

Minor Prophets I

The Book of Hosea

THE RESTORATION OF THE BACKSLIDER

Dr. Brian J. Bailey

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INTRODUCTION

Political and Economic Background

The kings of Judah that reigned during the life of Hosea were Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Although there were more kings of Israel who also reigned during this time, the only one mentioned is Jeroboam II, because he is the principal king. He began his reign in 793 B.C. Uzziah reigned from 792-740 B.C., and Hezekiah finished his reign in 686 B.C.

We can see that Hosea prophesied for a very long time, approximately 60 years. The principal prophets during this time were Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah. Isaiah and Micah ministered primarily to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, while Hosea and Amos prophesied mostly to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

During the early part of Hosea's ministry, there was great economic prosperity, especially during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam, but the economic state of the nation later deteriorated. By the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, the Assyrian army had subjugated all of Judah with the exception of Jerusalem, which they surrounded.

At the time Hosea prophesied, his prophecies seemed impossible, but God knows the future. He declared that He was going to bring judgment upon the Israelites because of their *lifestyle*. The principal judgment at this time came in the form of Sargon, king of Assyria, who took Samaria. Isaiah

prophesied exactly the same thing (Isa. 1:7-9). Isaiah and Hosea, living basically at the same time, prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isa. 1:1, Hos. 1:1).

Although God warned of coming judgment, He also promised that there would be restoration for Israel and that they would return to their land. This restoration only comes to pass about 2,700 years after this prophecy, when Christ returns. In 722 B.C., Samaria fell to the Assyrians and in the following years they were dispersed throughout the nations of the earth. At the time of Hosea, the southern kingdom of Judah had remained faithful to the Lord, and therefore God promised to protect Judah, fulfilling that promise when Sennacherib besieged it. (See 2 Ki. 19:35.)

Theme

The theme of Hosea is the restoration of the backslider. We see the extreme compassion of Christ in dealing with the very backslidden nation of Israel. God loves the backslider, even though He does not love his sin. God used the wife of Hosea, the unfaithful Gomer, to demonstrate His unfailing and steadfast love for backslidden Israel. Chapters 1-3 describe the domestic life of the prophet Hosea, and chapters 4-14 speak of the sins of Israel, God's coming judgment, and her ultimate restoration.

O U T L I N E

- Part 1** - The Prophet's Family (1:1 - 3:5)
- Part 2** - The Condemnation of the People, Priests, and Kings (4:1 - 5:15)
- Part 3** - A Call to Return to God (6:1-3)
- Part 4** - A Continual Condemnation for Deceit (6:4 - 7:16)
- Part 5** - A Warning of Judgments to Come,
Captivity in Assyria and Egypt (8:1 - 10:15)
- Part 6** - God's Compassion for Israel (11:1-12)
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MAP OF ISRAEL



1

THE PROPHET'S FAMILY

1:1 - 3:5

The first section of Hosea, chapter 1:1 to chapter 3:5, concentrates on the domestic life of the prophet Hosea, his children, and his unfaithful wife. It records Hosea's marriage to Gomer, the children they had together, her adultery, and her restoration. Hosea's unfailing love for Gomer, and his acceptance of her return, revealed to Israel God's steadfast love for them even though they had been unfaithful to Him.

CHAPTER ONE

1:1 - *“The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.”* The book of Hosea takes place during the reigns of Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Jeroboam II. This was during a time of great economical prosperity in Israel. Uzziah was a great military general, and so was Jeroboam II. They both took back lands that had been lost by previous rulers. In 2 Kings 14:25, it records how Jeroboam restored the coastal plains and recovered Damascus for Israel. We see in 2 Chronicles 26:5-15 the accounts of Uzziah's victories against the Philistines and the Arabians, and how he greatly increased the strength of Judah's army.

Uzziah was very wealthy. In 2 Chronicles 26:8-10 we find that Uzziah received gifts from the Ammonites and had much cattle. If the king were wealthy, then for the most part, it meant that the subjects were wealthy too. Many people had two houses, a winter house and a summer house, as seen in Amos 3:15, “And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.”

It appeared that all was well. However, Jeroboam II was not a good ruler. Uzziah was a good man, but he became proud at the end of his life. He tried to usurp the ministry of a priest, and was consequently smitten with leprosy (2 Chr. 26:16-21). Ahaz was not a good king. Hezekiah, on the other hand, was one of the best kings Judah ever had.

1:2 - *“The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms [“a wife of harlotry” or “an adulteress wife”] and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord.”* The lives of the prophets illustrated their prophecies (see Ezekiel chapters 4-5). This is important to understand when we study the life of Hosea.

Hosea prophesied primarily to the apostate ten northern tribes. These tribes were called “Israel,” while the southern tribes became known as “Judah.” As soon as the northern kingdom was inaugurated, her first king, Jeroboam I, instituted a new order of worship. He erected golden calves in Dan in the north,

and in Bethel in the south. He led Israel astray into idolatry. Israel also became engrossed in adultery. Therefore, since Hosea was called to prophesy to the northern kingdom, his life represented God's message to backslidden Israel. Israel saw the reflection of themselves in the life of Hosea and in the things that happened to him.

Hosea had a very high standard of consecration and dedication to the Lord. He was called upon by God to marry a woman who was in a terrible condition. Gomer was a sign to unfaithful Israel. As Israel had committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord, so Gomer left her husband Hosea and was unfaithful to him.

Isaiah was Hosea's companion prophet. Hosea and Isaiah both typified the Lord, and their wives represented the kingdoms to which they prophesied. Isaiah's wife was a prophetess. She was pure and faithful. Isaiah typified the Lord, and his wife represented faithful Judah, the southern kingdom. Isaiah's son was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his birth was a type of the virgin birth of Christ. Hosea's wife, Gomer, typified Israel—unfaithful and adulterous—and the names of Hosea's children revealed God's judgments that were going to come upon Israel.

Hosea manifested the love and forgiveness of the Lord in restoring Gomer—a type of the Lord's restoration of Israel in the last days after a time of judgment and purification.

God has a particular theme that He wants to develop in each of our lives as Christians. Because of this, we will pass through

circumstances that others do not pass through. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:16 that God had called him to manifest His longsuffering through him, as this was the particular truth God wanted to develop in Paul's life.

1:3-4 - *“So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son. And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.”* Hosea married Gomer, and then she bore him a son, whom the Lord told Hosea to name “Jezreel,” which means “God sows,” and speaks of *fertility* in reference to the valley of Jezreel that separated Galilee from Samaria in northern Israel. This is the place where Jehu had murdered the sons of Ahab in order to become king of Israel (2 Ki. 10:1-11).

It is very important that we understand the truth that is illustrated in verse 4. God says that He is going to avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu. Jehu was the great grandfather of Jeroboam II, the reigning king at the time of Hosea.

Jehu was not a descendant of the royal family. He was a captain in Ahab's army, who was raised up, commissioned by God, and even anointed by the prophet Elisha to slay all of Ahab's sons (2 Ki. 9:1-10). Because Jehu fulfilled what God told him to do, the Lord promised Jehu that his sons would sit on the throne of Israel until the fourth generation (2 Ki. 10:30). His dynasty ended with Zechariah.

Jehu was raised up by God to execute the judgment of God upon the house of Ahab. However, even though he fulfilled the prophetic word of God spoken by Elijah concerning the slaying of the house of Ahab (1 Ki. 21:21-24), Jehu shed much blood and delighted in it. That blood, even though it was the blood of the wicked, had to be atoned for. Therefore, God said that he was going to avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu. Jehu did not keep the law; therefore, the Lord judged him (2 Ki. 10:29-31).

This truth can be seen in the life of David. King David was raised up by God to bring rest to the united kingdom of Israel. His commission was to fight the wars of God, a task he faithfully did. In so doing, however, David shed much blood. Even though it was done in the will of God, David was later forbidden to build a temple for the Lord because he had shed blood. Irrespective of whether it was in the will of God, it was still the shedding of blood. That disqualified him from building a temple for the Lord (1 Chr. 22:7-8, 28:3, 1 Ki. 5:3).

