

Married to the Culture

Malachi 2:10-16

Before we get started, tomorrow is Veterans Day, and while we plan to recognize those who served again on Sunday, we as a Team would like to do so tonight. So, if you served, would you stand so we can give you thanks...

Thank you for your service. We thank God for you. God bless you.

Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Malachi chapter two. As you're turning, just to review, I'll remind you that Malachi brought the Lord's message to Judah after the Temple was rebuilt after the Babylonian Exile. That's where we are in time. Sadly, the people of Judah were in no better shape in this time than they were before their exile. In fact, it's arguable that they're in WORSE shape because after being punished through 70 years of exile for the VERY THINGS THEY'RE NOW DOING AGAIN, they should know better!!!

God rescued them from exile, brought them back to the Land, and allowed them to rebuild the Temple, and as gratitude, they bring the Lord blemished offerings while withholding the best for themselves. They bring the Lord rotten leftovers. The priests and Levites have led the people to stumble by teaching them to despise the table of the Lord and His NAME! Tonight, we'll see another way in which God's chosen people were *FAITHLESS*. Picking up in verse ten, Malachi says...

Malachi 2:10

10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Before even addressing the next trespass, Malachi calls the nation to account by invoking the Creator. We're all one, or at least, we should be because we were all created by one God. Paul brought this up in his message on Mars Hill when he said that **"he [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26)**. Paul even went as far as to quote the ancient Greek poets who said, **"In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28)**, proving that even as pagans, they understood their *ACCOUNTABILITY* to God. The lost of our day understand this as well and detest the notion because it forces them to deal with God's ultimate authority.

God is the Father of all humanity because He made us all. He's the Father of Jacob because He brought them out of Egypt and called them to be ONE with Him and SEPARATE from the rest of the nations through the covenants. In profaning those covenants, they were faithless not only to God, but to one another. It negatively affected the Nation. God is our Father through Christ, having made us ONE through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Paul said...

Ephesians 4:4-6

4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

That passage immediately precedes Paul’s discourse on spiritual gifts, which we’re meant to use for ministering to one another and building one another up in the Lord! Such singleness of heart and mind makes me think of the little kids playing soccer. Around here we call it “amoeba soccer.”



There are no *positions*; there’s barely *out of bounds*! There’s just the ball, and EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM (and the other team!) chasing after it. While it can be argued that that isn’t the most effective way to play soccer, one thing is inarguable: everyone is focused on the ball. May we be so INDIVIDUALLY and COLLECTIVELY focused on knowing and following the Lord!

Sadly, when we give ourselves over to habitual sin of the sort that Malachi’s about to describe in Judah, we dishonor God and deal treacherously with one another. What had they done? Well, it was nothing new for them. In fact, it was more of the same...

Malachi 2:11

Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god.

Now we get to it. The people had intermarried with the local pagans, joining in the worship of idols, and they continued bringing offerings to God in feigned worship like everything’s fine!

Throughout scripture, sexual immorality—be it today’s alphabet soup of sexual deviance, sex outside of marriage, adultery, pornography, or divorce—it has always been the tip of Satan’s spear, his favorite weapon for stealing our love for God. If some sexual addiction (or anything

else in this world) is too important to a person to give up for God, Satan's hook is in them, and their salvation is in question. God doesn't make exceptions for pet sins. That person has married themselves to the culture; they're an idol worshiper, and their feigned worship of God next to their true worship of this world is an abomination.

As I said, this is nothing new. Israel came out of Egypt with a "**mixed multitude**" (**Exodus 12:38**), and it led to the worship of Baal. They intermarried with the pagan nations during their wilderness wanderings, and that led the Nation into worship Molech, Chemosh, Milcom, and other detestable gods. The early Church had its struggles with becoming unequally yoked, and that struggle continues today. Paul said...

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, 18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

While the context of this passage has to do with tolerating false teachers in the congregation, the spiritual effects described here are identical to those we see throughout scripture when believers intermarry with unbelievers. This practice of *marrying within the group*, a practice known as *endogamy*, has nothing to do with race but everything to do with spirituality.

Malachi and Paul both point out the snare of the sexual as the pathway to false worship. Ezra had led the Nation in putting away these foreign women and the children born to them (Ezra 9-10), but in Malachi's day, the problem persisted. They deluded themselves into thinking that they could worship God and idols side by side, and the Holy Nation meant for revealing the glory of the Lord to a rebellious world was defiled. It's the man who attempts to live with one foot in Christ and the other foot in the world, and all the world sees is someone who looks like them while claiming to have something they need.

Because of these faithless marriages, Malachi said they were "**profaning the covenant of [their] fathers**" and while I believe the Abrahamic covenant as well as the covenant of marriage is in view here, the last covenant mentioned was the "**covenant of Levi**." Look back at Malachi 2:4...

Malachi 2:4-5, 8

4 So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the Lord of hosts. 5 My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name.

For the sake of time, skip to verse eight...

8 But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts,

Now, the Lord had *ALREADY* given the perpetual priesthood to the descendants of Levi (Exodus 40:12-15), but He reaffirmed it when Phinehas was jealous with His jealousy at the sight of Israel intermarrying with the surrounding pagan nations and worshiped their gods. God's Word says...

