

BIBLE STUDY III

Practical Bible Study III: Syllabus

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CLASS #1:

- I. Course Introduction
- II. Outline and Background of Malachi.
- III. Section #1: Mal 1:1-5.

CLASS #2:

- III. Section #1: (cont.)
- IV. Section #2: Mal 1:6-14.

CLASS #3:

- IV. Section #2: (cont.)

CLASS #4:

- IV. Section #2: (cont.)
- V. Section #3: Mal 2:1-9.

CLASS #5:

- V. Section #3: (cont.)
- VI. Section #4: Mal 2:10-16.
- Exam.

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Practical Bible Study III: Exam

The “Inductive Bible Study” courses do not have exams like the other courses. The exam time is used to actually do inductive Bible study.

In this third “Practical Bible Study” course, the exam requires making observations, interpretations, and applications. The student is given a passage from the Bible and will use the exam time to study the passage and form observations, interpretive questions, interpretive answers, and applications. The student is required to submit their four most important observations and interpretive questions. Two of the observation/question combinations must include an interpretive answer, and one of those two must include an application. The observations, questions, and answers are graded according to importance, insight, clarity, etc.

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Course Introduction:

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Prerequisite courses:

Introduction to Bible Study; Practical Bible Study I and II.

This is the third practical Bible study course that follows the Introduction to Bible Study course. The series is based on the materials that were taught in that course.

We will use our more advanced understanding of Bible study to study the book of Malachi. In the courses on Phillipians we have already practiced what we learned in the “Introduction” course. Now we want to continue practicing and advance our ability to do inductive Bible study.

At this point it may be helpful to review the introduction to the course called “Introduction to Bible Study.”

Format of this Course.

We will study Malachi 1:1-2:16. There will be four sections:

- 1) Title and preparation (1:1-5).
- 2) The sin of the priests (1:6-14).
- 3) The discipline and judgment of the priests (2:1-9).
- 4) The unfaithfulness and hypocrisy of the people (2:10-16).

Each section will contain three areas of study:

- 1) Study of the structure (this will include the process that leads us from observation to interpretation to application).

We will focus on interpretation in this course and allow more freedom (than in the previous courses) to go outside of the book of Malachi to answer our interpretive questions. We will also be less structured (than in the previous courses) in how we format this section.

We will do word studies (when necessary) within this section.

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- 2) An outline of the structure (we will summarize the flow of the relationships between the parts within each section).
- 3) A conclusion (this will include: final points and thoughts; a one sentence summary description of the passage; and a three or four word title that captures the focus of the passage).

***Note: We will use the New American Standard Bible in our study.

II. Outline and Background of Malachi.

A. General Outline of Malachi.

The following general outline of Malachi is used to organize the sections of this course and the sections of “Practical Bible Study IV”:

1. Title and preparation (Mal 1:1-5).
2. Israel’s unfaithfulness and hypocrisy is rebuked (Mal 1:6-2:16).
 - a. The unfaithfulness and hypocrisy of the priests (Mal 1:6-2:9).
 - 1) The sin of the priests (Mal 1:6-14).
 - 2) The discipline and judgment of the priests (Mal 2:1-9).
 - b. The unfaithfulness and hypocrisy of the people (Mal 2:10-16).
3. The Lord’s coming is announced (Mal 2:17-4:6).
 - a. The purpose of His coming: to purify (Mal 2:17-3:6).
 - b. The proper response to His coming: to repent (Mal 3:7-4:3).
 - c. The official announcement (Mal 4:4-6).

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B. Background to the Book of Malachi.

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1. Situational background.
 - a. The book of Malachi presents the love that God has for His people even though they refuse to acknowledge it or respond to it.
 - b. Difficult times for the people of Israel led them to turn from God. Their main problems were disappointment and impatience. Expectation and reality were two different things.
 - 1) After the exile ended, the people of Israel began to look with expectation at the Messianic predictions made by earlier prophets.
 - a) There would be a fruitfulness for the land (Ez 34:26-30).
 - b) There would be a fruitfulness for the people (Is 54:1-3).
 - c) There would be a fruitfulness for the nation (Jer 23:5, 6).
 - d) There would be a fruitfulness for the world (Is 49:22, 23).
 - 2) However, reality was not consistent with these expectations. Instead there was:
 - a) Drought (Mal 3:10).
 - b) Persian rule (Mal 1:8).
 - c) A low population in Israel.

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2. Historical background.

- a. The book was written around 460 B.C.
- b. The exile of the Jews to Babylon that began in 586 had ended about 75 years earlier.
 - 1) The temple was already rebuilt. The sacrificial system was functioning.
 - 2) The knowledge of the Law (as communicated by Ezra) was evident.
- c. It was a waiting period for God's people as opposed to a period of great change.
- d. The Edomites had been aggressively advancing against Judah since her fall in 586 B.C.

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III. Section #1: Title and Preparation (1:1-5).

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A. Study of the Structure of Section #1.

1. Verse 1.

a. This verse serves as a title of the book.

b. It answers three questions.

1) What is the nature of the book?

a) It is an **“ORACLE OF THE WORD OF THE LORD.”**

b) **What does the word “oracle” mean?**

(1) The Hebrew word for **“ORACLE”** often signifies an ominous occasion. It could be translated as **“BUR-DEN”**. The word is used 27 times in the O.T. In 25 occurrences it is found in the context of a coming judgment.

(2) When we combine **“ORACLE”** with **“WORD”** we can compare Zech 9:1 and 12:1 to see how there is an indication of ominous judgment.

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2) Who is the book addressed to?

- a) It is addressed to Israel.
- b) **Who is included in Israel?**

- (1) By the time Malachi was written, enough generations had passed that the distinction between Israel and Judah was fading away. The 10 northern tribes (often referred to as Israel) began to lose their identity.
- (2) They had been exiled to Assyria and had already begun the process of intermarrying with those northern peoples. This would later result in the people known as the Samaritans. Thus, “Israel” is now used (as it had also been used in the past) as a general term that refers to the Jewish people.

3) Who wrote the book?

- a) It was written by (through) Malachi.
- b) **Who is Malachi?**

- (1) Malachi was an O.T. prophet.
- (2) The word “**MALACHI**” means “MY MESSENGER.”

2. Verse 2.

- a. Immediately we can observe the prophetic style (“says the Lord”).
- b. We also observe a pattern of writing that will be used throughout the book of Malachi (“but you say”; followed by a question of doubt; followed by a response from the Lord).