This is also seen in the study of the kings of Judah and Israel. God would raise up one king to bring judgment upon another king; even though the one who was raised up by God to bring judgment fulfilled the purposes of God, he was still judged by God for what he did. Jeroboam I was a wicked king who led Israel into idolatry. Therefore, God spoke through the prophet Ahijah saying that He was going to raise up a king to cut off the house of Jeroboam (1 Ki. 14:10,14). Baasha was the man who was raised up by God to fulfil His will by slaying the house of Jeroboam (1 Ki. 15:27-30).

Then God spoke through the prophet Jehu, saying that He was going to judge Baasha and exterminate his house for killing Jeroboam's posterity (1 Ki. 16:1-4,7)—an act which was, in actuality, God's will, and what God had said prophetically that He would do. Then Baasha died, and his son Elah reigned for two years, after which Zimri then murdered him, in fulfilment of God's word (1 Ki. 16:12). However, Zimri did not have any peace because of what he did to Elah, and he consequently committed suicide (2 Ki. 9:31). Then Omri reigned in his place. The Word of God accurately states, "He that liveth by the sword, shall die by the sword" (Rev. 13:10, Mt. 26:52).

Likewise, Pharaoh was specifically raised up by God to oppress the children of Israel so that they would cry out to God. Pharaoh fulfilled God's will, but he was judged for what he did. Similarly, Judas was raised up by God to fulfil prophecy by betraying the Lord Jesus. Even though Judas fulfilled the will of God, he too was still judged accordingly. We should cry out to God to be used only for good things and not things that will bring judgment upon our own heads.

The Lord is God of the whole universe. He knows the conditions; He knows the vessel He wants, and gives promises according to the vessel. God knew Jehu would not follow the law; therefore, He simply used him to fulfil His will. He knew what his heart was inclined to do. The Lord takes a person and fits him into His will according to his heart. He knows what a person will do and uses him to accomplish His purposes.

We must remember that everyone is judged according to his own works. Fulfilling the will of God does not exonerate us from judgment if we do something that is wicked. Therefore, let us walk humbly before the Lord and ask Him not to incline our hearts to any wicked work (Ps. 141:4).

1:5 - *“And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”* This is speaking of the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. It was in the valley of Jezreel that the Lord broke the force and power of the Israelite army before the Assyrians.

1:6 - *“And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.”* Hosea’s wife conceived again and this time Hosea is told to name the child “Lo-ruhamah,” which means “not favoured” or “I will not have mercy.” There comes a time after a person or a nation continually rejects the word of the Lord that they cross a line of demarcation, and there is no more place for repentance. Israel came to that point in 722 B.C. at the fall of Samaria. Then later on they were scattered by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, kings of Assyria.

1:7 - *“But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.”* Although northern Israel fell to the Assyrians, the Lord miraculously preserved Jerusalem when Sennacherib besieged it (2 Ki. 19:34-35). Preservation is a blessing of obedience.

God made a difference between Judah and Israel. Right from her conception, Israel had gone into idolatry through the institution by Jeroboam I of two golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan (1 Ki. 12:26-30). Judah at this time, however, remained faithful to God under good King Uzziah. Because of their faithfulness, God promised that He would save them.

This is a very significant prophecy, confirmed by Isaiah. The historical record of Judah's deliverance from the Assyrians is recorded in Isaiah 37:35-37, "For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh."

From the writings of the prophet Isaiah, we understand that Hosea was alluding to the miraculous deliverance that God gave to Jerusalem when the Assyrian army was surrounding Jerusalem. The angel of the Lord went forth into the camp of the Assyrians and slew 185,000 men. This happened in the time of Hezekiah, but the prophecy was given in the days of Uzziah—many years before it came to pass.

This prophecy was given at a time when Judah was experiencing great economic wealth and the kingdom was prospering. Therefore, the prophecy did not seem possible at the time Hosea gave it, but circumstances changed very quickly.

True prophets of the Lord always confirm the word God has given. Both Isaiah and Hosea prophesied that God would defend Jerusalem and that it would not fall. I want to emphasise that there were two prophets who both gave the same prophecy. Amos 3:7 says, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secrets unto his servants the prophets." "Prophets" is a plural noun. The Lord does not reveal a major event to just one person; there are always at least two prophets with the same declaration. For a doctrine or a prophecy to be true, it has to be confirmed by other parts of the Word of God. If there is a verse in the Bible which can disprove that doctrine, it is not correct.

1:8-9 - *"Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people and I will not be your God."* Hosea's wife conceived again and bore a son. God told Hosea to name him "Lo-ammi," which means "Not my people." God was telling Israel, "You are no longer going to be My people." There was a breach. God was clearly saying that He was going to cut off Israel.

At Mount Sinai, the Israelites had covenanted with the Lord to obey His voice. The Lord said to Israel in Exodus 19:5, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." The Lord promised Israel that if they would obey His voice then they would be His people and His special treasure. In Exodus 19:8 the children of Israel responded to the Lord, "All that the LORD

hath spoken we will do.” Upon this premise, Israel became God’s people. However, after observing years of Israel’s disobedience, the Lord rejected them from being His people, just as He had warned them (fulfilled in 722 B.C. at the fall of Samaria, the capital of Israel).

Through the names of Hosea’s children, God declared judgment upon Israel, and upon the house of Jehu in particular, affecting the ruling king of Israel, Jeroboam II, and his son Zechariah. God also declared that the kingdom of Israel would cease. It ceased in 722 B.C. and has never been restored.

In the Restoration Period under Ezra and Nehemiah, only the southern kingdom of Judah (including the tribes of Benjamin and Levi) was restored to her land (Ezra 1:5). The ten northern tribes of Israel were not restored to their land at that time. They have been dispersed throughout the nations where they will remain until the Last Days, when they will finally be restored to their land.

1:10 - *“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”* In verse nine the Lord told Israel that they were no longer His people. However, in this verse, the Lord looked right down through the ages of time to the Second Coming of Christ and said, “But there is going to be a time when Israel shall be restored unto Me.” This verse is quoted by the Apostle

Paul to prove that Israel was cut off, but will be restored (Rom. 9:26).

1:11 - *“Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.”* The strength of Israel was broken in the valley of Jezreel; in that very same valley it shall be said unto them that they are the sons of the living God. In the valley of Jezreel is the town of Megiddo (or Armageddon), which is the site of the last battle. The Lord will descend, slay the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and cast Satan into the bottomless pit. After this battle, the Lord will return to Israel as their Messiah and establish His 1,000-year reign upon earth. Judah and Israel will be completely restored to their land, and the kingdom will be reunited as it was in the days of David. Israel and Judah shall become one stick in the Lord’s hand (Ezek. 37:16-23).

In the Millennium, David will be resurrected and he will be Israel’s king and their head (see Hos. 3:5, Ezek. 37:24, Jer. 30:9). Then God will sow (the meaning of “Jezreel”) the children of Israel, and they will be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered.

God declared His awesome judgments that would come upon Israel, but, in His compassion, He declared that He would restore them when He returns, and would have mercy upon them.

CHAPTER TWO

Hosea chapter two speaks of the rejection of Israel until the return of Christ, at which time they will be restored.

2:1-2 - *“Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi [which means “My People”]; and to your sisters, Ruhamah [which means “Favoured” or “Having obtained mercy”]. Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts.”* Gomer left Hosea after the birth of their children. She went after many other men and other lovers, who supplied her with all the luxuries of a harlot. She was being enriched by her lovers.

2:3-4 - *“Lest I strip her naked, and [expose] her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms.”* God threatens to publicly expose Gomer. However, the Lord is not only speaking to Hosea’s wife, but also to the whole house of Israel.

