

Malachi 2:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. This verse states priestly responsibility. **The priest's lips should keep knowledge** (פִּישְׁפְּתִי כָּהּ), ki-siftei kohen yishmeru-da'at)—the verb שָׁמַר (shamar, keep/guard) indicates careful preservation. דעת (da'at, knowledge) refers to covenant knowledge, theological understanding, wisdom. Priests were custodians and teachers of divine truth.

They should seek the law at his mouth (וְתוֹךְהָיְבָקֵשׁ מִפְּיוּ, vetroah yevaqshu mipipihu)—the people should come to priests for torah (law/instruction). Priests were God's authorized teachers, responsible for explaining and applying covenant law. The reason: **for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts** (כִּי מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה־צְבָאֹת הוּא, ki mal'akh Yahweh-tzeva'ot hu). (mal'akh, messenger/angel) identifies the priest as God's spokesman. This is the same term used for angels and prophets—priests represent God to the people.

This high calling demands excellence. When priests fail, the entire community suffers from false teaching and corrupted worship. The New Testament applies this principle to pastors/elders who must be apt to teach (1 Timothy 3:2), able to exhort in sound doctrine and refute error (Titus 1:9), and handle Scripture accurately (2 Timothy 2:15).

Historical Context

In ancient Israel, priests were the primary teachers. Before widespread literacy, they instructed people in covenant law, decided difficult cases, and preserved scriptural tradition (Deuteronomy 17:8-11, 33:10, 2 Chronicles 15:3, Nehemiah 8:1-8). When priests taught faithfully, the nation prospered; when they taught falsely or neglected teaching, apostasy spread (2 Chronicles 15:3, Hosea 4:6). By Malachi's time, corrupt priests had caused many to stumble (v. 8). This foreshadowed the need for a better mediator—Christ, who is Prophet, Priest, and King, who teaches infallibly and whose Spirit illuminates all believers to understand truth (John 14:26, 16:13, 1 John 2:27).

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the image of priests as 'messengers of the LORD' elevate the calling and responsibility of spiritual teachers?
2. What happens to a community when its spiritual leaders fail to guard and teach knowledge faithfully?
3. How should this verse shape expectations for pastors/elders and the congregation's responsibility to seek biblical instruction?

Interlinear Text

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 10:11 (References Lord): And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.

Deuteronomy 21:5 (Word): And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried:

Acts 16:17 (Parallel theme): The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (Parallel theme): Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

1 Thessalonians 4:8 (Parallel theme): He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Ezra 7:10 (Word): For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

2 Chronicles 30:22 (References Lord): And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD: and they did eat

throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers.

Isaiah 44:26 (Word): That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

Jeremiah 18:18 (Word): Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

Jeremiah 15:19 (References Lord): Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.

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