

Malachi Lesson 4: Malachi 2:10-16

Lecture

- This lesson introduces us to the 3rd disputation of Malachi.
- Malachi begins this disputation by reminding the people of their relationship with God in verse 10.
 - He was their only God.
 - He was their only father.
 - He was their creator.
- By reminding the Israelites about their special relationship with God, Malachi sets up the accusations he will make against the people for failing to be totally devoted to God, his covenants, his laws, and his commandments.
- Here are the contents of the 3rd disputation:
 - The assertion: The covenant is profaned by being faithless to one another with 3 sins:
 - Intermarriage with pagans (Malachi 2:10-12a)
 - Pagan-style worship (Malachi 2:12b-13)
 - Divorce (Malachi 2:14-16)
 - The question: Why?
 - The response: God is the covenant witness.
 - The implication: The people must be on their guard and not be unfaithful.

- Malachi connects marriage and God the father because it was the father who arranged marriages in this culture.
 - By bringing God into the context, Malachi is reminding the Israelites of the covenant of marriage which God ordained in Genesis 2:24.
 - It is ultimately God who decided whom the Israelites were to marry.
 - Marriage was a covenant between one man and one woman.
 - Further, God explicitly forbade intermarriage with foreigners in Deuteronomy 7:3-4 (and elsewhere in the Old Testament), because he knew that this would lead the Israelites into idol worship.

- How bad was the problem of intermarriage in Malachi's day?
 - It was severe enough that both Ezra and Nehemiah had to deal with the problem over the course of 30 years.
 - It is anyone's guess how long the problem had been going on before Ezra arrived on the scene circa 458 BC.
 - Ezra Chapter 10 lists the names of all the men guilty of marrying foreign women. From this list, we see that the problem had pervaded all parts of Judean society: priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, and other Judeans. 101 men are named.
 - Ezra forced the men to put away (likely divorce) their foreign wives after a public tribunal investigated who was guilty.
 - Nehemiah noted that half of the children born of these foreign marriages could speak neither Hebrew nor Aramaic.
 - Nehemiah resorted to public curses, public beatings and balding, and, in the case of Joiada, public expulsion from the community.

- Malachi's solution is an imprecatory prayer: "May God banish you from Judah." Certainly, this was the harshest of the 3 solutions taken by Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi.
- What exactly did expulsion from the Jewish community entail?
 - Spiritual exile
 - No participation in Temple services
 - No partaking of the daily and other sacrifices for the removal of their sins
 - Social exile
 - Totally cut off from other Jewish community members
 - No help in times of distress
 - Political exile
 - Possible forfeiture of citizenship in Judah
 - Effectively regarded as foreigners
- What was the motivation for the Judeans to intermarry with foreigners?
 - The obvious motivation was for sex.
 - A secondary motivation was money.
 - The Jews who returned to Judah under Cyrus of Persia were not particularly wealthy and their country had been greatly impoverished by the ravages of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
 - On the other hand, their neighbors had 100 years to maintain and build their wealth.
 - Taking a foreign wife was a way for a man or his son to improve his financial lot in life.

- Another motivation was that foreign fathers would have been more willing to accept a Jewish son-in-law who moved into the foreign family home, rather than sending their daughters into a Jewish home where the daughter's religion and welfare could fall under stricter Jewish rules and regulations.
- The 2nd sin Malachi outlines was pagan-style worship.
 - “Another thing you do: You flood the LORD’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.” Malachi 2:13
 - God ordained Jewish worship to be very stylized and formal.
 - Sacrifices were presented to and approved by the priests.
 - The sacrifices were ritually washed and then placed upon the altar by the priests.
 - The priests made prayers.
 - The participants could remain in the Temple courts to pray.
 - We already know from Malachi’s earlier disputations that the priests had violated God’s sacrificial laws. It appears that Canaanite worship practices may now have invaded God’s Temple as well.
 - We can get a flavor of such practices from reading the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal from 1 Kings 18:20-40. Here is a sample from verses 26-29:
 - Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.²⁷ At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.”²⁸ So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.²⁹ Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice.