Adultery

I want to consider briefly the subject of adultery, because adultery is very serious. Adultery is forbidden in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:14, Deut. 5:18). This stand against adultery was upheld by the Lord in the New Testament (Mt. 5:27-28, 19:18, Mk. 10:19). Adultery is a terrible sin.

Adultery opens up a breach in the family; the door for hurt, envy, jealousy, hatred, anger, and resentment to come in. It can also bring in the sin of murder (as in the case of David). I have known people who have wanted to commit suicide after they committed adultery.

In the 40 years I have been in the ministry, I have had to deal with many cases of adultery. Some of the individuals involved were personal friends of mine; others were very well known church leaders. In France many years ago, the senior pastor of the church where I was ministering committed adultery after he moved to another city. Because of his sin, he lost his church and ministry. He later returned to the same church where I had been. However, he never met Christ after his sin to receive grace, accept his punishment, and endure the consequences. Because of the tremendous guilt he felt, he committed suicide. I had a vision of him after he had committed suicide, and I saw terrible anguish on his face. The agony and torture he tried to escape by committing suicide had only become worse.

Adultery leaves a terrible scar and reproach, even if there is forgiveness and restoration. Proverbs 6:32-33 says, "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away." This principle can be seen in the life of King David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba. He was forgiven, but the reproach of his sin was never wiped away. It is recorded forever in Scripture; remembered throughout the

whole of the Church Age. King David is remembered for principally two things: his slaying of Goliath and his sin with Bathsheba. What a terrible reproach!

According to a person's rank in the kingdom of God, so is his judgment for sin. David's judgments were very severe. Because of his adultery with Bathsheba, Nathan pronounced the following judgments upon him: "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun" (2 Sam. 12:10-11).

Nathan continued the pronouncement of judgment upon David in 2 Samuel 12:14: "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." There are about 17 judgments that came upon King David because of his sin.

Adultery makes a person loud and stubborn (Prov. 7:11); it does something to a person's soul. Proverbs 9:13 says, "A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing." Adultery makes a person clamorous and argumentative.

Lust and adultery induce simplicity, in the sense of being carnally minded. People who do not truly repent of adultery

become simple, always wanting to hear stories and jokes. I once knew a certain pastor who, before he had committed adultery, would constantly say to me: “Don’t be so deep. Be more simple.”

Moreover, lust and adultery cause people to seek for signs and the spectacular. Jesus said in Matthew 12:39, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.” He repeated this in Matthew 16:4, “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas...” Those who are like this will be caught by the Antichrist because he will perform many signs and wonders.

How do you deal with a situation of adultery? I would commend that you follow the steps delineated in Psalm 51. In particular, verse 17 of this psalm, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” A person who is truly repentant has a broken and contrite heart. If ministers who have fallen into adultery will repent as King David did, and go through the steps of Psalm 51, they will be restored and come out into a place where they can once again be used by the Lord. We will see restoration clearly in this Book of Hosea, particularly in the life of Gomer and also in the nation of Israel.

Now that we have seen some of the terrible effects and consequences of adultery, let us consider the key to being kept from falling into adultery. Jude 1:24 says, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you*

faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Joseph was spared from committing adultery with Potiphar’s wife because he was pleasing to the Lord (Gen. 39:7-12). The key to being kept is found in Ecclesiastes 7:26, “And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her” (NKJV). If we always seek to do those things that are pleasing in God’s eyes, He will preserve us from committing adultery. Proverbs 22:14 says, “The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: *he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.*”

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:25, “Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.” Paul found grace and mercy in the sight of God to remain sexually pure. If we please the Lord, we will *not* fall into sin and adultery! I believe in restoration, but I believe it is a far greater testimony to be *kept* than to be *restored*. Therefore, let us walk closely with the Lord so that He may find us faultless and irreproachable at His coming.

2:5 - “*For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.*” This verse describes Gomer and the house of Israel, who both went after other lovers and left their true husbands. Israel worshipped Baal and other false gods. Gomer and Israel looked to others for their provision and fulfilment.

2:6 - *“Therefore, behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.”* When it is God’s time to bring someone back to Himself, He begins to hedge that person in, as with the prodigal son in Luke 15:14-17. God uses poverty or other difficulties to confine a backslider so that he cannot do as he pleases, as he did before. His friends begin to turn on him. This is the process God used to restore both Gomer and the nation of Israel, of which Gomer is a type. Difficulties get our attention and cause us to turn back to the Lord.

2:7 - *“And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.”* After Gomer was hedged in for a time and her lovers no longer wanted her, she would say, “I will go and return to my first husband.” We have to look at this statement very carefully. The original Hebrew means, “I will go back to my husband *as at first*.” This is confirmed by the New International Version (NIV) translation of this verse: “She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.’”

Gomer had left Hosea and committed adultery with several men, but she never married any of them. It is important to see that Gomer never remarried; if she had remarried, she could not have returned to Hosea. The Law is very clear that after a person remarries, he cannot return to his first spouse.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 says: “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”

Once a person divorces his first spouse and remarries, he cannot return to his first spouse if he divorces his second spouse, or even if his second spouse dies. This is confirmed by the prophet Jeremiah, “They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord” (Jer. 3:1). Once people are remarried, they cannot separate and return to their former spouses. They have to stay together, acknowledge their sin, and accept God’s judgments, just as David and Bathsheba did.

The end of verse 7 says, “*For then it was better with me than now.*” This is the story of the backslider. When he comes to his senses and realises that his condition was better before he left, then he returns to God. This is just like the prodigal son.

Concerning him, Luke 15:16-18 says, “And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.’ ” (NKJV). No one can tell people they are going the wrong way; they have to come to their senses and realise it for themselves before they will repent.

2:8 - *“For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.”* The Lord was speaking of Israel here, saying that their provision came from Him. The Lord said, “I was the One Who blessed you, not these idols.” Yet what did the Israelites do with the prosperity that God gave them? They sacrificed it to Baal. They were looking to Baal, the fertility god, to supply all their needs.

2:9-10 - *“Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I [uncover] her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.”* God gave the nation of Israel prosperity, but she used that prosperity for evil. He said that He would take away their prosperity, and bring economic distress and disaster upon them. There was nothing they could do to take away God’s judgment. Proverbs 13:15 clearly brings out, “The way of transgressors is hard.”

God was saying that He was going to diminish Israel economically. This is so often what happens. Nations that turn against the Lord lose His blessing, and their economy begins to weaken until it finally crashes. That is why the United States of America is in such economic trouble today. Sadly, it will probably take an economic crash to turn America back to God.

2:11 - *“I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.”* God was going to take away the times of rejoicing in the land of Israel. These times of rejoicing were an abomination to God because Israel was not living a life of obedience to Him. Israel as a nation ceased to observe the ceremonies of the Law after 722 B.C.

2:12 - *“And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.”* God was saying that He was going to take away all their blessings because they were attributing them to their lovers and not to Him, their Provider. God brought tremendous famine upon Israel because of their idolatry. The Assyrian invaders destroyed all their fruit trees.

2:13 - *“And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord.”* The NIV reads, “I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked

herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot,' declares the LORD." We find the NKJV says, "I will punish her for the days of the Baals to which she burned incense..." *Baalim* is the Hebrew plural of Baal.

The Lord said He was going to punish Israel for the days she has burned incense to the Baals, the false god of the Canaanites. In particular, the Lord was referring to the time when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, on the borders of Moab. Balak the king of Moab hired the prophet Balaam to curse Israel. Although Balaam could not curse Israel, he gave counsel to Balak on how to bring the judgment of God upon His people.

He told Balak to send Moabite women down into the camp of Israel to entice the children of Israel to commit fornication with them. This would cause them to also serve and burn incense to their gods; and that is exactly what happened (Num. 25:1-9; 31:16; Rev. 2:14).

