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Description automatically generated30 March 2025**

**(Week 31)**

**Accountability[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Accountability For Leading Justly**

**Focal Verses • Malachi 2:1-9, 3:5-6**

**Aim for Change**

By the end of the lesson, we will: ***DETERMINE*** the significance of justice for spiritual leadership; ***AFFIRM*** the value of covenantal reverence of God for leadership; and ***PRACTICE*** just spiritual leadership.

A drawing of a person in a robe

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**In Focus**

It was the last Sunday Pastor Bob Jenkins would address his congregation before retiring as Senior Pastor. Sitting behind his desk, he reflected on the first time he addressed his congregation. Pastor Jenkins remembered how humble he felt when the congregation chose him as their leader after a two-year search. Forty years later, he was just as humble to have the opportunity to serve the church.

Pastor Jenkins remembered he prayed his new church would be a community of faith which would live just lives and pray. He prayed God would keep him safe from temptation and scandal. Pastor Jenkins prayed for honest elders and deacons who felt accountable to God and who could help him lead the congregation. He prayed he would learn the personal stories of his congregants so he would feel the heartbeat of the congregation. Pastor Jenkins remembered he also prayed the congregation members would show compassion toward one another and strengthen and challenge each other. He prayed for a community of faith that would bear each other’s burdens and help the oppressed, the fatherless, and the poor. Finally, he prayed his leadership would bring others to Christ. On this last Sunday, Pastor walked out in front of the congregation feeling confident God had answered all his prayers—God had done all he asked.

***How does God bless honest leaders in His church? What is His reaction to dishonest leaders? How can we hold our leaders accountable so that they receive God’s blessings?***”

**Keep In Mind**

***2****If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart to give glory unto My name,” saith the Lord of hosts, “I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.***(Malachi 2:2, (NKJV)**

**Lesson Text**

**Malachi 2:1-9, 3:5-6**

**1** And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.

**2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart to give glory unto My name,” saith the Lord of hosts, “I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.**

**3**Behold, I will corrupt your seed and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.

**4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that My covenant might be with Levi,” saith the Lord of hosts.**

**5**“My covenant was with him of life and peace, and I gave them to him for the fear with which he feared Me and was afraid before My name.

**6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity.**

**7**For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

**8 But ye have departed from the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” saith the Lord of hosts.**

**9**“Therefore, have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept My ways but have been partial in the law.”

**Chapter 3:5-6**

**5 “And I will come near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers, and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and those who turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me,” saith the Lord of hosts.**

**6**“For I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

**The People, Places, and Times**

**Malachi:** The book of Malachi is the last of the Minor Prophets and the last prophetic voice to God’s people before John the Baptist. The book is believed to have been written between 450–430 BC, a century after Cyrus, the king of Persia, issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Judah after their Babylonian exile. The Temple had been rebuilt in 515 BC, and houses were reconstructed; however, their spiritual lives remained in ruins. It is debated as to whether Malachi, which means, “My messenger,” is the name of an actual person or simply a title attributed to a prophet tasked with relaying God’s message to His sinful people. The issues Malachi addresses are similar to those found in Ezra and Nehemiah, which means he either preached during their time or in the generation following them.”

**Background**

One hundred years after their return, the Jews had expectations of how life should be for God’s chosen people. They rebuilt the Temple and reinstated Temple worship as instructed by Haggai and Zechariah years prior. And yet, they were still in economic turmoil, suffering from poor crops, and were a far cry from the major independent nation that they once were. There was little evidence of the blessings promised to Abraham and Moses. This suffering, though brought about from their forefathers’ repeated disobedience, caused them to question God’s love. As a result of their disappointment and disillusionment, their hearts were indifferent or hardened toward God. The priests and the people violated many requirements of the Mosaic Law—haphazardly making sacrifices, tithes and offerings, marrying pagans, divorcing freely, and living morally bankrupt lives in general.

***Why do you believe people ask “Does God really love me?” in the face of trials? What can this indicate about a person’s view of God?”***

**In Depth**

**1. God’s Warning to the Priests (Malachi 2:1–4):** First, the Lord lays out His case against the priests (Malachi 1:6–11). There were specific requirements for offerings and sacrifices according to Mosaic Law. The priests, in their indifference to the Lord, failed to comply, complaining that His requirements were “too hard.” They allowed offerings that were not true sacrifices—from stolen animals to animals that were unfit for any other use, presenting “gifts” to God would not even be appropriate for an earthly leader. These priests defiled the Temple and dishonored the Lord. Not only were they offensive, they also failed to acknowledge their offensiveness, feigning ignorance, and seeking to justify their actions.”

In response, God commanded they choose to honor Him. He warned them failure to do so would lead to curses. These curses would be so effective that even those things expected to be blessings would be cursed, like the required provisions to the Levites from other Jews. However, this destruction would not stop with them; it would extend to their descendants. Ironically, the cause of their current suffering stemmed from the disobedience of their forefathers, and they were on the path of continuing the cycle.

The Lord provides a graphic picture of smearing feces (Malachi 2:3) on their faces. Not only would they be made unclean and unfit for service, but they would also be desecrated and exposed. This would happen so that the priestly Levitical line could be purified and restored, and His covenant with them could continue.

***Why do some people believe it is “too hard” to follow God and His ways?***

**2. “Priestly Examples (Malachi 2: 5–7):** “Following the incident of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32), the Levites came forward when Moses asked for those who were for the Lord. The Levites then obeyed Moses’ command to kill those who had rebelled. God instructed Moses to set these descendants of Levi apart for His service. Those who rebelled against the covenant with God died amidst the turmoil of sin and rebellion. The Levites, however, were obedient and faithful to the covenant. It is in this context that the Lord reminds these disobedient priests that the covenant He made with Levi was one of life and peace.

