

51). December 14-20—Malachi

1) Mal 2:14-15—Wife of Youth ~450 BC

Malachi confronts the men of postexilic Judah for treacherously divorcing "the wife of thy youth," calling her "thy companion" and "the wife of thy covenant" (Ml 2:14). She represents the covenant wives of an entire generation and stands as one of Scripture's clearest statements that marriage itself is a covenant witnessed by the LORD, not merely a private contract dissolvable at will (e.g., D&C 132:7, 15–19). The historical setting parallels the mixed-marriage crisis addressed by Ezra and Nehemiah: many Judahite men were divorcing their native wives to marry "the daughter of a strange god" (Ml 2:11; cf. Ez 9–10; Nh 13:23–27).

Malachi's charge rests on the Hebrew verb *bagad*/to deal treacherously, which occurs five times in this short unit (vv. 10, 11, 14, 15, 16), binding covenant unfaithfulness toward God to covenant unfaithfulness toward wives. The term *chaberah*/companion/ally/one joined, derives from a verb meaning to unite (also used in Ex 26:6). Malachi echoes Genesis 2:24 by rhetorically asking whether God "made one" of husband and wife in flesh, with the purpose of raising "a godly seed" (KJV) in fidelity to Him. The unnamed wife also acts as a simile for Judah's men keeping faith with God.

2) Mal 3:5—Widow ~450 BC

Malachi prophesied God's judgment against those who exploited the weak, including "those that oppress . . . the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right." Widows are easy targets for exploitation. Without male advocates, widows faced corrupt judges who ignored their claims, creditors who seized their property, and family members who denied their inheritance rights.

God positioned Himself as the widow's defender, declaring "I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness" against their oppressors. The Lord placed widow exploitation alongside sorcery, adultery, and perjury, and commanded His people to protect widows throughout Scripture (Ex 22:22–24; Deu 10:18; 24:17–21; Isa 1:17). The widow's vulnerability made her a measure for the society's righteousness. When God's people oppressed rather than protected widows, they proved they did "fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts," showing their worship was an empty ritual without faithfulness. (*See *Ex 22:22–24; *Deu 24:17–21; *Isa 1:17*)