levites and Phinehas seem offensive to you today? If so, why? If you were to strike the President of the United States, do you think your punishment would be the same as if you were to strike your neighbor? Why? How does striking the President of the United States compare to striking your neighbor? How does striking the President of the United States compare to striking God? We have become so used to the grace of God that we demand it. When God chooses to demonstrate His justice, people become quickly offended today. Why? How will God's justice eventually be displayed against everyone who rejects Christ? (See **Matt. 24:45-51; John 6:44; 14:6; Rev. 20:10-15**) Is this fair? Why or why not? Note: Don't ask for "*justice*," you might just get it. It is much better to ask for God's "*mercy*" while you can still get it.

3. According to **verse 5b**, what is the proper attitude that every believer should have toward God? Why should every believer "*fear*" God? How are Christians to "*reverence*" today? On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your reverence toward God by the lifestyle you live? Now that you've rated yourself, how would God rate your reverence?

4. What four positive qualities did the LORD reveal about the priest who fears the LORD in **verse 6**? How should these qualities relate to every pastor, elder, and anyone in Christian ministry today? How can a Christian believer walk "*in peace and equity*" with God today? What does the statement, "*The ground is level at the foot of the cross*" mean? How does this statement relate to every Christ follower? Should anyone be elevated above this because of their status in society?

5. Define the role of a priest. How does the priest's role differ from that of a prophet? What did the LORD mean in saying, "*For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge*" (**vs. 7**)? According to **1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10 & Rev. 1:5-6**, every born-again believer in Christ is "*a priest*." Do you consider yourself to be a priest? How should being a priest affect the way you live your life and how you do your ministry? According to **verse 7b**, what special role does the prophet and priest share? Are you living your life in such a way that you are being God's messenger to a lost world? If so, how?

6. What do you think the main objective of people should be when they come to church? (In other words, why are we here?) What is your favorite part of the worship service? How important is sound doctrinal teaching to you (**vs. 7**)? Why? What was the end result of the ministry of the unfaithful priests according to **Amos 8:11-12**? How do you see this related to modern churches today? What warning does Paul give to the modern church in **2 Tim. 4:2-4**? Compare the preaching of 200 years ago and the preaching of today; what changes do you see? Note: We can still read the sermons from that period. Why are more pastors moving away from the expository (verse-by-verse) teaching of the Bible and instead moving to short self-help sermons. What will the end effect of this kind of preaching have upon the church?

Part III: The corruption of the priesthood in Malachi's day (Mal. 2:8-9)

1. What three charges does the LORD bring against the unfaithful priests in **verse 8**? What, if any, similarity do you find between **Mal. 2:8** and **Acts 18:24-26**? Who does this concept of "*the way*" ultimately point toward? Describe how departing from "*the way*" has caused many people to stumble in our own day. What do you see as the greatest threat to the Christian Church today? Why?
2. According to **verse 9**, what had caused the priests to become "*contemptible and base*" before all the people? Who belittles the unfaithful priests in **verse 9**? Today we seem to find more and more unfaithful pastors and teachers undercutting the name of Jesus Christ and His holiness in our modern churches? Why do you think so many "*spiritual leaders*" do this? What are some of the qualities that Christians should be looking for when they search for a new church to call home?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.

3. How do you think the unfaithful priests of Malachi's day may have been showing partiality in the law (**vs. 9**)? What are some ways that the modern churches of today do the same? (See **James 2:1-4**) What example does God set for us in **Deut. 10:17**? How should our love for Christ motivate every aspect of our lives today? How should Christians treat every person who walks in the doors of our churches? Why?

MINER'S CORNER – *Manna to live by!*

- It is God's will that every believer takes His commandments and live by them.
- As Christians, we are to bring glory to God's name through the way we live our lives.
- When we sin, the consequences of our sin spread out and negatively affects other people.
- According to the New Testament, "every" born-again Christian is a priest. (See **1 Pet. 2:9-10**)
- Our lives and ministries should be like that of the faithful priests described in **verses 6 & 7**.
- The ground is level at the foot of the cross, there are no big or little Christians.
- Christians are not to show partiality in dealing with God's Word and Christ's Church.
- God will bless His people who live by the Great Commandment (See **Matt. 22:37-40**) and walk faithfully in obedience to Him.