Numbers 25:1-3 says: "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel." Baalpeor was the "local Baal" which was worshipped in the town of Peor. The Israelites worshipped Baal and made sacrifices unto the gods of the Moabites. As a result, God judged Israel for this, and 24,000 people died.

Many years later, in the time of Hosea, God said that He would judge Israel for what their forefathers did about 700 years before. Why is the judgment for what their forefathers did going to come upon them? The answer is in Ecclesiastes 3:15: “God requires that which is past.” This is a truth that is seen throughout the Word of God.

The Lord said in Matthew 23:34-36, “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.*” The Lord made it very clear that there would be a generation that would have to bear all the judgments of the sins of the former generations. That was what happened to the nation of Israel at this time.

In verses 14-23, we will see the restoration of Israel that will take place when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again to rule and reign for 1,000 years upon this earth.

2:14 - *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.”* When we go astray from the Lord, He brings us into the wilderness and into economic distress to bring us back to Himself. After He has gotten our attention by the calamities we experience, He speaks comfortably unto us.

2:15 - “*And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*” The Lord is referring to the time of Joshua when the children of Israel lost their first battle at the city of Ai. They lost that battle because there was sin in the camp. An Israelite named Achan had taken some of the spoil from the city of Jericho, against the Lord’s specific command.

The valley of Achor, southwest of Jericho, is the place where the children of Israel stoned Achan (Josh. 7:19-26). The valley of Achor means “the valley of trouble.” God said that in this valley of Achor, there would be a valley of hope for them.

In our time of trouble God always gives us a door of hope (1 Cor. 10:13). We must concentrate on hope. If people will acknowledge that they have done wrong and will accept God’s judgments, God will give them a door of hope, and they will come out of that valley of sorrow.

The Lord also said that they would sing as in the days of their youth when they came up out of Egypt. When the Lord turns again the captivity of Zion, we will be like them that dream; and our mouth will be filled with laughter and singing (Ps. 126:1-2).

2:16 - “*And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.*” God was originally called *Baal*, which means “Lord,” but the name *Baal* was later denigrated to mean false gods. *Ishi* means “husband.” This is referring to the Millennium when Israel

will be married to the Lord. However, Israel must go through the wilderness and the valley of trouble before the Lord comes again. A new relationship with the Lord comes as a result of passing through the wilderness (verse 14).

2:17 - *“For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”*

Here we see a cleansing of Israel, which will take place in the Millennium. They will be cleansed of idolatry. The names of Baal will no longer be mentioned or called upon by the Israelites.

2:18 - *“And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.”* The Millennium is going to be a time of great peace for Israel.

The latter part of verse 18 says, *“And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.”* It is during this time that the Prince of Peace will rule in righteousness and peace upon the earth. This is confirmed by Isaiah, *“And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”* (Isa. 2:4).

All weapons of war will be turned into harvesting tools. When the Lord returns, wars will cease. The Lord will make a

covenant in the Millennium with the animals, as confirmed in Isaiah 65:25, “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.”

Isaiah 11:5-9 reaffirms this, “Righteousness shall be the belt of [Christ’s] loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (NKJV).

The millennial reign of Christ upon earth will usher in great peace. The ravenous nature of animals will be changed. The violent nature of wolves will be removed from them. The whole of God’s creation will be transformed (Rom. 8:19-22).

2:19-20 - *“And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.”* In the Millennium, Israel will be married to the Lord and will know Him intimately. Jeremiah speaks of this close relationship that the Jews will have with the Lord in the Millennium, “And they

shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord” (Jer. 31:34).

Although Jeremiah is speaking of Israel, Paul quotes this passage in Hebrews 8:11, in reference to the Church Age. Therefore, this promise also has a fulfilment in the Church Age. Those who experience the new covenant, having the law written upon the fleshly tables of their heart, will know the Lord in an intimate way and be betrothed to Him in righteousness forever. The marriage supper of the Lamb takes place just before the Millennium. There is a progression in our lives, as we can see in this chapter of Hosea, after God has dealt with us, stripped us, and given us a door of hope, He restores us, and brings us into a new union and communion with Him.

2:21-22 - *“And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel [which means “God sows”].”* The New King James Version (NKJV) reads, “ ‘It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer,’ says the LORD; ‘I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel.’ ” God says He will hear the heavens, and the earth will respond by producing grain, new wine, and oil in abundance.

It is as though the choirs of heaven, hearing the groaning of God’s creation on earth, with one harmonious supplication,

plead for the restoration of rain for the parched soil. The promise rests on Deuteronomy 28:12. All heaven is pleading with God to bless the earth. God says, "I will hear the cry of heaven." When the Lord comes again, Israel will have great joy, after a time of tremendous sorrow.

2:23 - *"And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."* God is going to greatly multiply Israel. He is going to sow her in all the earth, which is the meaning of *Jezreel*. Israel is a very small country at the moment, but He is going to mightily sow Israel throughout all the earth in the Millennium.

This verse has a double fulfilment. In a certain sense, it applies to the Gentiles, who were not God's people originally. Isaiah 65:1 speaks concerning the engrafting of the Gentiles into the household of faith: "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." The Apostle Paul quotes Hosea 2:23 in Romans 9:25, speaking of the Church.

Hosea was speaking of two different time periods here. Firstly, He was talking about the time when God stretched forth his hand to the Gentiles and formed the Church. Secondly, he was speaking of the time of the restoration of Israel at the Second Coming of Christ, when they will cry out, "Thou art our God," and the Lord shall say to them, "Thou art My people."

CHAPTER THREE

3:1 - *“Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.”* The New King James Version reads: “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.’ ”

Here we see the correlation between the restoration of Hosea’s wife and the restoration of the children of Israel. God was requiring much of Hosea to return to the woman he loved—this woman had been an adulteress. Yet Hosea was now required to love her again. This is exactly what God is going to do for the children of Israel.

Gomer degenerated from a prophet’s wife into an adulteress and a harlot. When Hosea recorded in chapter 1:2 that the Lord told him to take “a wife of whoredoms,” it is quite possible that Gomer had the spirit of adultery in her.

Moreover, the Lord knew Gomer would be unfaithful to Hosea, but that she had not committed adultery before she married Hosea. In all probability, Gomer became a harlot *after* she married Hosea. Otherwise, Hosea would have married a prostitute. Either way, the truth that God wanted to illustrate was His unfailing love to His unfaithful people, Israel.

Unfaithfulness in marriage is one of the greatest problems of today. Those of you who have spouses who have been unfaithful should be encouraged by the story of Hosea and Gomer. God is able to restore your marriage today as he did the marriage of Hosea and Gomer. You must, however, receive your unfaithful spouse back in the loving way that Hosea did.

Another point worthy of mention here is that the prophet Hosea said, *"Then said the Lord unto me."* The Lord told Hosea that it was time for Gomer to be restored and bought back. This is a very important point. There is only restoration when the Lord speaks that there is to be restoration. Restoration, in actuality, always begins with God. Only He can change a person and give him repentance, for repentance is a gift of God (Rom. 2:4).

3:2 - *"So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley."* Gomer had deteriorated to the status of a slave, and was owned by someone else. The price of a slave was 30 pieces of silver (Ex. 21:32). Silver speaks of redemption. Therefore, Hosea bought Gomer back for half the price of a slave (15 pieces of silver), since she was not worth very much. This is a type of how the Lord purchased Israel out of servile status from Egypt to be His people. Ultimately, this shows how the Lord paid the price on the cross for us, His Bride.

Before we were saved, we were the servants and slaves of sin. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "ye are not your own...for ye

are bought with a price...” Hosea also had to pay one and a half homers of barley. What is the significance of barley in Scripture? The barley harvest is the first harvest of Passover. Therefore, it represents redemption.

3:3 - *“And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.”* Gomer was not restored immediately to be Hosea’s wife. There was a period of *probation*. He took her back, but before he would truly be her husband again, she had to remain sexually pure.