- Isaiah comments about Moabite worship in Isaiah 15:2-3:
 - “Dibon goes up to its temple, to its high places to weep;”
- Since only the Judean priests could approach the altar, it appears it is also the Jewish priests themselves who have reverted to pagan-style worship. Another mark against the priests!
- Malachi’s point in verse 13 also references pagan worship which had a form of quid pro quo theology.
 - The people offered sacrifices to their idols.
 - In turn, they expected their idol gods to do something for them.
- Biblical sacrifices, on the other hand, showed one’s contrition towards and gratitude to God. God owed the people nothing. He expected them to make sacrifices because they had broken covenant with God by their sins.
 - “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” Psalm 51:17
- The last charge of this disputation is divorce.
 - In an age of no-fault divorce, we might find it surprising to learn that it existed in Malachi’s day.
 - In his commentary, Thomas McComiskey refers to divorce in Malachi’s disputation as “aversion divorce.” Another way to put this would be, “I dislike my wife,” or “I find my wife repugnant,” so I am going to divorce her.
 - The NIV translation for verse 16 puts it well:
 - “The man who hates and divorces his wife...”
 - This would be a good place in our study of Malachi to point out that Malachi relies consistently on the Book of Deuteronomy in his disputations.

- Thus, it is no surprise that Malachi’s prophetic words on divorce are consistent with Deuteronomy 24:1:
 - “If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him **because he finds something indecent about her**, and he writes her a certificate of divorce...”
 - This law does not permit divorce because someone hates his wife.
 - Also notice the strict requirements of the Deuteronomy language. Because the husband had contracted a legal marriage with his wife, he had to divorce her legally.
 - Unlike our current no-fault divorces, Jewish women could not divorce their spouses.
- Certainly, there was a long practice of divorce in Israel.
 - There was also a long practice of polygamy, with prominent examples being Jacob, King David, and King Solomon.
 - And, because polygamy was culturally acceptable in the Middle East and not explicitly prohibited in the Old Testament, this lessened the need to obtain a divorce. Yet, it still occurred.
- Why then, does Malachi speak about divorce?
 - From what we have already seen in Malachi’s previous disputations, we know that the Jews were ignoring the laws in Deuteronomy and the Covenant.
 - The practice of divorce in Judea post exile must have become rampant.
 - Further, Malachi couples his disputation on divorce with his disputation on intermarriage.
 - Thus, men were divorcing their first wives, which were likely arranged marriages, to take 2nd wives who were foreigners.

- Thus, Malachi must, as God’s prophet, speak consistently against what he saw in post-exile Judea.
- What about Ezra’s actions to force the 101 men to put away their foreign wives?
 - This would have been entirely consistent with Malachi’s teaching, since marriage to a foreigner was forbidden to begin with.
- Jesus would have found aversion divorce equally repugnant. We can readily see this from his discourse in Matthew 19:3-9:
 - Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”
 - ⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”
 - ⁷ “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”
 - ⁸ Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

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For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist 1 Corinthians 8:5-6

1. From verse 10, in what 2 ways does Malachi remind the people of their common origin?
Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? Malachi 2:10
2. How have the people profaned God’s covenant, according to verse 10? List some examples from scripture which demonstrate this. (Hint: Exodus 20)
 - Why do we profane the covenant of our ancestors by being unfaithful to one another? Malachi 2:10
 - Worship something other than God, such as money. (Exodus 20:3-4; Matthew 6:24)
 - Swearing with God’s name (Exodus 20:7)
 - The people worshiped calves at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:31-32)
 - King Jeroboam appointed priests who were not Levites (1 Kings 12:31)
 - The Jews intermarried with foreigners (Ezra 9:2; Deuteronomy 7:3)
3. In verse 11, Malachi gets even more specific about how Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord. What do you think is meant by “has married the daughter of a foreign god?”
 - Judah has been unfaithful. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves by marrying women who worship a foreign god. Malachi 2:11
 - Women who did not worship Yahweh. Women who were idol worshippers.
4. How does Deuteronomy 7:3-4 explain this further?
Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. Deuteronomy 7:3-4

5. Both Ezra and Nehemiah had to deal with the issue Malachi spoke about from verse 11. What do you learn from Ezra 9:1-2 and Nehemiah 13:23-24?
 - After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, “The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. ² They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness.” Ezra 9:1-2
 - Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. ²⁴ Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. Nehemiah 13:23-24
6. How did Ezra handle the problem, according to Ezra 10:9-17?
 - Ezra selected men who were family heads to form a tribunal to investigate men who had married foreign women.
7. How did Nehemiah handle the problem, according to Nehemiah 13:25-27?
 - I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God’s name and said: “You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. ²⁶ Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. ²⁷ Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?” Nehemiah 13:25-27
8. According to Malachi 2:12, what is Malachi’s solution to this problem?
 - As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD remove him from the tents of Jacob —even though he brings an offering to the LORD Almighty. Malachi 2:12
9. In practical terms, what did Malachi’s solution mean?
 - The men were kicked out of the Jewish community.
 - The men no longer had access to the priests or to sacrifices for the atonement of sins.
 - The men were estranged from their other family members.
 - The men did not have access to the healers of the community.