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- c. We also observe that the Lord's first words are "**I HAVE LOVED YOU**" (note that the perfect tense makes it clear that He has loved them in the past and loves them in the present). These words prepare the reader to fully feel the implications of the contents of the rest of the book.
- 1) God speaks.
 - 2) His people say and do the opposite.
 - 3) The word "**BUT**" marks the beginning of this contrast.
 - a) God tells His people that He loves them, "**BUT**" their response implies that they do not believe it.
 - b) God's words are set in contrast to those of His people. This is something we will see throughout the book.
- d. In God's response to their doubt we can observe another contrast (note the term "**YET**").
- 1) The contrast is between Jacob and Esau and is used to show God's love for Israel.
 - 2) The contrast is even stronger when we realize that not only was Esau the brother of Jacob, but he was his twin brother who was older. Here we see the use of understatement to emphasize a point.
- e. The troublesome aspect of this verse is that we cannot deny that God uses a relative argument to prove His love for Israel. There are no conditions or criteria for how God chooses. We simply read: "**I HAVE LOVED JACOB.**"

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f. Does God love (choose) Jacob at the expense of Esau?

- 1) First let us show how the ideas of “loving” and “choosing” are associated with each other. Read Deut 7:6, 7. Note how in vs. 7 “**SET HIS LOVE ON YOU**” and “**CHOOSE YOU**” are interchangeable.
- 2) Second, we must again emphasize that God did not choose (love) Israel because of anything they did or were that was greater than what others had done or were. He simply chose them for two reasons:
 - a) Because He loved them (Deut 7:8), and (it is very important to observe this term).
 - b) Because He wanted to keep His covenant with Abraham (Deut 7:8).
- 3) Third, we must consider the contents of the Abrahamic covenant. Read Gen 12:1-3. Note how there are two parts to the covenant. One part focuses on how God will bless Abraham. Another part focuses on how Abraham will be a blessing to the nations (remember Esau was one of these nations).
 - a) Abraham was not chosen at the expense of the nations. God did not choose Abraham in order to exclude the nations. He chose Abraham in order to include the nations.

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b) When God says that He loved (chose) Jacob, it does not mean that He rejected Esau. It means that He did not choose Esau. However, Esau does not have to be excluded. He can be included according to the very reason God chose Israel. That is, he can be included according to God's missionary plan of reaching all the nations through choosing Israel.

(1) The concept of being chosen should not be understood in terms of excluding others. It should be understood in terms of including others.

(2) We need to put as much (if not more) emphasis on the responsibility of being chosen as on the privilege of being chosen. This concept will be a prevalent message of the book of Malachi.

3. Verse 3.

a. The structure of this verse is based on the movement from the general to the specific. **"I HAVE HATED"** (general) moves toward **"I HAVE MADE"** (specific).

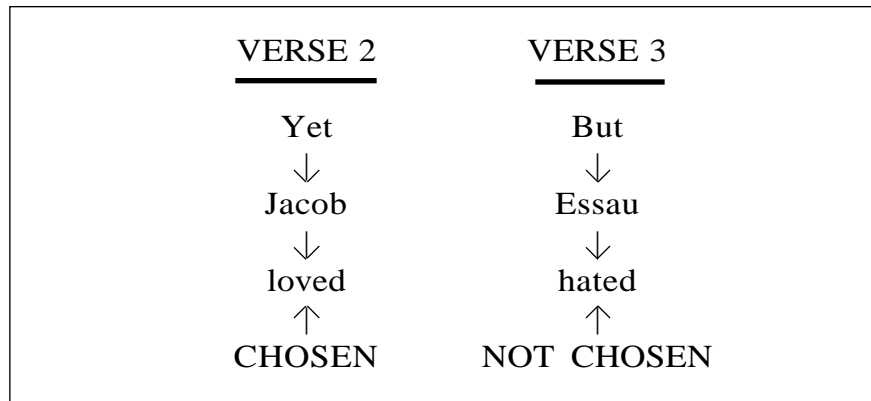
1) We should note that the specific details of how God hated Esau are not the results of God's random rejection of a certain people. God did not reject Esau (Edom). Edom rejected God through rejecting Israel (Edom had been against Israel since the time of the exile).

2) The focus here is on God's sovereignty. He is sovereign to establish His own system of blessing people. He sovereignly chose Israel. He sovereignly chose Israel to bring blessings to those who bless her, and curses to those who do not (review Gen 12:3). He sovereignly uses (appoints) others to carry out His justice against those who do not want to follow His system (note that the reference to JACKALS OF THE WILDERNESS probably refers to the fierce Nabatean Arabs that roamed that part of the world at that time).

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- b. The key word to observe in this verse is the word “**BUT.**” Again we see the emphasis on the idea of contrast. Use the following diagram to review.



- 1) Does God really hate people?
- a) Just as “**LOVED**” should be understood as “**CHOSEN**”, “**HATED**” should be understood as “**NOT CHOSEN**” (remember, this does not mean rejected or excluded).
 - b) The idea of “**HATED**” can better be understood when we study other uses of it. Read Gen 29:30-33; Deut 21:15-17; Lk 14:26; Mt 10:37.
- (1) Jacob “**HATED**” Leah (Gen 29:31). The implication is not that he had an emotional hatred for her (the word “more” in vs. 30 implies that he actually loved Leah). The idea is that he chose Rachel and did not choose Leah.
- (2) We find the same concept in Deut 21:15-17.

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(3) The word “**HATED**” in Lk 14:26 is interpreted by Mt 10:37 in much the same way as it is in the previous two examples. The understanding is not that we have an emotional hatred for our parents, children, etc. (again note how the word “**MORE**” in Mt 10:37 actually implies that we love our parents, children, etc.). The idea is that Christians choose Jesus and do not choose others.

- (a) Again, this does not mean that we reject or exclude others. It means that others are included in our lives through choosing Jesus. Practically, we might say that husbands are actually able to be better husbands because they have chosen Jesus and not their wives. A husband can truly love his wife only when He makes the commitment to allow Jesus to have first place in his life. A husband who “**HATES**” (does not choose) his wife can actually more truly love his wife.
- (b) Leah could only be loved by Jacob correctly in the sense that he chose Rachel. We might say that he had to be a “one woman man” in order to correctly love either one of them (another way to say this is that you cannot serve two masters, or you cannot serve God and mammon). Jacob had to choose one in order to love both. He would love Leah (ideally, in a different way that would be consistent with a monogamous lifestyle) because of his love for Rachel.