This gives us a pattern for restoration today, in other areas besides adultery. Although we must forgive a person immediately, restoration requires a period of probation, because we must first see the fruits of repentance in their lives (Lk. 3:8). We cannot immediately restore a person to the position he formerly held. There must be a time of proving. That is exactly what God is going to do with Israel.

There is also another side to restoration that we must consider. God spoke to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 44:10-14 concerning the priests who went away from serving Him, “Yes, I will restore them, but their final position will be that they will minister to the people and not to Me.” The priests who backslid and stopped serving Him would be restored to the ministry and would still be able to minister to the people. However, they would not be permitted to go into the Holy of Holies and minister unto the Lord. The Lord goes on to say in Ezekiel 44:15-16 that the sons of Zadok, who remained

faithful when the rest of Israel went astray from the Lord, would be able to draw near unto Him, come into the Holy of Holies, and minister unto Him. This is the greatest privilege of all. God makes a difference between those who remain faithful and those who do not.

God is looking for faithful priests to minister unto Him. Yes, God does restore the backslider and delights to do so, but what really makes Him happy are people who have always remained faithful. Praise God that David was restored, but it would have been far better if David had sought the Lord to deal with that area of lust in his life before he fell into adultery.

3:4 - *“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim [or household idols].”* The prophet Hosea was saying that there would be a prolonged period of captivity for the children of Israel. He was not just speaking of the 70 years of captivity that were pronounced by Jeremiah upon Judah. He was also dealing with the ten tribes of Israel that went into captivity in 722 B.C. and have never really been restored since that time.

“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king.” God was saying that after 722 B.C. Israel would no longer have a king. Israel has not had a king since 722 B.C., but Judah did until 586 B.C. The ultimate restoration of Israel will not be until the Millennium.

3:5 - *“Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.”* This clearly speaks of a resurrection of David in the *latter days* of Israel, referring to the Millennium. A statement of this magnitude, however, needs scriptural confirmation. Jeremiah confirms this in Jeremiah 30:9, “But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.”

The resurrection of David is also spoken of in Ezekiel 34:23-24, where God said, “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.”

2

THE PEOPLE, PRIESTS, AND KINGS CONDEMNED

4:1 - 5:15

CHAPTER FOUR

4:1 - *“Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is not truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.”* God was bringing a charge (or controversy) against the Israelites. Israel was in a terrible state of affairs. There was no truth, no mercy, and no knowledge of God in the land. Hosea was speaking to Israel, the Northern Kingdom, not Judah. This is what God primarily looks for—truth, mercy, and the knowledge of God. Yet none of these could be found in Israel.

4:2 - *“By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.”* The NKJV reads, “By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed.” Swearing and lying had replaced truth; killing, stealing, and adultery had replaced mercy. There was no safety. Bloodshed followed bloodshed, and there were no restraints or bounds that they did not break. They committed one crime after another. That is very much like today. In some cities today, no safety can be found. In large cities such as Los Angeles, children have been found

carrying guns and knives in school. Now students have to go through metal detectors in many American schools. It is no longer safe in many places in the world.

4:3 - *“Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish [or waste away], with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.”* The Lord said the land and the sea were going to suffer because of the people. There was complete destruction when the Assyrians overran Israel. We cannot read this account (seeing that Israel deserved judgment) without recognising the same conditions today that will require judgment (especially in America). God does not have two different standards. He is going to judge the nations of the earth today for their sin.

4:4 - *“Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.”* There was great contention in the land of Israel. The people were arguing with the priests and the ministers. Proverbs 13:10 says, “Only by pride cometh contention.” In their pride, the people were complaining and arguing with the priests.

4:5 - *“Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.”* God said that He was going to completely destroy Israel. In one sense, Jerusalem is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26), and was the capital city of the Southern Kingdom. However, by “*thy mother*” the Lord was probably referring here to the nation of Israel.

4:6 - *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”* Isaiah 5:13 says exactly the same thing, “Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge.” There is such a similarity between the prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea (and later Micah in chapter 3:12). The voice of the Lord was thundering out through these two prophets. There was no excuse for Israel.

We must cry out to God for knowledge and truth. There is an awesome warning in Proverbs 1:22-23 to those who reject wisdom and knowledge, “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold [and then] I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.”

Proverbs 1:28 says, “Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer.” There is a solemn warning in the Word of God that the people who reject knowledge will be rejected by God. He will not hear them in their time of need.

The Lord continued, *“Thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”* God also said that He would reject their children; that is an awesome statement by God. The Lord wants to be a father to our children and to bless them, but He says that if we reject His law and reject knowledge, then He will reject our children.

In Exodus 19:6, God said at Mount Sinai that He wanted all of the children of Israel to be a kingdom of priests unto Him. However, because of disobedience, only the tribe of Levi received the priesthood. But now God is saying, “No longer will the children of Israel be priests unto me.” That office has been taken over by the Church, who has become a *royal priesthood* (1 Pet. 2:9).

What God has declared will come to pass! He declared that Israel would become a kingdom of priests. However, they rebelled against Him, and were rejected by Him because of their sin. Let us always remember that what God has said *will* come to pass. God’s calling upon Israel to be a nation of priests unto Him was fulfilled, but not by Israel. This calling has now come upon the Church, the spiritual Israel of God. When a person or a nation has been called to a specific ministry or calling, if it is not fulfilled, that calling is passed on to someone else, just as Matthias took Judas’ ministry after Judas betrayed the Lord.

However, we also must remember “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom. 11:29). Ultimately, God will restore Israel and they will flow into His original purpose.

This is such an important truth—the gifts and callings of God are without repentance! Isaiah 61:6 says, “But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.” When Christ returns, the Israelites will return to the Lord and become priests during the

Millennium. In the Millennium, Jerusalem will be the capital city and Israel will have the pre-eminence among the nations.

The Southern Kingdom of Judah, established around the capital city of Jerusalem, finally fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The Gentile powers took over and Judah ceased to be a nation *per se*. They no longer had a king. After the Babylonians, they were ruled over by the Persians, then the Greeks, and finally the Romans. Then Christ came, but Israel rejected Christ. Therefore, in A.D. 70 the temple was obliterated and Jerusalem was left in ruins. Now the Church has taken the call of Judah and Israel, but the crown will return to Israel when David is resurrected in the Millennium.

4:7 - *“As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore I will change their glory into shame.”* The literal interpretation of this verse is different than the spiritual interpretation. The actual interpretation is, “As Israel multiplied, so their sins multiplied against me.” Psalm 62:10 says, “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.” Many large churches are in this state. A number of people have big churches because they have no standards. In the secular life, as you are promoted, you have more and more people under you. Nevertheless, that is not necessarily the case in the spiritual. Sometimes the higher up you go in God’s kingdom, the fewer people you have under you, but you have *quality* people.

It is difficult at times to look at people whom you know are not right and yet they seem so successful. Then you look at yourself and although you are doing what is right, you are

struggling. The key to understanding this seeming paradox is to go into the presence of God, as Asaph wrote in Psalm 73:17, “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” The only thing that counts is to make sure that we are accepted by the Lord. Saul sought to please the people and to be accepted by the people rather than seeking to obtain approval and acceptance from God. That is why he lost his throne and the kingship was given to someone who sought his acceptance from the Lord—David.

Jeroboam II and Uzziah reigned over a colossal territory. Outwardly, it looked as if they were highly successful and accepted by God, but the prophet told them they are wrong. On the surface they looked fine, but God saw their hearts. Uzziah was a military genius and a military engineer. He invented weapons of warfare. The surrounding nations feared Uzziah. Jeroboam II enlarged his territory by entering it according to the word given by the prophet Jonah of an enlargement of territory (2 Ki. 14:25). We might think: “The prophet prophesied of enlargement of territory, and the king entered into it. That is real success.” Yet God rejected these men. It is so important to have true values in life. What was the end of all this prosperity and expansion? The end result was dismal failure, because the foundation of their own personal lives and of the lives of the people was not sound. They had tremendous prosperity, but did not have God’s stamp of approval.

