

Sunday January 12th 2014
Malachi – God’s Messenger
Part Eleven

1). Mal 2:13 *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."*

a). We have seen in our study in the Book of Malachi that there is a principal whereby the way an individual relates to God will determine the way that individual relates to others who are within that same believing community.

b). This was firstly seen in the way the nation of Israel related to God as their Father - Mal 1:6 ¶ *"A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name.*

c). Giving God neither honor nor reverence thereby despising His name resulted in their profaning the covenants of the fathers causing them to deal treacherously one with another, brother with brother - Mal 2:8 *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." 10 ¶ 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?*

d). We then see exactly the same principal with regards to the way the nation of Israel related to God as their Husband - Mal 2:11 *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.

e). The nation's dealing treacherously with God as their husband then led to them profaning the covenant made with their wives causing them to deal treacherously with the wife of their youth as we saw in our opening verses this morning – and in reality to deal treacherously with God within the Father/son relationship and the Husband/wife relationship are one and the same thing.

f). Now there are 3 particular things we might note here within the context of the husband and wife relationship. The first is that God Himself is personally a witness to the covenant made between a husband and his wife and will hold both accountable for keeping this covenant and will be the witness against them if they should profane it, and the reason this is so significant brings us to the 2nd of our 3 things - *15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring.* At the beginning the Man and the Woman were made 'one flesh' for the purpose that the Lord seeks 'godly offspring'. And at the time of the marriage of a man with a woman the Lord joins them together as 'one flesh' after the same fashion and the same purpose as we see with the Man and the Woman at the beginning.

g). Because of the hardening of their hearts, that which God had joined together man had separated through dealing treacherously with the wife of his youth and as a consequence we come to our 3rd thing - *So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.*

h). We find this same turning away by the Lord with regard to unfaithfulness in a more general sense in - *Isa 1:13 Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies-I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. 14 Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. 16 ¶ "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, 17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.*

i). Both of these examples would leave us with a question for ourselves, 'If we deal treacherously with one another and/or deal treacherously with the wife of our youth, will the Lord hear us? Will He regard our offering anymore?'

Ps 34:13 Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

j). Before we leave these particular verses in Malachi Chapter 2, let's mention one last thing concerning 'one flesh' with regards to ourselves – the phrase 'one flesh' speaks of unity and parity; that the husband and his wife are inseparable one from the other. Now this would not be seen in a physical sense, but certainly in a spiritual sense.

k). In other words with respect to rightly dividing the Word of Truth, working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, running the race of the faith, they must both be on the same page so to speak – this must certainly be seen with respect to the commands of Christ for husbands and wives but must also extend beyond that to faithful obedience to the Word in all its facets, they must be 'one flesh' with regards to this – also being 'one flesh' with the Lord.

l). And it is the husband's responsibility as head of his wife to make sure that this spiritual 'one flesh' is so - *Eph 5:23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.*

m). And if they are 'one flesh' in this respect then both the husband and his wife will be 'one flesh' with Christ also, thereby becoming the 'godly offspring' that the Lord seeks and to be 'godly offspring' after this fashion must inevitably lead to that position of rulership in the Kingdom which is to come as both a firstborn son and part of the Bride of Christ.

n). On the other hand if we should deal treacherously with the One to whom we are betrothed, our Heavenly Bridegroom, by conforming ourselves to this world rather than being transformed then it is inevitable that we would profane the Word of God and deal treacherously with our spouse – to deal treacherously with our Heavenly Bridegroom would be as simple as

deliberately choosing not to obey the commands to husbands and wives. And in such a situation not only would one spouse deal treacherously with the other, but the offending spouse would also be dealing treacherously with the rest of us as we have seen in past weeks, because their rebellion against the Lord and against their spouse will come through the doors with them and be found amongst us.

o). Spiritual adultery potentially opens the door to physical adultery and our Lord had something very interesting to say about that - Mt 5:27 ¶ *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 'But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

p). Within the OT economy for Israel with a view to the earthly realm of the Kingdom the prohibition was against literal, physical adultery, however, with respect to the 'Church' with the heavenly realm of the Kingdom in view the concept of adultery moves beyond being purely physical into the area of the mind – and to lust after another person with our thoughts as a result of looking with our eyes with that intent is, from God's perspective, the same as if physical adultery had been committed. In a time when visual images are everywhere this becomes most pertinent.

q). And if we think about it this would be perfectly logical considering that our mind is to be in the process of being transformed and therefore what we choose to look at and what we think about that which we see must inevitably begin to change through the metamorphosis – to lust in our mind is to walk in our flesh and to walk in our flesh is always contrary to walking in the spirit, because to walk in the flesh places us in the kingdom of darkness whereas we should be operating in the Kingdom of light – 1Pe 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

r). Now with regards to what we look at our Lord said this – Mt 6:22 *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

s). And the contrast between the flesh and the spirit we can find in – Ro 8:1 ¶ *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin*

and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

2). Our verses in Malachi Chapter 2 then continue - 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."*

a). It would be good to be a little cautious here and make sure we understand correctly that which is being said – The word translated ‘divorce’ here literally means ‘to put away’ and the concept of putting away is different from that which we would understand divorce to mean and is used separately from writing a certificate of divorce that we also find in the OT scriptures.

b). The best way to understand this maybe to remember the stories told of husbands in Kenya who take a second wife, according to tribal tradition, and then put the first wife out on the street to fend for herself – this would be the basic idea of putting away.