Numbers 25:6-13

6 And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting. 7 When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand 8 and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped. 9 Nevertheless, those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand.

10 And the Lord said to Moses, 11 Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy. 12 Therefore say, Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace, 13 and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.

Typically, the priests made atonement for the people through the death of a substitutionary sacrifice, but in this instance, Phineas just killed the offenders! He turned back the Lord's wrath, and God said, "*He's my friend. I give to him my covenant of peace,*" and reaffirmed His "**covenant of a perpetual priesthood.**" That's the covenant Judah now profaned by once again intermarrying with the nations, and I believe it's in the spirit of Phineas and the Lord that Malachi says...

Malachi 2:12

May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!

Malachi uses the figurative expression of "tents" for "community," asking the Lord to cut off from the community of Jacob anyone who has married an idol worshiper, becoming one themselves, and still brings an offering to the Lord of hosts. His prayer is that the Lord would bring an end to that person's family line in the Nation, most likely by death or exile. This would ensure that their faithlessness wasn't passed on to the subsequent generation, which means the Nation would be purer spiritually.

Much like the imprecatory psalms, the preservation of this prayer teaches us that this is God's will. God desires a holy people, and He refuses to bless the lives of those who rebel against Him. This point is reinforced when we see the Lord's response, or I should say, "LACK of response" when such rebels made their worthless offering...

Malachi 2:13

And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.

Malachi said those who committed such an abomination WEPT and MOURNED because God didn't regard their offering. Their weeping was SELFISH; Their tears were tears of HYPOCRISY. They weren't broken over any sin; they were upset because, in their sin, God didn't accept their offering or them with favor. Their worship of God was FAKE; what they truly worshiped was SEX and the culture. The prophet Zechariah spoke to this in Zechariah 7, when the people fasted for show and lived their lives only for themselves. When God told them how to truly worship with their lives, they literally stopped their ears, so God said...

Zechariah 7:13

As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear, says the Lord of hosts,

God says, "You don't get to worship other gods and expect My Presence and blessing in your life! How dare you!" How much of our lives are spent worshiping like this, making much of everything else and little of God?

Malachi 2:14

But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

And here we see the other side of Judah's offense. Not only had they intermarried with the local pagans, they had divorced their wives to do it! Sin's like that. To make room for one sin you usually have to commit another.

Malachi 2:15a

Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring.

THIS GOES BACK TO WHAT MALACHI WAS SAYING ABOUT HOW "ONE GOT CREATED US!" The One God created them, and in marriage He had made them ONE FLESH as we see depicted in the first marriage (Genesis 2:24).

Besides keeping the Garden and not eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, what did God command Adam and Eve?

Genesis 1:28a

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...”

And they filled it! By the time of Noah, the earth was filled...with wickedness and violence, so much so that God regretted making anyone. He destroyed them all save eight, and then He gave Noah and his family the same command...

Genesis 9:1

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”

HOW?! What was God looking for that He hadn't really gotten from Adam and Eve? **GODLY OFFSPRING.** Can I show you what this looked like? Check this out...

Isn't that beautiful?! **"The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart" (Psalm 19:8)."**



That's from the RightNow Media Kids show simply called "The Bible: Part One," and my kids and I love it!

When God said **“fill the earth,”** He was saying, *"Have lots of children, to that their children, and their children's children will fill the earth with people who are like Me, people who know Me, who obey Me, and love Me."* That's God's design for the family—one man and one woman to

be one flesh equally yoked with the One True God for one lifetime with the one purpose of guiding their family to know, love, and follow Him.

Do you see how that would be difficult if you married an unbeliever? If you don't get that part right first, your children will experience the same spiritual tug of war WITHIN your home as they do when they leave your home and go out into the world. That isn't to say that it will be impossible to lead your child to follow God with an unbelieving spouse or that that spouse will never come to Christ. We see Paul's encouragement to the believing spouse to live upright before the lost spouse so that he or she might be won to Christ. We also see the encouraging example of Timothy whose faith was passed down to him, not by his apparently unbelieving Greek father, but by grandma and mom (2 Timothy 1:5). So, carrying out God's purpose of filling the earth with godly offspring is not impossible in these situations, but it is much harder.

The mission to produce godly offspring suffers an additionally grievous blow when it's devastated by divorce. When couples divorced, families were flung apart...

Have you ever seen a potter center a cup or bowl from a lump of clay?



A friend of ours makes a lot of mugs and sells them at the WV State Fair. She has a pretty significant pottery business. Once she was giving a demo to a group of interns at the camp where my wife and I used to work. She had gotten the clay centered on the wheel, which is a feat in and of itself, and she began forming the body of a mug, explaining what she was doing as she went along. By the time she was done, all that was left was to add a handle, which was done later. Well, one of the clumsier interns got up to do something, and as he walked across the room, he accidentally stepped on the electronic pedal that turned the potter's wheel.