We must be very careful with the snare of *church growth*. Trust me, beloved; if you seek to do what is right, everything

that can go wrong *will* go wrong. At the same time, you will see people who are prospering even though they are not walking uprightly. Know that there comes a day when God says, “Well, the accounts are going to be opened up.”

In Greece, there were two churches in a particular town. One was an Evangelical church of 3,000 members and the other was a Pentecostal church of 200 members. The Evangelicals looked down on the Pentecostals. God gave a dream to a very respected lady, and she saw 9 lights in the Evangelical church and 200 lights in the Pentecostal church. Can you see how God viewed things and how He was keeping score? Two hundred to nine. The people were counting 3,000 to 200, but God looked at things differently.

4:8 - *“They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.”* The children of Israel not only did wickedly, but also delighted in so doing. Their hearts were fully determined to sin.

4:9-10 - *“And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish [both of] them for their ways, and reward them for their doings. For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase [or multiply]: because they have left off to take heed to the Lord.”* The children of Israel would not listen to God or obey Him. They had *“left off to take heed to the Lord.”* Because they wanted to feast on sin, God said the time would come when they would not have enough food. Moreover, He would not give them children; therefore, they would not multiply. When we sin and

disobey God, the Lord sends leanness into our lives (Ps. 106:15). No matter what we do, we are never satisfied.

4:11 - “*Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.*” Whoredom and wine always flow together, and they turn away the heart from following God. This is what Proverbs 31:4 says, “*It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink.*” Wine causes a person to “relax” and let down his guard over his tongue and his actions. Intoxication can occur before an individual realises what is happening, resulting in an impairment of judgment. In some individuals, wine can cause an addiction that can lead to hard liquor, or even drugs. We must realise the power of sin. Fornication is not just an act, but it completely envelops a person’s heart and turns the heart away from God.

What is the significance of *wine* and *new wine*, and what is the difference between the two? *New wine* is hard liquor. Everybody knows hard liquor is very dangerous, thus people often start out drinking wine. After they become addicted, they begin drinking hard liquor, eventually becoming alcoholics.

Unfortunately, this is not only true of the world but also of the Church. God was condemning His people, not the heathen. Therefore, this applies to us as Christians today. While drinking wine in moderation is not unscriptural, let us just say that abstinence is better than moderation. If a person is not careful, wine will lead him to fornication and eventually turn his heart away from the Lord, as this verse plainly tells us.

4:12-13 - *“My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.”* In these verses, we find that the spirit of adultery led the children of Israel into idolatry. Thus, we see that the spirit of adultery leads people into idolatry.

This is seen very clearly in the life of Solomon. Solomon had 1,000 wives and loved many strange women (1 Ki. 11). Thus, 1 Kings 11:4 says, “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods.” The spirit of adultery led Solomon away from the true God to serve idols and other gods.

I cannot stress enough the importance of purity of heart because impurity of heart actually opens the door to all kinds of other sins. The nation of Israel went into idolatry. We must be very careful to guard our hearts so that we do not go into spiritual idolatry (Prov. 4:23). Romans 1:21-24 expresses the same thought. Paul, like the prophet Hosea, links idolatry and adultery together.

4:14 - *“I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand*

shall fall.” It is terrible when God lifts His hand off someone, and He lets him go his own way without correction. Adonijah was not corrected by David, but Solomon was; Solomon was the one who became king. Those who are being prepared for the throne to reign with Christ will be corrected and chastised.

We sometimes wonder why everything seems to continue to go well for Christians who go astray and commit all kinds of immorality. They seem to prosper, perhaps even more than before they went astray. It is simply because the Lord is not going to bother to punish them or correct them now. He lets them go their own way. However, in the end they will fall into the pit and eternal judgment.

In the last part of verse 14, the Lord repeated what He said in verse 6, *“The people that doth not understand shall fall.”* The Lord is strongly emphasising the importance of knowledge—of knowing the ways of God and walking in them. There is a worldly maxim that says, “What you don’t know can’t hurt you.” O how wrong that statement is! What you do not know can and will hurt you and cause you to fall and be destroyed. We are responsible to find out what we do not know. May we cry out for the Lord to give us a heart to know and understand His ways!

4:15 - *“Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The Lord liveth.”* God said: “Israel has gone astray, but Judah, be careful. Do not learn Israel’s ways.” We must speedily deal with sin in the church because the

danger is that others will say, “The pastor did not do anything about it, and the one who sinned got away with it, so we might as well do the same thing.”

The Lord also told Israel not to go to Gilgal or Bethaven. Gilgal was one of the religious centres of their day. Joshua made it his headquarters for a time. It was a very revered place where the children of Israel experienced the second circumcision. It speaks of spiritual circumcision of the heart, having the old nature cut away. However, the places that were holy in the memories of the children of Israel had now become centres of idolatry.

How we rejoice when we realise that we can be used by God! Nonetheless, if we do not continue to walk in the light of God’s commandments, we can become like Gilgal—a place of idolatry and uncleanness. Bethaven means “house of idols” (Amos 5:5, 1 Ki. 12:29). Bethel means “*house of God*.” Sadly, her name was changed from “House of God” to “House of Idols” because she had become a habitation of idols and demons. Bethel is the place where Jeroboam I set up one of the two golden calves. God told Judah not to go there, lest they be corrupted by them and learn their ways.

They were still saying in Bethaven, “*The Lord liveth*.” There was such a mixture. They believed in the living Lord, but were not walking according to His precepts. They were practicing all kinds of idolatry. This is very much like the Church today. People praise and worship the Lord, and yet practice immorality and idolatry at the same time. God will not accept this.

4:16 - *“For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place [or open country].”* Israel had backslidden and become like a stubborn calf. The expression “the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place” meant that they would have no protection from wolves and other predators. They would be scattered among the nations. They would no longer be protected within the confines of the land of Israel.

4:17 - *“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”* As a result, the Lord said that He would leave Ephraim alone. God told Judah, “Do not waste your time on Ephraim (the northern Israel); do not bother with him.” At times, we should not waste our time on some people. They are not going to make it anyway and they will never change, so why bother with them? The best thing is to leave them alone.

This might seem hard to some, but it really is not; it is a principle of God. This is how the Lord works; “who art thou oh man that repliest against God?” (Rom. 9:20). Sometimes God lets people continue in their sin for a very long time before dealing with them; somehow you do not have a burden to pray for them until God’s appointed time for restoration comes.

4:18 - *“Their drink is sour [or gone]: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye.”* The New International Version reads: “Even when their drinks are gone, they continue their prostitution; their rulers dearly love shameful ways.” After drinking, they turned to

commit adultery, fornication, and prostitution. The rulers of Israel loved shame.

4:19 - *“The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.”* The wind takes a person withersoever it will, with no stability whatsoever. These sacrifices would not profit them at all, but would only bring them shame. These sacrifices would not found Israel on the solid rock, which is Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER FIVE

5:1 - *“Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.”* The Lord is speaking this time, not to the whole house of Israel, but to the priests and the royal household in particular—*“O house of the king.”*

Jeroboam II was a wicked king, but he was the most successful of the kings of Israel. As we have said before, outward success—a large church and other such things—is not necessarily a sign of approval and acceptance by God. In fact, many times it is the ones whom the Lord has rejected who are blessed and appear successful.

“For judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.” This little phrase is pictorial because Mizpah and Tabor were the places that they would cast their nets to catch birds. Thus the priests and kings of Israel would snare the people with idolatry, as one snares a bird with a net.

5:2 - *“And the revoltors are profound to make slaughter [or are deeply involved in slaughter], though I have been a rebuker of them all.”* The house of Israel had revolted against the Lord and had shed much innocent blood. Even after He had rebuked them and had corrected them, they

still went their own way. They did not heed His reproofs.