10. Who had the most radical solution to solving the problem and why did he feel the need to take such a radical step?
 - Malachi had the most radical solution. He felt that this behavior was infecting the Jewish community, and he was determined to eliminate it.
11. According to verse 13, why are the people weeping?
 - You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. Malachi 2:13
12. According to verse 14, what is the root cause of the Lord's displeasure?
 - You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Malachi 2:14
13. What covenant was Malachi referencing in verse 14 and who was a witness to this covenant?
 - The covenant of marriage
 - God was the witness.
14. How does Genesis 2:24 offer context?
 - That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Genesis 2:24
15. Malachi uses the phrase "faithless/unfaithful to your wife" in verses 14 and 15. How does verse 16 clarify what Malachi meant?
 - "The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the LORD Almighty. Malachi 2:16
16. What did Malachi say was the intent of a covenant marriage, according to verse 15c?
 - To produce Godly offspring
17. What is Malachi implying by his reference to "the wife of your youth?"
 - A man's first wife, whom he married when he was young.
18. Polygamy was practiced in the Middle East and one example from scripture is Jacob, whose 2 wives were Leah and Rachel. What is the key difference between what we see with Jacob and what Malachi is addressing?
 - Jacob took both Leah and Rachel as wives, and they remained so until their deaths.

- Malachi is addressing the issue of men divorcing their first wives.

19. Putting verses 13-16 together with verse 11, what is Malachi inferring about the men of Judah's other wives?

- Their other wives were foreigners.

20. Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4. What did God's law say about divorce?

- If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, ² and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, ³ and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, ⁴ then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. Deuteronomy 24:1-4

21. How did Jesus change the concept of divorce, according to Matthew 5:31-32?

- It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Matthew 5:31-32

22. How did Paul speak about divorce, according to 1 Corinthians 7:10-11?

- To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. ¹¹ But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

23. From Malachi 2:16, with what word does Malachi equate divorce? Why would he use such a strong word?

- Violence
- A divorced woman had little to no means of support in Jewish society. She would have been dependent on family members to take her in, else she would fall into poverty and/or prostitution.

24. What types of social problems does a divorce cause, even in the case of infidelity?

- Income loss
- Impacts on children
- Emotional issues
- Family estrangement

25. What is Malachi's guidance on divorce from verse 16? What do you think he meant? Consider Matthew 5:29 and Proverbs 4:23 for context.

- So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful. Malachi 2:16
- Malachi is urging people to be on guard against situations which result in infidelity.
- If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. Matthew 5:29
- Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Proverbs 4:23

Malachi Lesson 4

Malachi 2:10-16

The 3rd Disputation

- Malachi Reminds the People About Their Relationship with God
 - Their Only God
 - Their Only Father
 - Their Creator
- These Reminders Set Up the Accusations Which Follow

The 3rd Disputation

- The Assertion: the Covenant Is Profaned by Being Faithless to One Another with 3 Sins:
 - Intermarriage with Pagans (Malachi 2:10-12a)
 - Pagan-style Worship (Malachi 2:12b-13)
 - Divorce (Malachi 2:14-16)
- The Question: Why?
- The Response: God Is the Covenant Witness
- The Implication: The People Must Be on Their Guard and Not Be Unfaithful

Connecting Marriage to God the Father

- The Father Arranged Marriages in This Culture
- Malachi Is Reminding the Israelites of the Covenant Marriage God Ordained in Genesis 2:24
- It Is God Who Decided Whom the Israelites Were to Marry
- Marriage Was a Covenant Between One Man and One Woman
- God Explicitly Forbade Intermarriage with Foreigners in Deuteronomy 7:3-4 (and Elsewhere), Because He Knew This Would Lead to Idol Worship

How Bad Was the Problem?

- Severe Enough That Ezra and Nehemiah Had to Deal with It Over the Course of 30 Years
- It Is Anyone's Guess How Long the Problem Had Been Going On Before Ezra Arrived in 458 BC
- Ezra 10 Lists the Names of All the Men Guilty of Intermarriage
- The Problem Had Pervaded All Parts of Judean Society: Priests, Levites, Musicians, Gatekeepers, Other Judeans
- 101 Men Are Named

How Bad Was the Problem?