In a second the newly formed mug flew apart in every direction! Without the potter's hands surrounding it, what was once lovely and useful was DESTROYED. That's what divorce does. I

know that may be hard to hear for some; understand, I know I'm not the Judge, just the messenger. God alone is the Judge, and He defined marriage *NOT ONLY* as "one man and one woman," but He also stipulated "for one lifetime." That's the covenant of marriage, but when we remove this God-ordained union out from under the bounds of the covenant, we remove the Potter's hands from the clay, and things fly apart. Families are destroyed.

That was the furthest thing from the minds of the Pharisees of Jesus' day...

Matthew 19:3-6

3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" 4 He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

They couldn't leave it alone, though. The Pharisees had to be the smartest ones in the room. This wasn't real life to these guys. Their lives weren't the ones being destroyed. To them, advocating for divorce was just another intellectual talking point.

Matthew 19:7-9

7 They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" 8 He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

Have you picked up on all the **CONNECTIONS** made between **MARRIAGE** and **CREATION**? Marriage is a part of the Creation; God didn't just create humanity, He created the family, and Jesus' assertion here proves that Jesus believed in the six-day Creation account of scripture. It sounds ridiculous to say, given that HE'S THE CREATOR, but there are those who seek to distance themselves from the authority of God, and they start by imbibing the doctrine of evolution and millions of years. Jesus said that ADAM AND EVE WERE IN THE BEGINNING.

Jesus was saying, "You want to justify your own flippant view of divorce, but GOD MADE THAT MARRIAGE and ONLY HIS WORD ON IT MATTERS!" You can choose to be right or you can choose to be wrong, but you don't get to choose wrong and redefine it as right. YOU DON'T HAVE THE AUTHORITY!

God created the perfect system for fully enjoying His Creation and for filling it with people who look like Him. When we deviate from His plan for the family, we depart from Him and teach the next generation to do so, inviting destruction not only into our own lives, but also theirs (like that clay mug from before). God wants to spare us from that, which is why He gives us these instructions. Malachi says...

Malachi 2:15-16

15 Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 16 "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

When a man divorces his wife, Malachi says he **"covers his garment with VIOLENCE."** What's he talking about? Think back to our study on Ruth. When she asked him to spread his garment over her, what was she wanting from him? MARRIAGE! For a man to cover a woman with the corner of his garment, it was meant as a marriage PROPOSAL. It was the offer to PROTECT and PROVIDE for her. In the instance of divorce, his garment was no longer such a fulfilled promise; it was an act of VIOLENCE. He had broken the marriage covenant established in Creation and of which the One Creator had been a silent witness. In effect, he took his garment back, like stripping the jacket off the woman that he had previously put around her to keep her warm.

Malachi urged the Nation (and us) to, **"Guard yourselves in your spirit"** against such faithlessness and violence. **"Guard yourselves in your spirit,"** which is sometimes even translated *conscience* or *mind*. Malachi is referring to the INNER MAN, which is the origin of all sin. This is where the *GUARDING* begins. James said...

James 1:14-15

14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Malachi says to **"guard yourselves"** or to **"pay attention"** to our spirits. You'll think I'm crazy, but I think of this when I'm pumping gas. You know where I'm looking while I'm pumping? EVERYWHERE. I'm not watching the dollars tick up (filling up is painful enough already). I'm not watching the goofy little TV that are on pumps these days or the cars going down the road. I watch everyone around me and I make sure I know where everyone of them are and what they're doing, especially when my family is with me. That's how we must pay attention to the enemy and to our own weak flesh. In Ephesians 5, Paul teaches us to be *CIRCUMSPECT*...

Ephesians 5:15-21

15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Paul's parallel teaching to the Colossians says this...

Colossians 3:16

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

And what's the very next teaching after both passages about being filled (controlled by) with the Spirit and the Word? God's will for MARRIAGE and the FAMILY, which Malachi has already described as GODLY OFFSPRING. Given that godliness is the goal, it only makes sense that it's the MEANS for by which to guard ourselves in our spirits. We say it plenty, but I'll say it again: when God is in His proper place, seated on the throne of my life, everything else is in its proper place. When we seek to take His throne or give it to some worldly influence, married to the culture, we shouldn't be surprised when things start to go off the rails. Warren Wiersbe said...

Strong families begin with strong marriages, a man and a woman who love each other and want to live for each other and both for the Lord. Anything less than that is less than God's will.

"Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" We're ONE! You see, in a marriage, God makes you ONE, and at the same time, SEPARATE from all others. Your marriage is EXCLUSIVE. That's the definition of JEALOUS. When God says He's a jealous God, and that His Name is Jealous, He's saying that HE DEMANDS EXCLUSIVE WORSHIP, and He can expect that because HE'S WORTHY! HE'S GOD. That's to be our relationship with God. God tolerates no additional lover, no idol, no other recipient of our worship. We're ONE WITH HIM and SEPARATE FROM ALL OTHERS.

For those of us who are married, do we see our marriage as a part of God's mission? Do we see that your marriage is imbued with the divine purpose of extending God's will throughout the earth? For those looking forward to marriage, will you surrender that desire to Him, submitting to His choice, His timing, and His purpose for that future marriage? May we all shun the cosmic thinking of the culture and champion biblical marriage for Christ's sake, partnering with Him to fill the earth with the godly offspring He seeks.