5:3 - *“I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled.”* God sees everything. Our ways are not hid from Him. The phrases *“thou hast committed whoredoms”* and *“the spirit of whoredoms”* are repeatedly used in the book of Hosea because immorality had absolutely corrupted the nation of Israel. *Whoredom, adultery, harlot,* and other related words occur about 26 times in the book of Hosea.

5:4 - *“They will not frame [or direct] their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord.”* The phrase, *“They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God,”* shows us how important it is to take hold of our lives and discipline ourselves to do what is right. The Israelites would not take hold of their lives to turn to God. Their lifestyle took them away from God. As the NIV says, their deeds would not allow them to return to God.

“The spirit of whoredoms” refers to lust. Lust must be dealt with by God—it is one of the works of the flesh. We must allow the Lord to cleanse our hearts and make us morally clean.

5:5 - *“And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them.”* God continues delineating the sins of Israel by speaking of the pride of Israel. Pride

comes in when we *refuse* to walk uprightly. This is what happened to Israel. They were immoral and became proud. We would tend to think that when people fall into immorality and have problems with lust, they would be deeply humiliated and cry out to God; but that is not what happens. Instead, when a person commits immorality he becomes very proud.

“Therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them.” Israel and Ephraim were apostate and backslidden, but Judah was faithful at this time. However, the Lord said that *“Judah also shall fall with them.”* This is what happens all too often. Sadly, the faithful many times are corrupted by the wicked and fall with them. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 it says, “Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character” (NIV).

5:6 - *“They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.”* In essence, God was saying to Israel, “You have turned against Me, so when you want Me, you will not find Me.” Proverbs 1:28-29 describes Israel at this time period, “Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.”

The Lord said in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee.” Israel had rejected knowledge, and gone

their own way; therefore, Christ rejected them and withdrew Himself from them. He refused to answer them when they called upon Him. The Israelites would seek the presence of the Lord and offer animal sacrifices, but their hypocritical sacrifices were useless. Sin separates us from the presence of the Lord (Isa. 59:1-2). Many times, sin in our lives is the reason the Lord does not respond to our prayers.

5:7 - *“They have dealt treacherously against the Lord: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions.”* The Lord said they had begotten *strange children* whom He would not acknowledge. The nature of a child depends upon the spiritual condition of the parents at the time of conception. Because the Israelites were backslidden at this time, they were producing children who went astray from the womb (Ps. 58:3).

We want to produce a godly seed both in the natural and in the spiritual. As we produce children who are just like us in the natural, so we do with spiritual children. Ministers, and especially pastors, will reproduce like kind. As the shepherd is, so will the sheep be. It is an irreversible law of nature. We can only beget like kind. We cannot produce what we ourselves are not.

Genesis 1:11 says, “The fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself.” James 3:12 says, “Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.” An apple tree can only beget an apple tree; it cannot reproduce an orange tree.

In much the same way, if a pastor is not committed to the Lord, his sheep will not be either.

“Now shall a month devour them with their portions.” This referred to Menahem, king of Israel, who gave money to Pul, king of Assyria (2 Ki. 15:16-20). In other words, God was saying: “I am going to place a time limit on Israel. When their month comes, then their judgment will come.” God limits a day. Hebrews 4:7 says, “He limiteth a certain day.” Yet God is also very longsuffering; He was giving the Israelites a little while longer to repent, and at the end of that time, if they did not repent, then He would judge them (Lk. 13:6-9).

5:8-9 - *“Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin. Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.”* God made known among the tribes of Israel what was going to happen. He openly declares His judgments. God never does anything without first telling His servants, the prophets, who in turn declare it to His people.

5:10-12 - *“The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water. Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness [as by worm-eating].”* The leaders of Judah, instead of instructing the people in the ways of God, were removing God-established boundaries.

They were not guilty of the crime of changing territorial boundary lines (Deut. 19:14; 27:17), but they were guilty of changing God's standards, His boundary lines, between right and wrong. As a result, God poured out His judgment upon them like water.

Ephraim *willingly* walked after false statues; the commandment to do evil, given by Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12:28, when he set up two golden calves and told Israel to worship them. Therefore, God's judgment was going to come upon Ephraim and Judah as *a moth and rotteness*, figures representing God's destruction of His backslidden people and their land.

5:13 - "*When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.*" When the northern tribes of Israel (Ephraim) began to be afflicted, instead of going to God for help, they went to the Assyrians. There is no record of King Jareb (the mighty king) in secular history, so we are ignorant of him. In all probability, this was a reference to the mighty King Tiglath Pileser III of Assyria.

5:14 - "*For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him.*" The Lord said He was going to destroy the northern tribes. None would be able to take them out of His hand and rescue them from Him. It was useless for Israel to look to Assyria for help because Assyria could not help them once God had come against them.

5:15 - *“I will go and return unto my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.”* One of the hardest things to do is to get people to acknowledge that they have done wrong. People always have excuses for what they did. An acknowledgment of wrongdoing is a prerequisite to receiving mercy from God. There has to be an acknowledgment of the Law and of having broken the Law in order to receive mercy. The Mercy Seat was on top of the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Law inside.

God said He would leave them alone until they acknowledged their offence and sought His face. He said He would bring great affliction upon them, eventually, it would cause them to turn back to Him. Only then would He would restore them.

3

A CALL TO RETURN TO GOD

6:1-3

CHAPTER SIX

6:1 - *“Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.”* We must return to Christ when we have gone away from Him. God draws us, but it is our responsibility to respond to His drawing, and return to God. This is a beautiful description of the dealings of God in people’s lives. The reason God brings all kinds of afflictions upon us and corrects us is so that we will return to Him. He will heal and bind us up if we finally do return to Him.

6:2 - *“After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.”* Here is a very profound theological statement. We interpret this Scripture by comparing it with other Scriptures. This passage in Hosea is interpreted by Luke 13:31-32, which says, *“The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto [Jesus], Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.”* The Lord was certainly not speaking of His death and burial, which lasted three days. The true interpretation of this is

understood as we compare the passage in Luke with the passage in Hosea.

In 2 Peter 3:8, Peter said that a day is as 1,000 years. Therefore, the interpretation of this passage is that after two days, after *approximately* 2,000 years of the Church Age, Israel will be revived and restored on the third day, which is the millennial reign of Christ upon earth.

“He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight.” The Lord said in Luke 13:32, “I do cures [or healings] today and tomorrow.” This means that His Church will perform miracles for two days (two thousand years). “And the third day I shall be perfected,” means that the Body of Christ will be perfected after two days. After 2,000 years, the Church will come to perfection.

6:3 - *“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”* As we go on to know the Lord, we will experience the last day outpouring of the Spirit of God, which is known as the “former and latter rain.” Joel 2:23 says, “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.” This is speaking of the feast days. The former rain was the outpouring on the Early Church on the day of Pentecost. The latter rain is the great outpouring that God will give to

His Latter Day Church during the spiritual celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.

“Then shall we know.” When is *then* referring to? For Israel it is after the Lord’s coming (Rom. 11:26); for us it is now. What we need so very, very much is to follow on to know the Lord, so that He will visit us with both the early and the latter rain. Psalms 50:23 says, “He that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.” Our conversation, or conduct (as the NKJV puts it), is very important, because it can either qualify or disqualify us from having a part in the last day outpouring.

4

A CONTINUAL CONDEMNATION FOR DECEIT

6:4 - 7:16

6:4 - *“O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.”* Ephraim was the head of Israel and the prominent tribe of Israel. Ephraim came from Joseph, and means “double fruitfulness.” Actually, Ephraim was in northern Israel. Throughout the book of Hosea, however, the prophet uses *Ephraim* to represent the whole of the northern kingdom of Israel (approximately 37 times).

“Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.” This was spoken to Judah. The Lord was saying to Judah: “Judah, you were different than Israel; you were good. But your goodness was like the morning mist that quickly disappears and like the early dew that evaporates. Your goodness was not lasting. After a time you became wicked like your brother Israel.” There was no depth to their goodness—it disappeared and evaporated very quickly.