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(c) This idea of a monogamous relationship is consistent with what God calls us to as Christians. It is interesting that God often uses the monogamous relationship between man and wife to describe his desired relationship between Himself and man (for example, consider the message of Hosea). He calls us to complete commitment to Him, the **only** God. Those who make that decision can be better family members and better citizens, not because family and country are a priority, but because their complete commitment to God allows them to be and equips them to be better family members and citizens. In light of all of this, it is interesting to note that in Mt 6:33 the Greek term for “**FIRST**” actually implies “**ONLY**”. Seek **only** the kingdom and everything else will be added to you.

c) Now we can better understand what it means that God “**HATED**” Esau. His plan was to love, include, and bless others through choosing **only** Israel. Israel, the missionary nation (remember the idea of Gen 12:1-3), was chosen so that God could love the world. Remember, Jn 3:16 says that “**GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD.**” God chooses Israel in order to choose others. In New Testament terminology, He loves us in order that we would love others (see 1 Jn 4:19).

Discussion Point

Discuss how this understanding should affect how we live as Christians.

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2) Is it not unfair that God chooses one but does not choose another?

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a) To answer this question we need to study the context of the New Testament counterpart of Mal 1:2, 3. Read Rom 9:6-21.

(1) First, and foremost, we must focus on vs. 19-21. God is sovereign. This should actually be the end of the discussion. God, as the Creator, has authority to choose as He wishes.

(2) However, God does give us more of an explanation. Read vs. 6.

(a) The justice of God is different than the “justice” of man. Man defines justice and fairness in terms of everything being the same. God defines justice and fairness in terms of how people respond to what they are given (for example, in the parable of the talents the owner judges each slave **“ACCORDING TO HIS OWN ABILITY”**: see Mt 25:15).

(b) God’s justice or fairness is based on whether or not He has kept His promises. God is just because He has kept His promises. Man’s understanding of justice focuses on his evaluation of the contents of God’s promises. God’s understanding of justice focuses on His faithfulness to His promises (the contents of those promises are unaffected by man’s evaluation because they are established under God’s sovereignty: see Rom 9:19-21).

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(c) Finally, our question would not imply such frustration for men if they would understand the Biblical concept of “choosing” and election. Choosing is designed to include others. Election is not reserved for a certain people group “**FOR THEY ARE NOT ALL ISRAEL WHO ARE DESCENDED FROM ISRAEL.**”

b) **What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? may it never be! (Rom 9:14).**

4. Verse 4.

a. The key word of this verse is “**THOUGH.**” It establishes the contrast between God’s sovereign control and man’s proud self reliance. Edom tries to assert the power of her “free will” to create and God replies by proclaiming His sovereignty over her plans. Note this construction as it is seen in the following diagram.

EDOM SAYS:

We will build
|
up the ruins

GOD SAYS:

They may build
|
I will tear down

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b. **How does the free will of man relate to the sovereignty of God?**

- 1) It is true that man has a free will. However, this free will is not a creative will. It is a receptive will. That is, man has a free will in terms of what he is able to receive from God, not in terms of what he is able to create apart from God (consider Jn 1:12, 13).
- 2) Thus the Edomites cannot use their free will to insure their security. Their destiny is not under their control. Their free will could have been used to respond positively to God through responding positively to Israel, but they rejected God. Now their free will is not sufficient to save them. God is sovereign over man's attempt to save himself.

Discussion Point

Read Lk 10:16 and discuss how people reject God by rejecting those whom God sends.

c. We should observe that God is referred to as “**THE LORD OF HOSTS.**” This is a very important title with respect to the message of the book of Malachi. It will be used 24 times in Malachi's 4 short chapters.

- 1) **What does that title mean?**
- 2) The term “**HOSTS**” signifies the idea of heavenly powers. It points to the universal and sovereign rule of God. Yahweh is the Lord of all powers, the Lord of the universe, or the Lord of the nations.

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5. Verse 5.

- a. The word “**AND**” connects vs. 4 and vs. 5. It introduces the result of what happened to Edom.
- b. The manifestation of the sovereignty and power of the Lord against those who reject whom He has chosen will result in Israel’s proclamation of the greatness of God.

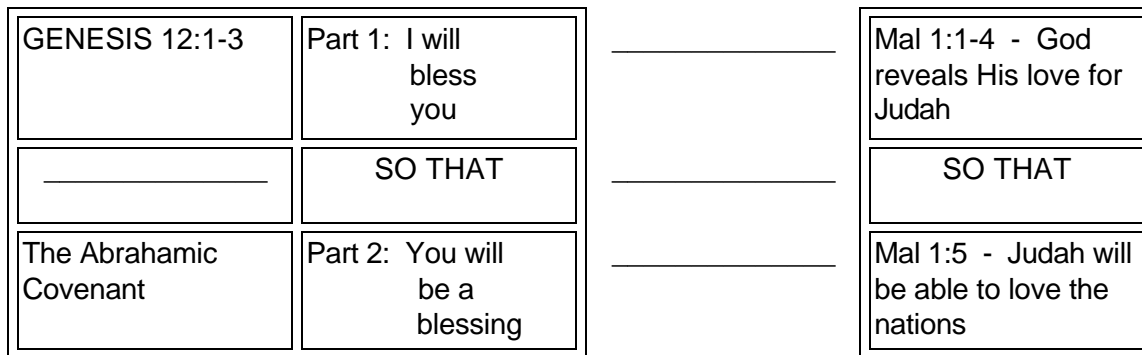
1) To whom will this proclamation be addressed?

- a) First, let us remember the points that we have already discussed in vs. 1-4 that relate to the “**NATIONS.**”
 - (1) Israel was chosen to be a blessing (testimony) to the “**NATIONS.**”
 - (2) It is the Lord of hosts or the Lord of the “**NA-TIONS**” who is the subject of the proclamation.
- b) Second, we should observe the consistency between those types of emphases and the phrase “**BEYOND THE BORDER OF ISRAEL.**”
- c) The implication is that all that has been said so far is a desperate attempt by God to move Israel in the right direction. They must fulfill their part of the covenant by functioning as a missionary nation. They are the light that must shine in the world in order for God to be “**MAGNIFIED BEYOND THE BORDER OF ISRAEL.**” They should be proclaiming these truths to the “**NATIONS.**”

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2) How do these points relate to God's initial words (I have loved you) vs. 2?

- a) Again we must remember that God's redemptive plan is based on a chosen people who will be a missionary people.
- b) Next, we must apply the principle of 1 Jn 4:19. If it is true that we can love others because God first loved us, then it is essential that we know that God loves us. Israel failed to see that God loved her. The result was that she was not able to love others. She was not able to bless others. See the following diagram.



***Note: The concept of Judah "loving" the nations is relevant to her willingness to, testify about God in an effective way.

