

2. Infidelity spiritually and physically

May 13, 2010

We all hate hypocrisy. If you want to insult any born-again Christian in the ultimate way – I hope that you don't, unless you want to cause troubles, you can call him or her a hypocrite. Even an unbeliever doesn't like to be called a hypocrite if they understand the definition of it. Our Lord despises hypocrisy – especially His followers'.

In our last study of Malachi, the Lord grilled the Jews for their polluted offerings that were presented to Him. They were practically blasphemies. In chapter 2 we get to see how the Lord chastises the corrupt priests who should have known better, yet they chose not to obey the law of the priests that was set by the Lord. However, they still liked and enjoyed the status of being priests, so they could continue in their jobs, but not in ministry.

To make the matter worse, they not only committed disobedience to the Lord and hypocrisy to the people, but also they committed infidelity physically and went through divorces from their wives. There is no other Scriptures in the Bible that speaks more clearly about divorce from the heart of God than this one. You will feel the passion and anguish in His voice against divorce, because it was NOT a part of His plan for the marriage He instituted at the beginning.

A. A WICKED PRIESTHOOD

Malachi 2:1-4 "And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. 2 If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name," Says the Lord of hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, Because you do not take it to heart. 3 "Behold, I will rebuke your descendants And spread refuse on your faces, The refuse of your solemn feasts; And one will take you away with it. 4 Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, That My covenant with Levi may continue," Says the Lord of hosts.

These priests' sin is based on a hollow formalism. It is a religion of surface emotions and outward signs, but not in their hearts.

Here is a good example of it:

In 2005 the London Times reported that a new "teaching document" issued by the Roman Catholic bishops of England, Wales and Scotland warns that Catholics should not take the Bible literally -- that it's not infallible.

"We should not expect to find in Scripture full scientific accuracy or complete historical precision," they say in the booklet, 'The Gift of Scripture'.

So what sorts of things aren't accurate? According to their document, creation, for one. Genesis, they note, has two different, and sometimes conflicting, creation stories and cannot be considered "historical." Rather, the bishops say, it simply contains "historical traces."

You have to wonder why these bishops still hold their positions as bishops of Catholic. Why don't they just leave their churches and be a flat-out antagonistic group against Christianity and God? By the way, the Vatican denounced their document as a heresy.

Look what the Lord says in v3. He would spread refuse on their faces, on the Jewish priests' faces. That would be an ultimate insult.

The motive of God's punishment is not in the punishment itself like some sort of a sadistic mean divine being that you would see in Hindu religion. Rather the Lord wants to restore our relationship with Him through repentance that comes from punishment. But some never do.

B. A GOOD EXAMPLE OF LEVI

Malachi 2:5-7 "My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, And I gave them to him that he might fear Me; So he feared Me And was reverent before My name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away from iniquity. 7 "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

The Lord reminded me the incident from the Book of Numbers 25:1-13.

Numbers 25:6-11 And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 7 Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. 9 And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. 10 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal.

When Phinehas saw this ungodly and disobedient act by the Israel man, he was zealous with God's zeal and killed the man and the Midianite woman. We, too, must have the same kind of zeal for the Lord which is willing to destroy our own sins and even the motives of our sins.

V6 and 7 are the job descriptions for the priests in that day, pastors and Bible teachers today. As these priests didn't have fear of the Lord, many false clergies around the world do not have it either, because their hearts are not with the Lord. Not very many things are so horrible to the Lord like a habitual ritual instead of a heartfelt ministry. The privileges of being pastors and Bible teachers, leaders of the ministries come with a great responsibility to follow what the Lord says in the Bible.

C. CAUSING OTHERS TO STUMBLE

Malachi 2:8-9 But you have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi," Says the Lord of hosts. 9 "Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base Before all the people, Because you have not kept My ways But have shown partiality in the law."

It was bad enough that the priests were disobeying the Law, but they were causing others to stumble as well. Like the Pharisees Jesus described, the priests were "toxic" and defiled everything and everybody they touched. I don't think that there is any worse place to be than being on God's black list, do you?

Matthew 23:15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

This isn't limited to the priests, pastors, Bible teachers or ministry leaders. All of us are responsible to be a true follower of Jesus Christ to give a true representation to unbelievers in the world.

D. TREACHERY OF INFIDELITY

Malachi 2:10-11 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another By profaning the covenant of the fathers? 11 Judah has dealt treacherously, And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, For Judah has profaned The Lord's holy institution which He loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign god.