c). And it is this, in this context, that the Lord God of Israel hates. And it would be very easy to understand why given that by covenant it is the husband’s role to be the protector of and provider for his wife as he loves her with a sacrificial love – just as God has loved Israel.

d). And it is this action of ‘putting away’ that ‘covers one’s garment with violence’ – which itself is an interesting phrase. The word translated ‘garment’ can mean just that, a garment that is worn, but it is also used as a euphemism for wife. The word translated ‘violence’ can be better understood as ‘injustice’ as this has been and will continue to be a theme running through the Book.

e). So then, putting away ‘covers one’s wife with injustice’ – the covering this husband provides for his wife is injustice, is treachery, when it should rather have been that the covering the husband provides for his wife is one of protection, safety, security and love with a view to them being heirs together of the grace of life – after the very fashion we see God covering Israel in – Eze 16:8 *"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you*

became Mine," says the Lord GOD. 9 "Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. 10 "I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. 11 "I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. 12 "And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. 13 "Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty.

f). Our verses here end with regality as this has always been God's purpose for His people and we would see the same thing from a slightly different perspective with regards to the one who typifies the faithful Christian – Ruth - Ru 3:8 *Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. 9 And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative." 10 Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 "And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.*

g). The Book of Ruth also ends in regality and it is inescapable here to see that the role of the husband, now within an Christian context, is to do all that is necessary to make possible his wife's regality at Christ's Judgment Seat by covering her with his faithful obedience to his God given role and responsibility.

h). I think we can clearly understand why 'putting away' because of boredom, or age, or bitterness would be hated by God – such action would make it much harder for the wife in the race of faith as she would be covered with injustice and would be a stumbling block for the one who has dealt treacherously being disobedient to the Word to which he was appointed.

i). 1Pe 3:7 *Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*

j). Not to dwell with our wives with understanding, not giving honor and not seeing her as an heir together with us of the grace of life in the age to come would be to deal treacherously with the wife of our youth, to cover her with injustice – and do you notice how our verse ends? Perhaps this answers our

question from earlier and certainly parallels the Lord not regarding the offering anymore that we read about in Malachi.

k). Then within just 2 verses this admonition is repeated twice drawing this section of scripture to conclusion - *"Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."*

Taking heed to our spirit would be to follow the dictates of the spirit man, that part of our being in permanent harmony with our Lord, thereby walking in the Spirit – and clearly, to do this would ensure that we would not deal treacherously with the wife of our youth – taking heed to our spirit would make it impossible to do otherwise.

3). Before we move on to the closing verses of Chapter 2 let's look at divorce for a moment - De 24:1 ¶ *"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,*

a). We see here in Deuteronomy that the writing of a certificate of divorce is on the basis of the husband having found 'some uncleanness' in his wife and we had seen last week what the Lord had to say about this subject – Mt 19:3 ¶ *The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" 4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 "and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." 7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" 8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."*

b). What we see in v9 is repeating that which the Lord had previously said, recorded in - Mt 5:31 *"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.*

c). Sexual immorality then is the only reason that a husband may divorce his wife and vice versa and ideally even if adultery has been

committed forgiveness and reconciliation should take place rather than divorce – realizing of course that reconciliation requires willingness from both parties.

d). It is on the grounds of adultery that God the Father had given a certificate of divorce to Israel - Jer 3:8 *"Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.*

And it will be on the basis of forgiveness and reconciliation as a result of the nation's repentance that He will take Israel as His wife again.

e). Now what is instructive for our purposes is to realize that if 'divorce' has taken place for any other reason than sexual immorality, then from God's perspective no divorce has taken place at all, which is why we see the husband causing his divorced wife to commit adultery through re-marriage in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 – we need to be like minded with God about this and not like minded with the world.

f). From whatever condition we find ourselves in when we first hear our heavenly calling, such is how we should remain - 1Co 7:24 *Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.*

g). Jesus addressed this in the verses that follow those we have looked at from Matthew Chapter 19 - Mt 19:10 *His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." 11 But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: 12 "For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."*

h). Now some, through the nature of their 'divorce' may be in the position whereby they will have to be eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake – and in this there would really be no choice.

i). But for those who are free to marry the scripture is clear – 1Co 7:1 ¶ *Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. 3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a*

time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

4). And so we come to the concluding verse of Chapter 2 - Mal 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?"*

a). Now the subject matter of this verse does not change but rather provides amplification of that which has gone before.

b). We have seen both this week and in past weeks the injustice practiced by the nation in their treacherous dealings with one another, both brother with brother and husband with wife as a result of their treacherous dealings with God – and this theme of injustice we see continuing in – Mal 3:5 *And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, Against perjurers, Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien- Because they do not fear Me," Says the LORD of hosts.*

c). Here then is a catalogue of the injustice done one to another within the nation – what we are seeing in v17 of Chapter 2 is Israel's profanity towards their God brought to its zenith – they are justifying their own injustice towards one another by claiming that God Himself is unjust in His dealings with them. What we read in this verse is not so much a complaint as an accusation – God is unjust.

d). Even in our own day there are those who think like this, but there are some basic things we need to keep in mind, not the least of which is that we live in a fallen world and Christians are not exempt from that.

e). We might also remember that now is not the time for Judgment, but Judgment will come and God's justice will be seen by all - De 32:4 *He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.*

f). Zep 3:4 *Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; Her priests have polluted the sanctuary, They have done violence to the law. 5 The LORD is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, But the unjust knows no shame.*

g). Mt 5:44 *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes*

His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

h). Mt 13:49 *"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just,*

i). We will have to continue with this next time though – if the Lord is willing.