B. An Outline of the Structure of Section #1 (using the outline, challenge the students to identify relationships between parts).

1. Title (vs. 1).
2. Interaction between God and Israel (vs. 2, 3).
 - a. God loves them (vs. 2a).
 - b. They question God's love (vs. 2b).

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c. God responds to their question (vs. 2b-3).

1) Esau and Jacob are contrasted (vs. 2b-3a).

a) God loved Jacob (vs. 2b).

b) God hated Esau (vs. 3).

(1) God makes his mountains a desolation (vs. 3a).

(2) Edom's inheritance is for the jackals (vs. 3b).

3. Interaction between God and Edom (vs. 4).

a. Edom makes proud claims (vs. 4a).

b. God claims to be sovereign over their plans (vs. 4b).

4. Israel's concluding response to these interactions (vs. 5).

C. Conclusion to Section #1.

1. Final points and thoughts.

a. Although Edom is referred to consistently, the focus of this section is on Israel and God's love for the people of Israel. The conclusion focuses on the need for that love to flow out of them. The Israelites must understand how they, as the chosen people, relate to the nations.

b. Why did God choose you? First, He chose you because of His unconditional and unmerited love for you. Second, He chose you so that He could use you to include others.

c. Our response to God choosing us should be one of gratitude and thankfulness. This gratitude should motivate us to go beyond ourselves and to the person (nation) beyond ourselves (our own borders).

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2. Summary sentence. Since God intensely desires His love to be revealed and responded to, we should respond to His love by living out the covenant that He made with us.
3. Title. God loves His people.

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IV. Section #2: The Sin of the Priests (1:6-14).

A. Study of the Structure of Section #2.

1. Verse 6.
 - a. In 1:1-5 God prepared Israel to sense the seriousness of not responding to Him. In 1:6-14 He begins to point to their sins by first pointing to the sins of their representatives (the priests).
 - b. An argument that moves from the lesser to the greater is used in this verse to show how ridiculous and unnatural it is that Israel is not responding to God.
 - 1) We can observe the repetition of the words “**FATHER**,” “**MASTER**,” and “**HONOR**.” The point of this argument is that if the lesser case is true, then the greater case should also be true. If earthly fathers are honored, how much more should a heavenly Father be honored?
 - 2) The tragedy is that the greater case is ignored.
 - a) **How do the priests ignore God?**
 - (1) The phrase “**THEN IF I AM**” implies that the problem is not that the priests are unwilling to **say** that God is their Father and Master (a priest would proclaim these things as part of his job when he recited the creeds in the temple). The problem was not in their words but in their behavior. Their words and their behavior were two different things.
 - (2) Thus, we see that the ignoring of God is not being done on the level of pure rebellion. It is being done on the level of pure hypocrisy.

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b) What does the term “despise” mean?

(1) It means to give little worth to something; to undervalue it.

(2) The priests were undervaluing God. They were not giving Him His proper value or worth.

c. Again, we should observe the use of the title “**LORD OF HOSTS.**” It is the God of the nations who should receive honor. If He does not receive honor from His own children, then how will the nations learn to give Him honor?

2. Verse 7.

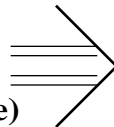
a. We should observe the repetition of the terms “**DESPISED** and **DEFILED.**” We should also observe the continuity of the ideas of “**GOD’S NAME**” (vs. 6d), “**GOD’S ALTAR**” (vs. 7a), “**GOD**” (“Thee”: vs. 7b), and “**GOD’S TABLE**” (table of the Lord: vs. 7c). Study the following diagram.

DESPISE ____ my name

DEFILED ____ my alter

DEFILED ____ me (Thee)

DESPISE ____ my table



DESPISE = DEFILED

my name = my alter = me = my table

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- b. We can now summarize the main idea of vs. 6, 7 by outlining the argument in the following way:
- 1) God: You despise my name.
 - 2) Priests: How?
 - 3) God: By presenting defiled food upon my altar.
 - 4) Priests: Yes, but what does that have to do with defiling you?
 - 5) God: When my table is defiled, then I Myself am defiled.
3. Verse 8.
- a. In vs. 6 we saw that there was a problem with the offerer. In vs. 8 we see that there is a problem with the offering. These two problems are usually seen together. They affect each other (in vs. 7 we see the combination of the two problems).
- b. **What is the problem with the offering?**
- 1) Read Deut 15:21. First of all, this type of offering was forbidden. Thus, the priests were being disobedient.
 - 2) The problem seems to go deeper than disobedience. The point of God's questions at the end of the verse is that the priests were bringing offerings to the altar of God that they would not dare bring to the civil ruler.
 - a) They showed respect to the governor and they knew that God was greater than the governor. Yet their actions toward God did not show that respect. The problem is in their faith.
 - b) They can see the governor. They cannot see God. Thus, they begin to question the validity of approaching Him. The sacrificial system becomes a mere ritual, empty and hypocritical.

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c) An offering that is not presented in faith is based on hypocrisy instead of the fear of God, and is not acceptable to God (consider Heb 11:4).

3) In their offerings, the priests undervalued God. They despised Him. Most significantly, they undervalued their own redemption and practiced hypocrisy because of their lack of faith.

4. Verse 9.

a. First, we should observe again that the words of this verse are spoken by **“THE LORD OF HOSTS.”**

b. In verse 8 we see the question: **“WILL HE (the governor) RECEIVE YOU KINDLY?”** Here in vs. 9 the question is repeated, but it is made in reference to God instead of the governor.

c. **What is the relationship between offerings and finding God’s favor?**

1) To see the governor, a person must bring a correct offering or gift to show his respect. It would secure entrance.

2) In the Old Testament, the correct sacrificial offering secured entrance with respect to God. In the New Testament we could say that the correct offering is praise and worship. We enter into His presence with praise. We bring the sacrifice of praise.

3) God, like the governor, will not hear our prayers and requests if we do not show Him proper and sincere worship.

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d. At this point let us do a quick review.

- 1) The emphasis has been on Israel. However, there is an obvious universal aspect or purpose to all that God is saying. Here again we should remember the repetition of “**THE LORD OF HOSTS**” (vs. 4, 6, 8, 9), the reference to the universal plan of redemption (vs. 7, 8), the implication of the importance of the reputation of God among the nations (“my name”: vs. 6), and the statement concerning God’s greatness being made known “**BEYOND THE BORDER OF ISRAEL**” (vs. 5).
- 2) Verse 6 included the specific problem of the offerer. Verse 8 included the specific problem of the offering. Verse 7 combined the two problems to state the general problem. Verse 9 speaks of the tragic result of the problem.