Having dealt with the sins of the priests, Malachi now turns to the nation as a whole and confronts the men who divorced their wives to marry pagan women.

God's command against mixed marriages in Israel had nothing to do with race, but with faith. There is even a foreign wife in the genealogy of Jesus – Ruth was a Moabite who married a Jewish man named Boaz. But she forsook Moab's gods for the Lord. Rahab from Jericho also was another foreign woman who turned her heart to God before her own marriage.

The men loving pagan women wasn't a new problem in the Jewish nation. When the Jews left Egypt, there was a "mixed multitude" that left with them according to Exodus 12, which suggests that some Jews had married Egyptian spouses. Unfortunately, it's not totally absent from the church today either.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

I have had several occasions to talk with the believers who should have known it better, yet they were determined to date, engage and eventually marry unbelievers and went against the Scriptures. I lost count of how many of them, yet I have not had one incident that a believer said, "OK, I will do what the Lord wants. I repent. I will not get involved with this person." They ignored what the Lord told them to do for their own sake and they got married and their futures are in misery.

Typically the first thing they did was that they left the church so that they didn't have to listen to the Word and my advice according to the Bible. Then they started to move in and had fornications. If they ever got married, some of their marriages didn't even last long.

Marriage is God's holy institution which He had ordained and He loves. When we sin against our marriages or our marriage vows, we sin against God. He has set apart marriage for a special meaning, a special purpose in the life of His people. Marriage is God's idea, not man's.

Because it is God's institution, He is the only One who can define the qualification, no one else – one genetic man and one woman, not homosexual marriage, not cross-gender, etc. It is no wonder why homosexuality is abomination to the Lord.

E. GOD HATES DIVORCE

Malachi 2:12-16 May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob The man who does this, being awake and aware, Yet who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts! 13 And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. 14 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. 15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. 16 "For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

To marry a pagan woman, a Jewish man went through divorce from his wife and her tears covered the altar of the Lord. Then he brought an offering to the Lord. It is the same thing when a believer thinks, "I know it is a sin, but I am gonna do it anyway. Afterwards, I will ask God to forgive me." Were they truly repenting from their sins? I think not and I know not. According to what we just read in this portion of the Scriptures, instead of forgiving them, God was ready to "cut them off."

In matters of ethics and morals, there are many things in society that are legal but are not biblical. Brides and grooms must remember that God is an unseen witness at every wedding, and He also witnesses those who have sex who aren't married. One day there will come a terrible harvest from the seeds being planted today by those who despise God's commandments and the principles He has built into nature.

V16 gives us the clearest comment from the lips of God – He hates divorce.

Marriage is a physical union – "one flesh" – and can be broken by physical causes:

1) Death

Romans 7:2-3 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

2) Sexual sin

Matthew 19:9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.

3) Desertion

1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.

God's original intent was that one man and one woman be devoted to each other in marriage for one lifetime. Divorce for reasons other than those given in Scripture, even though legal, would grieve the heart of God.

I've seen some believers who look for biblical references from the Bible – of course, out of context – to justify their divorces. Oh, they say, "It is just a separation." Do they think that they can pull wool over God's eyes?

By the way, what does it mean "*it covers one's garment with violence*"? In modern Western society, a man puts an engagement ring on a woman's finger to propose marriage, but in ancient Israel, he placed a corner of his garment over her as we read in Ruth 3:9 from NLT.

Ruth 3:9 "Who are you?" he demanded. "I am your servant Ruth," she replied. "Spread the corner of your covering over me, for you are my family redeemer."

If a man divorces his wife, instead of having a garment that symbolized love, he had a garment that symbolized violence. He wrenched apart that which God said is one. By his infidelity, he made the marriage bed a place of impurity and violence.

F. WHERE IS THE GOD OF JUSTICE?

Malachi 2:17 You have wearied the Lord with your words; Yet you say, "In what way have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, And He delights in them," Or, "Where is the God of justice?"

The people of God in Malachi's day were depressed and discouraged because it seemed like the wicked prospered and had it better than the godly. This filled them with doubt and unbelief like now.

Our just God does not deal with the evil ones every time they do something wrong. If that was the case, there would not be anyone on the earth alive including us, because we were once unbelievers of God and we still sin. In His time, in His way. It is a good thing the Lord had mercy on us, not justice only.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) All of us are responsible to be a true follower of Jesus Christ to give a true representation to unbelievers in the world.

2) Divorce for reasons other than those given in Scripture, even though legal, would grieve the heart of God. He hates divorce.