- Ezra Forced the Men to Put Away (Likely Divorce) Their Foreign Wives After a Public Tribunal Investigation
- Nehemiah Noted That Half of the Children Born of These Foreign Marriages Could Speak Neither Hebrew nor Aramaic
- Nehemiah Resorted to Public Curses, Public Beatings and Baldings, and 1 Case of Public Expulsion

Malachi's Solution

- “May God Banish You from Judah”
- The Harshest of the 3 Solutions
- What Did Expulsion from the Jewish Community Entail?

Spiritual Exile	No Participation in Temple Services; No Partaking of the Daily and Other Sacrifices for the Removal of Their Sins
Social Exile	Totally Cut Off from Other Jewish Community Members; No Help in Times of Distress
Political Exile	Possible Forfeiture of Citizenship in Judah; Effectively Regarded as Foreigners

What Was the Motivation to Intermarry with Foreigners?

- The Obvious Motivation Was for Sex
- A Secondary Motivation Was Money
 - Post-Exile Judeans Were Not Particularly Wealthy
 - Judea Had Been Impoverished by King Nebuchadnezzar
 - Their Neighbors Had 100 Years to Build and Maintain Their Wealth
 - Taking a Foreign Wife Was a Way for a Man or His Son to Improve His Financial Lot in Life
 - Foreign Fathers Might Be More Willing to Accept a Jewish Son-In-Law Rather Than Sending Their Daughters Into a Jewish Home with Strict Jewish Rules and Regulations

The Sin of Pagan-Style Worship

- Malachi 2:13
- God Ordained Jewish Worship to Be Very Stylized and Formal
 - Sacrifices Present To and Approved by the Priests
 - Sacrifices Ritually Washed and Placed Upon the Altar
 - Priests Made Prayers; Participants Prayed in the Temple Courts
- The Priests Had Violated God's Sacrificial Laws; Canaanite Worship Practices May Now Have Invaded God's Temple

The Sin of Pagan-Style Worship

- 1 Kings 18:20-40 (Baal Worship)
- Isaiah 15:2-3 (Moabite Worship)
- Both the Priests and the People Were Guilty
- Pagan Worship Had a Quid Pro Quo Theology
 - The People Offered Sacrifices to Their Idols
 - In Turn, They Expected the Idol Gods to Do Something for Them
- Biblical Sacrifices Showed One's Contrition Towards and Gratitude to God; God Owed the People Nothing
- God Expected Sacrifices Because the People Had Sinned
- Psalm 51:17

The Charge Against Divorce

- No-fault Divorce in Malachi's Day
- Thomas McComiskey: "Aversion Divorce"
- NIV: "The Man Who Hates and Divorces His Wife"
- Malachi Relies Consistently on Deuteronomy in His Disputations
- Malachi's Prophetic Words on Divorce Are Consistent with Deuteronomy 24:1
- The Law Does Not Permit Divorce Because Someone Hates His Wife
- Notice the Deuteronomy Language; A Legally Contracted Marriage Required a Legal Divorce
- Jewish Women Could Not Divorce Their Spouses

The Charge Against Divorce

- There Was a Long Practice of Divorce in Israel
- There Was Also a Long Practice of Polygamy
 - Prominent Examples: Jacob; King David; King Solomon
- Because Polygamy Was Culturally Acceptable in the Middle East and Not Explicitly Prohibited in the Old Testament, This Lessened the Need to Obtain a Divorce
- Yet, Divorces Still Occurred

Why Does Malachi Speak About Divorce?

- The Jews Were Ignoring the Laws in Deuteronomy and the Covenant
- The Practice of Divorce in Judea Post-Exile Must Have Become Rampant
- Malachi Couples His Disputation on Divorce with His Disputation on Intermarriage
- Men Were Divorcing Their 1st Wives, Which Were Likely Arranged Marriages, to Take 2nd Wives Who Were Foreigners
- Malachi Must, as God's Prophet, Speak Consistently Against What He Saw in Post-Exile Judea
- Ezra's Actions Were Consistent With Malachi's Teaching

What About Jesus?

- Jesus Would Have Found Aversion Divorce Equally Repugnant
- Consider His Discourse in Matthew 19:3-9