5. Verse 10.

- a. Here we observe the continuation of God’s rejection of the priests. What was implied in vs. 9 (that the priests and their offerings would not be accepted) is now confirmed in vs. 10.
- b. There also seems to be an extension of God’s response. He proclaims His desire that they actually shut down the whole sacrificial system (“**SHUT THE GATES**”).
- c. **Why does God want them to stop the sacrifices?** (Would it not be better to have a partially correct system than no system?)
 - 1) The answer to this question is not clear, but we do have a clue in the emphasis and repetition within the final part of the verse.
 - a) It was sufficiently clear in vs. 9 that God was saying that He would not accept them and their offerings. Yet, here in vs. 10 we see God repeating and emphasizing this reality.
 - b) God appears concerned that they still do not understand. It appears He is saying: **Do not be deceived!**

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- 2) It is actually better to have no system of worship at all than to have a ritualistic, empty, form of worship. Worship without obedience and sincerity is “**USELESS**” or in vain (consider Mk 7:6, 7). As Malachi says, it is uselessly kindling fire on God’s altar. Beyond this, however, is the problem of deception that hypocrisy and religiosity brings. False rituals often give false confidence. Empty religion deceives people because it makes them think that they are “right with God” when they are not. Men think that the form without the substance is better than no form at all. God would rather that the gates be shut. Man would say that lukewarm is better than cold. God would rather that we be cold (see Rev 3:15, 16). God would rather have no sacrifices than receive sacrifices with contempt (Is 1:11-15).
- a) Here we can make an important application of this verse. God hates hypocrisy more than anything. He hates empty religion and ritualistic ceremonies that mean nothing. They are futile and they deceive those who practice them. He spews out of His mouth that which is lukewarm (Rev 3:16). With God it is “yes” or “no” (Mt 5:37). It is all or nothing (Mt 16:24).
- b) The areas of hypocrisy in our lives must be destroyed. The “gates” must be shut. The longer that we allow hypocrisy to continue, the more likely it is that we will be fooled by its deception.

BIBLE STUDY III

6. Verse 11.

- a. An emphasis that had been implied earlier is now made more obvious. Here we should observe the repetition of **“MY NAME,” “AMONG THE NATIONS,”** and **“THE LORD OF HOSTS.”**
- b. **How does this universal emphasis relate to the sins of Israel?**
 - 1) The first word is the key word to observe in this verse. The word **“FOR”** introduces the reason God will not accept the offerings. It is because of His universal plan of redemption. God is saying that He will not accept impure offerings from His own people when His ultimate goal is to receive pure offerings from all the peoples of the earth.
 - 2) Moreover, the sins of Israel are providing a bad testimony to the nations. This is opposite of what God’s plan was for Israel the missionary nation. The lack of authentic worship negatively affects God’s universal plan of redemption.

7. Verse 12.

- a. This verse is used to put the focus back on the problem. It is a repetition of the argument that began in vs. 6-8.
- b. The term **“BUT”** establishes the contrast between what God hopes for and what is actually happening. **“MY NAME WILL BE GREAT”** in vs. 11 is contrasted with **“YOU ARE PROFANING IT”** in vs. 12.

Notes

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BIBLE STUDY III

Notes —

8. Verse 13.

- a. Here God will continue describing the problem (note the word “**ALSO**”).
- b. The priests are “**ALSO**” bored of all that they do.

1) **How does being bored relate to the previous verses?**

- a) The priests are bored with religiosity. They are bored with empty worship. Religion is boring. True and sincere worship of God is not boring because it bears fruit.
- b) Here is the key to our answer. Note that the context of this boredom is a negative perception of the “**FRUIT**” (vs. 12).

(1) Hypocritical religiosity is boring because it is empty.

(2) This is the tragic reality of empty religion. It is dead. Nothing real goes in so nothing real comes out. Boredom and empty religion always exist together. When there is no real meaning (remember, hypocrisy results in futility), then there is no life and excitement.

Author’s Illustration:

You can only go so long eating empty pie shells before you will tire of them. If there is no fruit then it becomes boring.

Insert Your Illustration:

BIBLE STUDY III

2) How does being bored relate to what follows in vs. 13?

- a) Insincerity and boredom go together. The sacrifices that were offered did not cost the offerer anything. It is easy to give a sick or stolen animal for sacrifice.
- b) An easy faith and boredom also go together. Things that have meaning to us are most often things that cost us something.

9. Verse 14.

- a. Again, we see that the reason (note “for”) God responds negatively to the priests has to do with the “**NATIONS**.” This verse concludes this section.
- b. The emphasis is obvious. God is calling Israel to a sincere and authentic life of worship for their own good, and for the good of the “**NATIONS**” who receive their testimony of God through Israel.

B. An Outline of the Structure of Section #2 (using the outline, challenge the students to identify relationships between parts).

- 1. The definition of the problem (vs. 6-9).
 - a. The specific problem with the offerer (vs. 6).
 - b. The general problem (vs. 7).
 - c. The specific problem with the offering (vs. 8).
 - d. The result of the problem (vs. 9).
- 2. God’s request (vs. 10-12).
 - a. The specific request and the confirmation of vs. 9 (vs. 10).
 - b. The reason for the request (vs. 11).
 - c. The present reality (vs. 12).

Notes —

BIBLE STUDY III

Notes —

3. Additional problems (vs. 13,14a).

a. Boredom (vs. 13a).

b. Incorrect types of offerings (vs. 13b, 14a).

4. Conclusion (vs. 14b) - The conclusion is stated as the reason for God's displeasure.

C. Conclusion to Section #2.

1. Final points and thoughts.

Author's Illustration:

People admire the dedication of an athlete or a musician, but they think it is "weird" or "legalistic" to be dedicated to God. They watch 5 hours of television each day, but they cannot find time to read the Bible. They spend thousands of dollars on "toys", but cannot give God 10% of their income. What is God worth to us? Have we undervalued God? Do we give God what He deserves? Do our offerings smell of hypocrisy? Are we willing to count the cost of authentic worship?

Insert Your Illustration:

a. Are we willing to count the cost of authentic worship?

b. If you are not living a true Christian life, then it would be better to "shut the gates" and stop calling yourself a Christian. Why? Because His name is feared among the nations.

BIBLE STUDY III

2. Summary sentence. We must give real worship to a real God who is the Lord of hosts.
3. Title. Hypocritical worship.

Notes

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V. Section #3: The Discipline and Judgment of the Priests (Mal 2:1-9).

