

## **LOVE AND GRACE IN MALACHI**

### **3: COVENANT IMPLICATIONS. 2: 1 – 16**

**1: 2; *I have loved you, says the Lord. But you say, how have you loved us?*** --- God speaks to his priests; v1 – 9, and his people v10 – 16. His love and grace are shown in the connecting word; **COVENANT: v4, 5, 8, 10, 14**. Covenant; NEVER contract. **Genesis 15: 18**, God symbolically brought himself under a curse should he violate his promise. Then **17: 1 – 5 & 19**; & first mention of; v8, *I will be their God*. Abraham was not required to respond for God takes the oath and lays himself under obligation. Contrast with the Mosaic covenant of Exodus 20; Israel is the recipient which takes the oath and is placed under stipulations. Covenant truth, relationship between God and his people was initiated when God chose and called a man and brought him out of idolatry to become the father of many nations and declared covenant with him. This divine choice and Israel's complex history bears no relation to moral or spiritual worth. God's choice is never to be understood, save in relation to its purpose and he chose Israel because Israel could serve his purpose (H. H. Rowley).

**V1-9; corrupt priesthood. V1 & 2**; the people are unfaithful to God and to each other because the priests are ungodly and irresponsible. Priests were to teach and lead the people in righteousness but were debased, mercenary, corrupt, and held in contempt. The teaching role of the priests in declaring covenant obligations is emphasised rather than their sacrificial duties. **V3**; The Lord will corrupt their offspring, seed; their hypocritical piety turned to an abhorrent spectacle.

**V4**; *my covenant with Levi*; ancestor of the Levitical priests but no Biblical reference to a covenant made with Levi. Covenant was made with Aaron, same tribe & fourth generation from Levi. Jacob blessing his sons; **Genesis 49: 5 & 6**, *Simeon and Levi are brothers; their swords are implements of violence. Let my soul not enter into their counsel; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men; And in their self-will, they lamed oxen*. Following the molten calf idolatry; **Exodus 32: 26**, *then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Whoever is for the Lord, come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. Numbers 3: 6*, *the Lord spoke to Moses. Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him*. Pictures of election, grace and love for God's purposes.

**V5**; wonderful covenant promises that God initiated. *My covenant with him (Levi) was one of **life and peace**, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of **fear**, and he feared me. He stood in **awe** of my name. – 1: **LIFE & PEACE**; spiritual & eternal life; a joy to live with assurance no matter outward events; Numbers 25: 12 f., Is 26: 3-12; 32: 17&18; 54: 10; 55: 12; 57: 19-21. 2: And *Shalom*, for all is well with Covenant for I am at one with you and trust you are with me. 3: **Grace is declared**; and I gave them to him. 4: **A covenant of FEAR**; cf. 1: 6, awe, dread; thought of losing this gift by disdain or carelessness was horrific; Ezra 7: 10, 25-28; Isaiah 8: 13, Phil 2: 12, 1 Pet 1: 17, 1 Timothy 1: 18f, 4: 12-16; 2 Tim 1: 6f & 2: 15f: and he feared me. 5: **He stood in AWE OF MY NAME**; God's name is HOLY; Exodus 33: 18-20, 34:8, 40:35; Habakkuk 2:20; Lev. 19:2 cf. 1 Peter 1: 16; *You shall be holy for I am holy*.*

**V6 – 9**; *True instruction was in his mouth*; the mouth teaches God's Torah (law). Written but also technical term for teaching by a priest. When asked for advice the priest would consider the question and draw upon Scripture & his knowledge of God's will. *And no wrong was found on his lips*; not their own views, theories or speculations. *He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity*; Amos 3: 3; *Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?* **V7**; *knowledge*: which only God can give; 2 Chron. 15: 3. *He is the messenger of the Lord of hosts*; 3: 1. **V8 & 9**, *turned aside*; effect of bias. *You have corrupted the covenant of Levi*; Deut. 10: 12 & 17 cf. v1-3 & 1 Cor. 9: 27; *But I discipline my body & keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified*. Worship of covenant God was not taken seriously & its conduct by priests was play-acting. God initiates Worship; & our participation is the expression of our lives in knowledge and relationship with God, but the forms can be habitual without reality. Worship also reflects deeper problems in our lives. The priests *had had not kept God's ways and had shown partiality in instruction*; ignorant of God and no truth to pass on.

**V10 – 16**; Q & A again in key **verse 14**. Five times, *faithless*, KJV & NASB, *treacherously*; **v10, 11, 14, 15, 16**. Malachi aims his guns here at three evils which intertwine with sham worship. **1: Mixed marriages, 2: marriage unfaithfulness, 3: divorce**. Echo of Ezra & Nehemiah years before.

**V10**; One Father, one creator, one covenant & one family. *Why are we faithless and profane the covenant of our fathers?* Answer in **v 11**; *Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord*; marriage vows had broken down & men were divorcing their wives to marry heathen women, who brought with them their **pagan gods**, like many of Solomon's wives. A fifth column was evident. Disastrous results for rearing of children and fatal for worship of Jehovah. Scepticism, indifference, low morals and the prosperity of heathen nations, issued in; 'What's the use of serving God'? cf. 3: 13 - 18. The penalty for this faithlessness is severe; **v12**. Basic to Israel's theology: there is one God, the creator of all life who was known to his people in covenant faithfulness. True also of marriage but growing prevalence of divorce was symptom of break in both divine/human relations and societal relations. If the covenant of marriage could be broken for personal gain, so also the covenant with God. We refer to marriage problems but it is people problems!

Why should the people be surprised; **v13 & 14**? The tears, weeping and groaning at the temple altar is not people confessing their sin. Rather, people locked into self-satisfied sin and foreign marriages, performing because God would not accept their offerings; Isaiah 1: 10 - 15. Q & A again in **v14**; *your wife by covenant*: this fills the entire picture.

**V15 & 16**; faithfulness in all relationships, based upon God's covenant with us and the covenant of marriage. Translation, *I hate divorce*. Different in ESV. *So guard yourselves in your spirit and do not be faithless or do not deal treacherously*. Faithfulness means covenant truth and living in truth!! Must know the truth to live in truth! Love and grace in Malachi reminds us that if we would grow in grace, we need to know God's grace and learn what it means in a redeemed life.

**Revelation 19: 6 – 8 & 21: 1 - 5**