The prophet delineates the characteristics of those who are examples of positive and godly leadership. Truth, peace, and equity “are benchmarks for the lifestyle that does not accept inequity. Faithful leaders seek God for the truth as His messengers. The Levites revered and honored the Lord, speaking truth, living righteously, and obeying the Lord. The Levitical priests of old did as they were ordained: they instructed the people and preserved the knowledge of God. While prophets were typically called messengers of God, here Malachi uses it for those priests

***How can considering the examples of the past help us to live more faithfully in the present?***

**3. The Priests’ Sins (Malachi 2:8–9, 3:5–6):** In contrast to how the former Levites lived, these priests were not committed to the truth. Not only did they allow Israel to fall away from the Lord, but they caused them to sin with false teaching. They showed favoritism in serving, cheating, and oppressing the vulnerable, involving themselves in all types of ungodliness. The all-knowing, ever-present, self-existent God would be His own witness against them and the judge. There would be no escape. Because of the nature of their sins and positions, the judgment would be for all to see.

***How can we resist temptation to abuse positions of authority, and how can we help those who are taken advantage of by those in power?”***

**Liberating Lesson**

“We do not sin in isolation.” This statement is applicable to everyone, but it is particularly impactful for those who are leaders. History has shown one leader with a bent toward injustice, evil, and selfish ambition can have a devastating effect on the masses. Consider Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act, which set the stage for the Trail of Tears. However, history has also shown one leader, such as Alexander Crummell, who served as a missionary in Liberia for twenty years and planted the first independent black Episcopal church in Washington DC, can spiritually impact generations to come. God told the priests to “make up your minds to honor my name.” We get to choose what type of impact we will have. It all begins with a sincere commitment to follow and obey the Lord.”

**Application for Activation**

Reflect on a few leaders in your life, past and present. How have their actions impacted your life—positively and negatively? Identify what you learned about being a godly (or ungodly) leader from them. Then evaluate your relationship with the Lord and influence over others—at home, work, church, and so on. How would God describe your current relationship with Him and others? More like the zealous Levitical priests of old, or like the resentful priests in Malachi?

**Take Aways**

**Closing Prayer**

**Daily Bible Reading**

**Christian Season:**

**Lenten!**

**Season Color: PURPLE**

**Resurrection Sunday Is on the Way!**



**Monday:** Habakkuk & Zephaniah Psalm 85:8:13

**Tuesday:** Haggai, Psalm 86:1-7

**Wednesday:** Zechariah 1-7, Psalm 86:8-13

**Thursday:** Zechariah 8-14, Psalm 86:9-18

**Friday:** Malachai, Psalm 87

**Saturday:** Matthew 1:1-2:18, Psalm 88:1-9

**Sunday:** Matthew 2:19-4:25, Psalm 88:10-18

**NOT PART OF THE LESSON**

**Information purposes only**

**A blue sign with white text and a cross

Description automatically generatedBlack History Began in Africa**

**Mansa Musa**

Mansa Musa I was the ruler of the [Mali Empire](https://www.worldhistory.org/Mali_Empire/) in West [Africa](https://www.worldhistory.org/disambiguation/africa/) from 1312 to 1337. Controlling territories rich in [gold](https://www.worldhistory.org/gold/) and [copper](https://www.worldhistory.org/copper/), and monopolizing [trade](https://www.worldhistory.org/disambiguation/trade/) between the north and interior of the continent, Mali grew extremely wealthy. [Mansa Musa I](https://www.worldhistory.org/Mansa_Musa_I/) was said to have spent so much gold in Cairo the value of bullion crashed by 20%. A Muslim like his royal predecessors, Mansa Musa brought back architects and scholars from his pilgrimage to Mecca who would build mosques and universities which made such [cities](https://www.worldhistory.org/city/) as [Timbuktu](https://www.worldhistory.org/Timbuktu/) internationally famous. Mansa Musa's 1324 stopover in Cairo, though, would spread Mali's fame even further and on to [Europe](https://www.worldhistory.org/europe/) where tall tales of this king's fabulous wealth in gold began to stir the interest of traders and explorers.

**The Amistad Case**

In February of 1839, Portuguese slavers abducted Africans from Sierra Leone and shipped them to Havana, Cuba. This abduction violated all the treaties then in existence. On July 1, 1839, the Africans seized the ship, killed the captain and the cook, and ordered crew to sail to Africa. The crew steered the ship north; and on August 24, 1839, the [*Amistad*](https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/amistad)was seized off Long Island, NY, by the [*USS Washington*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_(1837)). The schooner, its cargo, and all on board were taken to New London, CT. The Africans were imprisoned on charges of murder. The murder charges were dismissed. The Africans continued to be held in confinement and the case went to trial in the Federal District Court in Connecticut. The plantation owners, government of Spain, and captain of the Washington each claimed rights to the Africans or compensation. After a long legal process. The Supreme Court ordered the immediate release of the *Amistad*Africans. Senior Justice Joseph Story wrote and read the decision: *"...it was the ultimate right of all human beings in extreme cases to resist oppression, and to apply force against ruinous injustice."* The opinion asserted the Africans' right to resist "unlawful" slavery. Thirty-five of the survivors were returned to their homeland, the others died at sea or in prison while awaiting trial.

Figure 1Amistad memorial Hartford, CT

1. Bantu, Dr. Vince L.. Precepts for Living: Principles for Living in an Unhinged World (2024-2025) UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc.). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)