A. Study of the Structure of Section #3.

1. Verse 1.
 - a. God emphasizes that He is addressing the priests. He makes sure that they know that “**THIS COMMANDMENT**” is for them.
 - b. **What is this commandment?**
 - 1) It is the commandment of the curse that was first mentioned in 1:14.
 - 2) This is made obvious in vs. 2 when we observe the repetition of the term “**CURSE.**”
2. Verse 2.
 - a. The if/then construction of this verse is very important to observe. It establishes the fact that the judgment of God is preceded by a call to repentance. God always gives an opportunity for repentance.
 - b. The warning is strengthened when God says, “**AND INDEED.**” These words introduce a continuation and extension of the previous condition. The possibility of judgment has actually begun to be a reality. This should motivate the priests to repent.

BIBLE STUDY III

Notes —

c. What must the priests do to repent?

- 1) The word “**BECAUSE**” (at the end of the verse) introduces the reason for God’s judgment. The priests have not taken the commandment to seriously. As we saw previously, the commandment is the warning of the curse. Implied are the commandments involved with the sacrificial system. The priests must turn from the incorrect practices that they have been using in the temple (see 1:8, 13, 14).
- 2) They must turn from their hypocritical attitudes and their empty ritualism. In vs. 2 we should observe the repetition of the idea of “not taking it to heart”. Earlier in the verse this idea is further defined. It includes not listening and not giving honor to the name of God. Their repentance must move from their ears and mind (listen) to their heart, and then to their actions. It must be real and sincere. The result will be that God’s name will be honored (again, we should remind ourselves of the universal implications of this result).

d. We are also reminded of the flow of the Abrahamic covenant. God would **ble**ss Israel and then Israel would **ble**ss the nations. Indeed, the first part of the covenant depends on the completion of the second part. If Israel does not bless the nations then God will not bless them. In the words of Malachi: “**IF YOU DO NOT GIVE HONOR TO MY NAME**” (bless the nations by providing a correct witness), “**THEN I WILL CURSE YOUR BLESSINGS**” (I will not bless you).

- 1) This principle has been proven throughout history. It can be shown that the exile itself was a result of this principle.
- 2) As nations were blessed by God, they retained their blessings as long as they were willing to give away blessings to the nations. If they did not bless the nations, the blessings were taken away. This is seen, for example, in the fall of Rome. It is also seen in the fall of the Goths and the Vikings. Biblically, it is seen in the Babylonian exile and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

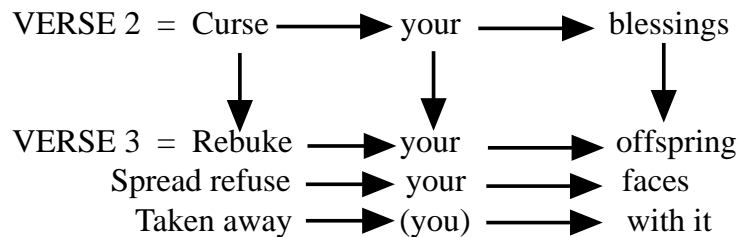
BIBLE STUDY III

3. Verse 3.

a. We should observe a very important repetition of the use of the future tense. In vs. 2 we see the words “**WILL**” (2 times). Here we have the words “**I AM GOING TO.**”

b. How do these two verses relate to each other?

1) Verse 3 functions as a further explanation of vs. 2. Study the following diagram.



2) God will curse by rebuking, spreading dung, and putting them out.

3) The blessings that God will curse are:

a) Their offspring (literally “seed”) will be cursed. This can refer to their children and/or crops (see Deut 28:18).

b) The “refuse” was the entrails of a sacrificed animal that were taken out of the camp and burned along with the hide and the flesh (see Ex 29:14; Lev 8:17; 16:27). They were the contents of the bowels of the slain animals (Lev 4:11).

(1) The implication is that the priests will be publicly humiliated. If they throw refuse (hypocrisy) in God’s face, then God will throw refuse back at them.

(2) God will cause the reputation of the priests and the priestly system to be ridiculed (see Deut 28:19; Nah 3:4-7).

Notes

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BIBLE STUDY III

Notes —

- c) Finally, the priests will be **“TAKEN AWAY WITH IT.”** This is the greatest curse of all because it refers to the greatest blessing of all. The priests, like the refuse, will be placed out of the presence of God. They will lose their fellowship and relationship with God (consider Ps 67:1, 2; 73:28).

4. Verse 4.

- a. We should observe the key words **“THEN”** and **“SO THAT.”** These words point to the purpose of the preceding verses.
- b. **Why will God curse the priests?**
 - 1) God has two purposes:
 - a) **“THEN YOU WILL KNOW”** - The rough treatment is a way to wake them up to obedience. It is a way to turn them back to **knowing God**.
 - b) **“THAT MY COVENANT MAY CONTINUE”** - God can not break His covenant. Thus, He will discipline the priests so that they will turn back to Him and continue to **make God known**. (Remember, the Abrahamic covenant is a missionary covenant).
 - 2) It is important to realize that God was disciplining the priests for their own benefit.
- c. **What was the covenant with Levi?**
 - 1) There is no formal recording of the covenant with Levi.
 - 2) For now we can simply refer to Num 25:12, 13 and Deut 33:9, 10.

BIBLE STUDY III

5. Verse 5.

Notes —

- a. This verse explains the covenant with Levi that was introduced in vs. 4.

1) What does the covenant include?

- a) It includes life and peace.
- b) As we reflect on Num 25:12, 13 we will recall a reference to these same two points.
 - (1) The ministry of the priests resulted in life (redemption). The blood of the sacrificed animals represented life poured out for the life of another.
 - (2) It also resulted in peace (atonement). The Levitical system was established for the purpose of reconciling people to God.

2) Why was the covenant given to Levi?

- a) **“I GAVE THEM TO HIM AS AN OBJECT OF REVERENCE.”**
- b) God’s purpose for Levi was that He would fear God.

3) How did the covenant affect Levi?

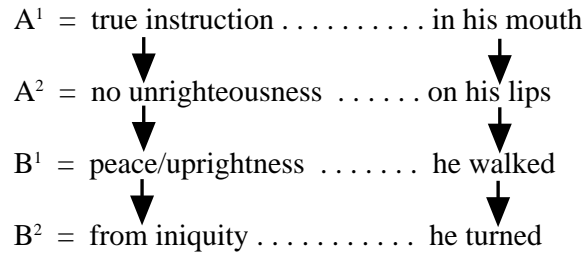
- a) The word **“SO”** introduces the result.
 - b) It was consistent with God’s purpose. Levi feared God.
- b. We should also observe the repetition of the theme of honoring, fearing, or respecting God (see 1:6). Until now, the argument is that the priests do not conduct themselves (1:6-2:4) the way that they formerly conducted themselves (2:5).

