



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 wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn 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. (Mal 2:1-7)

God, through His prophet, Malachi, has castigated the people AND their priests for a lack of obedience, faith, and reverence to God. He now turns His Cannons of Admonition to the Broadsides of the priests wholly. The preachers of that day were so very much like the great majority of our day. Their interpretation of scripture was never interpreted in the context of present sins. It was always a reflection of that which was past. But God's Word is not merely historical, but a Living Word with present and future applications to those living in every spectrum of time. We hear sermons about the disciple's and Pharisees of Jesus' time and how 'bad' some were, and how Holy were others. But seldom do we hear that those unfaithful and wicked people of the time of Jesus reflected the same attributes of our present generation of professing Christians. They have made God's Word, thereby, of none effect. Those rebukes Jesus gave to the Pharisees, and His own disciples, are intended for us as much as for them. Oh, sorry, we didn't want to hear THAT, did we? It is by the expositional preaching of the application of the Gospel to this present generation that God is glorified. God's Word is not historical only, but TIMELESS! We might wisely heed the words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*:

*One God, One Law, One Element,  
And One far-off Divine event,  
To which the whole Creation moves.*

This passage that we are beginning today is a warning, first of all, to me as a clergyman, and then to all AOC clergy, and then to all Christian clergymen, called of God to feed the flock of Christ - not with trite theological assumptions, but with the true Word of God and its exposition and application to the lives of men and women today. Need I remind any that we are not called to preach opinions and understandings of men, but of God's clearly revealed truth. Let there be no mistake - the Great Bishop and Shepherd of our Souls is not some mortal preacher, but Jesus Christ Himself! We have no Pope's or Archbishops! We have been appointed to preach the Gospel - not some man-made philosophy. WE have been commissioned by a High Authority. We do not preach by our own authority, but the Authority of Him by whom we have been sent. *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Romans 10:14-15)

A widely accepted principle in the field of medical science is this: **"If the brain dies, the whole body is dead."** How true that is of the Church. Our Head is Christ - not a bishop, not a priest or deacon, and not a pastor of any sorts - our head is the Lord Jesus Christ who also was commissioned by the Father and spoke every Word that the Father gave Him. *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* (Luke 4:18-19) The Lord has called His ministers to occupy until He comes in preaching the same Gospel that He preached. Jesus is our Bishop, our Soul's Captain, and the Great Shepherd. We are His under-shepherds to follow Him and to bring His sheep and lambs with us. *"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."* (1 Peter 2:25) Note the difference in the Good Shepherd and the Hireling: *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."* (John 10:11-14)

I will be first to admit that our Church has some of the most dedicated men of God that I have had privilege to meet; however, we must all do better - including me - unless we have reached that exalted perfection that only saints acquire at the crossing of Jordan Waters. But when we observe the deplorable state of the ministry of doubt and faithlessness in the larger church, we must admit that the ministers of God (if they be so called) have failed to honor the God who has called them. No longer is the Bible believed to be infallible and inerrant. The Person of Christ is demeaned more and more by newer Bible versions based on a selective category of corrupted textual evidence. Yes, I refer to, among others, the NIV, the ESV, the NASB, and many others. The ministers of God have failed to occupy in preaching the Word. The titular head of the church is dead and rotting. But the Head which matters - Jesus Christ - is forever alive and will bring judgment against all such men who have miserably led the church into the weeds of the world.

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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." I am afraid that there are ministers who read this devotion who cringe in their holes rather than speak out against the evils of abortion, homosexual marriage, and religious freedoms simply because the government has taken the place of God in their hearts. Such ministers, and their following, shall go off into a miserable captivity - not MY opinion, but the Word of the Lord.

This fourth verse is intended, I believe, to convey the message that, subject to a contrite heart and repentance of His ministers, the covenant once made might be confirmed. "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." Without the early pangs of fear, how can a child be made to obey the father; and without the fear engendered by disobedience to God's Law, how can a people come to revere and glorify their Maker? 5 "My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name." God gave His promise and covenant. The ideal priest will teach all of the Law of God and not cherry-pick from those most appealing fruits of their own desires: "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law." (Deut 33:10) The elephant in the room is that they have not done so, neither have the modern ministers done so today! Furthermore, even those who masquerade as ministers of God today do not fear the Lord, neither do they teach men so to do.

6 "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." The Levitical priesthood descended from those who spoke boldly and without hesitation the Law of Truth. The perfect priest was one who spoke from a heart of righteous love and faith. His teaching did not condemn, but convict and convert. There has come now a new priesthood that is of Christ as its head. It was always so even if we did, as Abraham did, look for His Coming.

When Jesus tells us that MANY false prophets would arise, He did not say only a FEW. Those MANY have come to fulfillment in our day. Not many years ago, I heard Robert Schuler of the so-called 'Crystal Cathedral,' being questioned by a caller on the Larry King Show. The caller asked, "Dr. Schuler, what does the Bible say about homosexuality?" to which Schuler responded, "To tell you the truth (a lie), I have not

read anything - one way or the other - about homosexuality in the Bible!" What a gross lie for a man to tell who had been in the ministry for decades untold - else he would be a complete idiot! How many today omit speaking out against such an evil under the pretense of "separation of church and state?" *If Baal be god, than follow him; but, if God be God, than follow Him.*" How many will heed that counsel, or say, "We will not follow Him?"

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." One cannot be a messenger of the Lord of Hosts unless he carries the very message of the Lord of Hosts. A watered-down gospel does not measure up to that perfect standard of Christ. Municipal governmental laws are subservient to the higher authority of the state, and state laws are subject to the higher authority of the Federal government, and all national laws are subject to the Higher Authority of God - whether our weak-kneed ministers wish to admit it or not. Paul could have bowed to the law of Rome and renounced the Lord, but he did not. He pressed on to the higher calling in God. Should we not all do so?

Years ago when I was consecrated a bishop in the AOC, I had some gentle pressure from well-meaning Christians to soften my preaching and writings on the evils of homosexuality and abortion. They felt that such an uncompromising and public stand would not attract adherents; but when has the Word and Law of God ever attracted adherents? It is only after we have realized our depravity and decadence of spirit that the Holy Spirit will use those urgings to force us to the Throne of Grace. Good Christian people, you best wake up now before the steel-toed boot of oppression has grown so large as to be impossible to resist without the shedding of much innocent blood. I will continue to write and preach on the sins that separate us from God - with, or without, government permission.