BIBLE STUDY III

Notes —

6. Verse 6.

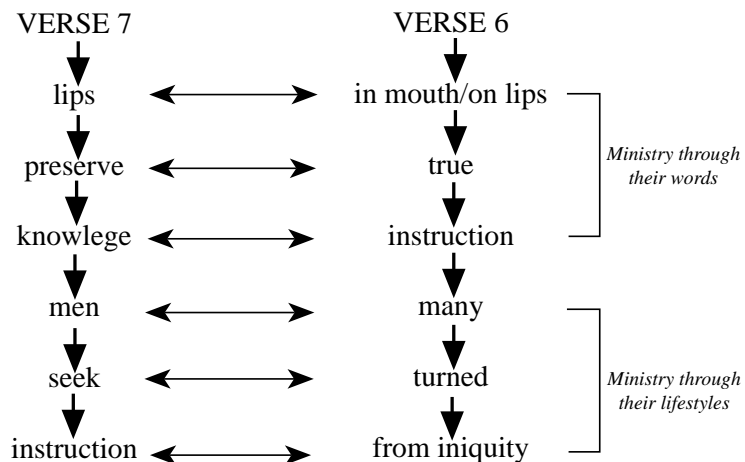
- a. Here we have a specification of how the priest kept the covenant. Let us first study the structure of this verse. See the diagram.



- b. We may be surprised to see that the priest was much more than a minister of ritual and ceremony. He was an instructor. He turned others toward God. He walked very closely with God. His teaching focused on truth, dedication, and correction. He was a man of God in word and lifestyle.

7. Verse 7.

- a. Here we want to focus on the words “**FOR**” and “**SHOULD.**” Verse 6 explains what the priests did. The word “**FOR**” introduces the reason they did those things. They did it because they “**SHOULD**” have done it.
- b. We want to emphasize that the priests had a two part mission. They were to minister through their words and through their lives. Study the following diagram to observe this two part mission.



BIBLE STUDY III

c. **Why is it true that the ministry of the priests was in speech and lifestyle?**

- 1) **“FOR HE IS THE MESSENGER OF THE LORD OF HOSTS.”**
- 2) A messenger must have a lifestyle that focuses on being in God’s presence. Only in this way will he be able to receive the message (consider Zech 3:7).
- 3) A messenger must then deliver the message verbally (consider Hag 1:13).

8. Verse 8.

a. Here we find the key word of this section (“**BUT**”). The reflecting on the way that it used to be had one purpose. God wants to emphasize the **contrast** between what was real and what is now false. The contrasts are emphatic.

- 1) Instead of “**TURNING**” many from iniquity, the priests have themselves “**TURNED**” from the way.
- 2) Instead of men seeking “**INSTRUCTION**” from their mouths, the priests have caused many to stumble by their “**INSTRUCTION.**”
- 3) Instead of the covenant “**CONTINUING**” with Levi, the priests have “**CORRUPTED**” (or broken) the covenant of Levi.

b. In the next section God will begin to focus on the sins of the people. Here, however, He is specifically focusing on the priests.

Notes

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Notes —

c. **Why does God focus on the priests before he focuses on the people?**

- 1) It is important to observe the progression. The priests have rejected God. The people are affected. The actions of the priests cause “**MANY**” to stumble (we can see this same type of progression in 1:13 where the attitudes of the priests influence the people to bring wrong offerings).
- 2) The fall of a ministry is preceded by the fall of the minister himself. God focuses on the sin of the priests first because, as leaders and representatives of the people, they have more responsibility for the sin of Israel. (See Ex 5:14 and Jms 3:1). The actions of the leader of a people directly affects that people.

9. Verse 9.

- a. The word “**SO**” is used to introduce the result of the preceding verse. It also serves to point to the conclusion of this section.
- b. **Why does God use the word “also”?**
 - 1) First, we can observe the continuity between what is happening to the priests and what happened to Edom in 1:3, 4. We can observe that in both cases God says, “**I HAVE MADE.**” In both cases those who receive the judgment are despised by others.
 - 2) Second, we should remember our point that we made earlier about reaping what we sow. The priests despised God (they sowed). The people despised the priests (they reaped). If we want to have favor with God, then we should show favor to God (Mt 7:2).
- c. The conclusion is that the priests are not desiring to gain favor with God (“keeping His ways”). They are desiring to gain favor with men (“showing partiality; which was forbidden in Lev 19:15). Of course, this is in direct contrast to God’s desires for them to walk with Him, and to not have any unrighteousness (partiality) found on their lips.

BIBLE STUDY III

B. An Outline of the Structure of Section #3 (using the outline, challenge the students to identify relationships between parts).

Notes —

1. Description of the commandment (2:1-3).
 - a. Introduction (vs. 1).
 - b. Conditions (vs. 2a).
 - 1) The current reality (vs. 2b).
 - 2) The details of what will come (vs. 3).
2. Purpose of the commandment (vs. 4).
 - a. To wake them up (vs. 4a).
 - b. To continue the covenant with Levi (vs. 4b).
3. Description of the covenant (vs. 5-7).
 - a. General description (vs. 5).
 - b. Specific description (vs. 6).
 - c. The reason why this description is true (vs. 7).
4. Rejection of the covenant (vs. 8).
5. The result and conclusion (vs. 9).

BIBLE STUDY III

Notes —

C. Conclusion to Section #3.

1. Final points and thoughts.
 - a. We retain the blessings of God to the degree that we are obedient to Him and share those blessings.
 - b. God disciplines His people so that His plan (covenant) can continue. God's purposes can not be thwarted (Job 42:2).
 - c. Peace and life are results of obedience to God in speech and lifestyle.
 - d. To despise God is to assure that you will be despised. Hypocrites dig their own graves.
 - e. The importance of godly leaders is obvious. They influence many people and so they are judged first (consider Jms 3:1).
 - f. It should be observed that all of this relates to the fact that God is **"THE LORD OF HOSTS."**

Discussion Point

How could we explain the message of Malachi in terms of being a missionary message?

- g. Let us summarize this section with the following diagram.

VERSES 1-4a

COMMAND TO CHANGE

A decree/warning which includes God's discipline because of His desire to keep the covenant

VERSES 4b-7

EXAMPLE OF HOW TO CHANGE

God reflects on how it was previously and desires that it be the same so that His people and the nations can enjoy the benefits of the covenant

VERSES 8,9

THE CONTRAST

The contrast between what was and what is and the very costly consequences

BIBLE STUDY III

2. Summary sentence. While He reflects on how things were formerly, God warns of His discipline in an attempt to correct sins and to continue the covenant with Levi.
3. Title - Judgment against hypocrisy.

Notes

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VI. Section #4: The Unfaithfulness and Hypocrisy of the People (Mal 2:10-16).

A. Study of the Structure of Section #4.

1. Verse 10.
 - a. This verse serves as the introduction of this section. We can observe the various terms that point to this as a general verse that will be used to introduce more specific problems (note **“US,” “WE,” “OUR,” “ONE FATHER,” “FATHERS,” “ALL,” “ONE GOD”**).
 - b. In this section the word **“TREACHEROUSLY”** is repeated five times.
 - c. **What does “treacherously” mean?**
 - 1) It means to be deceitful.
 - 2) It is used in this section to indicate unfaithfulness in relationships.
 - d. The repetition of the words **“TREACHEROUSLY,” “PROFANE,”** and **“COVENANT”** point to the main theme of this section. Unfaithfulness to others is equal to unfaithfulness to God and His covenant. It is to profane God, His covenant, and His sanctuary. As this verse would argue, if there is a common Father then unfaithfulness to your brother is unfaithfulness to His child (thus, it is unfaithfulness to Him).

BIBLE STUDY III

Notes —

2. Verse 11.

- a. Now God is more specific. The word “**FOR**” points to the explanation of how the people have been deceitful.
- b. **How have the people been deceitful and unfaithful?**
 - 1) They have been marrying women of other religions.
 - 2) These types of mixed marriages were forbidden in the covenant law because of how they promoted apostasy (see Ex 34:15, 16; Deut 7:3, 4). They profane the covenant because they are mixing holiness with unholiness.

3. Verse 12.

- a. The phrase “**AS FOR THE MAN WHO DOES THIS**” introduces the result of the unfaithfulness. The key word in the verse is “**CUT OFF.**” It should be noted that the Hebrew word for “**CUT OFF**” is the same as the word used to express the idea of “cutting” a covenant.
- b. Thus, for those who do not “cut” the covenant there will be another type of cutting.
 - 1) They will be cut off (eliminated, destroyed, excommunicated) “**FROM THE TENTS OF JACOB.**”

BIBLE STUDY III

2) That is, they will be excommunicated from the community of God's people.

a) With this in mind we can better understand the Hebrew idiom **“EVERYONE WHO AWAKES AND ANSWERS.”** The idiom can mean two things:

(1) Everyone belonging to him (his family) will also be cut off.

(2) He will lose all civil rights. That is, there will be no one to defend him in a court of law.

(a) The final portion of the verse would then indicate a loss of religious rights.

(b) That is, there would be no one to present offerings to God for Him.

b) God will not allow the contamination of His people. He will not allow intermarrying. As was the case when Israel came into the promised land, everything that was a mixture or that could have caused a mixture had to be destroyed (consider the similarity of 1 Cor 3:16, 17; 2 Cor 6:14).

4. Verse 13.

a. The list of grievances continues. The general problem was stated in vs. 10. Now God gives His second reason for being upset.

b. We are reminded here of the principle of Mk 7:6-8. Worship without obedience is futile. We might say that remorse without obedience is futile. Remorse is not what God wants (for it could simply be “worldly grief”: see 2 Cor 7:9, 10). God wants repentance. Tears without repentance are tears of hypocrisy.

Notes —

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Notes —

5. Verse 14.

- a. This verse is used to explain why God does not receive their offerings (observe the word “**BECAUSE**”).
- b. **Why does God not receive their offerings?**
 - 1) “**BECAUSE**” faithlessness and covenant do not go together. In vs. 10 God made this clear in a general way. Now He makes it clear by using a specific example.
 - 2) A lack of faithfulness mocks the covenant. Ultimately, this is viewed as mocking God Himself.

6. Verse 15.

- a. The word “**BUT**” introduces a contrast. It is the contrast between those who are faithful (who have a remnant of the Spirit), and those who are not faithful (described in the previous verse).
- b. There is an implied sarcasm within the question that follows the contrast (“**AND WHAT DID THAT ONE DO WHILE HE WAS SEEKING A GODLY OFFSPRING?**”). The implication is that the unfaithful one, of course, wanted to have a godly child. But how can a godly child come from a mixed marriage?

7. Verse 16.

- a. Here we have the conclusion in the form of a reason. God commands that His people be faithful to their wives. Why? “**FOR I HATE DIVORCE.**” This is the reason and the conclusion. God hates divorce. It is “**wrong**” (note that the idiom “**COVERS HIS GARMENT**” signified the act of declaring someone to be your wife: see Ruth 3:9).
- b. We can also call this the conclusion in the sense that it is stated so emphatically. Note that the idea of “**TAKING HEED TO YOUR SPIRIT SO THAT YOU DO NOT DEAL TREACHEROUSLY**” is repeated in vs. 16 and vs. 17.

BIBLE STUDY III

c. Why does God repeat this warning?

- 1) It is repeated to emphasize and highlight the conclusion.
- 2) The words “**I HATE DIVORCE**” are placed between the repetitive statements and, thus, are emphasized.

Notes —

B. An Outline of the Structure of Section #4 (using the outline, challenge the students to identify relationships between parts).

1. Introduction: General problem (vs. 10).
2. Specific problems (vs. 11-15).
 - a. Problem #1 (vs. 11).
 - 1) Result of the problem (vs. 12).
 - b. Problem #2 (vs. 13).
 - 1) Reason for the problem (vs. 14).
 - c. Contrast of the problem (vs. 15a).
 - d. Warning to avoid the problem (vs. 15b).
3. Conclusion (vs. 16).
 - a. God’s emphasized point (vs. 16a).
 - b. The repeated warning (vs. 16b).

C. Conclusion to Section #4.

1. Final points and thoughts.
 - a. Faithlessness is the enemy of covenant. God is very serious about being loyal to covenants.
 - b. Marrying outside of the faith leads to destruction.
 - c. Access to God is destroyed when covenant is broken.

BIBLE STUDY III

Notes —

- d. God hates divorce.
- e. The continuing theme that connects section 2:1-9 and section 2:10-16 is the tension that exists between God's desire that covenants not be broken and Israel's tendency to break them.

Discussion Point

What are some covenants in your life? Do you take them seriously?

- 2. Summary sentence - God calls the people to turn away from faithlessness and to turn toward the covenant.
- 3. Title - Faithlessness to the covenant.