6:5 - *“Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.”* The NIV says, “Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you.”

6:6 - *“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”* We must major on those two things that God desires—being merciful and knowing Him. This is brought out by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42. Micah 6:8 says, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” The key to life is pleasing God. The heart of God is revealed here. He desires mercy and the knowledge of Himself. He abides where these two things are present.

6:7 - *“But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.”* The Israelites broke the covenant, like all men who have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The phrase “they like men” could refer to mankind in general, or more specifically to Adam and his original sin, as in the New Revised Standard Version, New International Version, and the New American Standard Bible. The word “treacherous” means that they appeared godly, but inwardly they were wicked. They were unfaithful to the Lord.

6:8 - *“Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood.”* Gilead was quite a large region in the north-central highlands of Transjordan, consisting of many cities (Jdg. 12:7). This is where Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh settled (Num. 32). *Gilead* in Scripture is used quite often to represent the whole land of Israel on the east side of the Jordan River. The land was full of bloodshed.

6:9 - *“And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness [or heinous crimes].”* This is not speaking about the Levites because it is directed toward northern Israel. Jeroboam I established a different kind of priesthood from the priesthood established by Moses. Jeroboam appointed the basest and lowest of men to be the priests of Bethel and Dan (1 Ki. 12:31-32).

In the days of Hosea, in the reign of Jeroboam II, the priests of northern Israel were murderers. Can you imagine what the spiritual state of Israel was at this time? Their priests were literally murderers and highway robbers. They formed gangs to rob and kill travellers along the highways of Israel. Unfortunately, this is not only true of the priests of northern Israel; the Catholic Church over the years also has been guilty of murdering many saints.

6:10-11 - *“I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled. Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.”* Israel became defiled by literal and spiritual whoredom. The Lord tells Judah to be careful, because a harvest of judgment in the last days is certain for her when the Lord returns for His people (Jer. 30:1-7).

CHAPTER SEVEN

7:1 - *“When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.”* The Lord is saying that He wanted to heal Israel, but when He sought to heal Israel, her wickedness was uncovered. Ephraim was the head tribe of the northern kingdom, and Samaria was the capital.

This was a time of great unrest and great insecurity in Israel. It was very risky and dangerous to travel along the highways. Travellers were subject to all kinds of violence, including bands of robbers. There was no law and order. Drunkenness had taken over, and because of drunkenness there was no firm leadership. Instead of protecting the people, the soldiers took part in robbing them.

7:2 - *“And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about [or have surrounded them]; they are before my face.”* This is something that seems very peculiar—those who become engrossed in sin feel that God will not remember their sin. That is absolute folly. We must put things right before God.

Psalm 10:11,13-14 speaks of the wicked: “He has said in his heart, ‘God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see.’ ... Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, ‘You will not require an account.’ But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief, to repay it by Your

hand” (NKJV). This is one of the major themes of Romans chapter 2. Romans 2:3 says, “And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” Proverbs 11:21 assures the righteous of the punishment of the wicked, “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.”

7:3 - *“They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.”* Consider the attitude of the ruling house of northern Israel, in particular Jeroboam II. The wickedness of the people delighted the heart of Jeroboam and his princes. Proverbs 2:14 speaks of evil men who “rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked” (NKJV). Jeroboam was the king of Israel, and the purpose of being king was to be a father to the people and to look after them. He should have been upholding righteousness, instead, he was rejoicing in evil. In all likelihood, Jeroboam was given a percentage of the spoils of the robbers.

Jeroboam’s attitude reminds me of Joseph Stalin. It was said of Joseph Stalin that he was only able to rest quietly and peacefully at night when he had given an order to kill a number of people. He *rejoiced* in iniquity. This depth of wickedness is described in Proverbs 4:16, “For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.”

7:4 - *“They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough,*

until it be leavened.” The NKJV says, “They are all adulterers. Like an oven heated by a baker; he ceases stirring the fire after kneading the dough, until it is leavened.” The whole nation of Israel was guilty of spiritual adultery and apostasy, including immorality. Their unrestrained lusts were likened to the flame of an oven.

7:5 - *“In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.”* The princes were constantly giving the king wine to make him drunk. Proverbs 31:4 says, “It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink.” The princes were extremely wicked. They delighted in immorality and desired to steal, so they made the king drunk. Because of it, the king became a scorner, who mocked at spiritual things. Proverbs 19:29 says, “Judgments are prepared for scorners.” This is what wine does to a person.

7:6 - *“For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.”* The prophet was saying that the people were so drunk that they could not even make good bread. The baker was so drunk that he would put the bread in the oven, and then it would catch on fire and burn while he was sleeping.

7:7 - *“They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.”* The 20 kings of Israel were in reality no good at all. Of Israel’s last six kings, four of them were murdered.

7:8 - *“Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.”* God describes Ephraim as a half-baked cake because the Israelites had taken on the idolatrous ways of the kingdoms around them. Psalm 106:35-36 records the sad deterioration of Israel: “But [they] were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.” Against God’s clear warnings, they learned the ways of the heathen and became corrupted by them.

The Lord said to the children of Israel in Leviticus 20:24 and 26, “But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people. ... And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.” God had separated Israel from among the nations to be a light to the nations, but separate from the nations. The Church is also called to be a light to the Gentiles, but separate from them.

A half-baked cake is of no worth at all; it is thrown away. This is how God views a person who mixes himself with the people and becomes like them. A sanctified life is a separated life. We cannot mix ourselves with ungodly people—we must reach out to them and seek to lift them out of the pit they are in, but we are not to compromise God’s standards.

Over the years, God has quickened this verse to me for ministers and pastors. A pastor must be set apart from his

sheep. He must lovingly care for them and visit them, but a pastor can never be just “one of the guys.” There must always be a separation between the pastor and the congregation; otherwise people will lose respect for the leader. If you are in the ministry, ask God to make you well balanced in this area—kind to your people and yet separate enough from them to maintain their respect.

7:9 - *“Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.”* The Assyrians came in and took the land after Jeroboam died. Foreign nations devoured the strength of Israel and brought terrible decay to Israel, but she did not even realise it.

7:10 - *“And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this.”* This verse is similar to chapter 5:5, *“the pride of Israel doth testify to his face.”* There is a peculiarity about pride. People who have done wrong are very proud. Many people who have been punished by God for their sin become proud instead of becoming humble and repentant. The pride of Israel is what hindered them from seeking the Lord after all the calamities that came upon them. Psalm 10:4 expresses this truth, “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.” Pride prohibits us from seeking God.

7:11 - *“Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.”* The prophet said *“Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart.”* A dove represents

faithfulness, as a dove is faithful to his mate. Doves do not mate again after their mate has died. Ephraim (the northern tribes), however, was a *silly* dove—they were unfaithful to the Lord, and had many other lovers.

“They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.” When God started dealing with the Israelites, they went to Assyria and Egypt for help. Ephraim was likened unto a *silly* dove that did not know his home or to whom he belonged. When a dove is let out of his cage, he knows his home. God said that their alliances with Egypt and Assyria would not help them when He judged them.

7:12 - *“When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.”* God did not leave Himself without a witness. God has always had His righteous preachers who proclaim what He is about to do. Everybody knew what the prophet was saying. We call Hosea one of the Minor Prophets, but Hosea was a very great man. We must understand that he was not the only prophet at this time. Isaiah and Micah also prophesied during Jeremiah’s time, and there were many others who are not mentioned. They were all continually warning Israel of what was going to happen. Literally all the congregations heard the same message, but no one paid any attention to this warning.

7:13 - *“Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.”* Israel fled from God and went to Assyria. The nature of the

First Adam is to flee and hide from God, but the nature of the Last Adam is to cleave unto Him. They were speaking lies about God as well.

7:14 - *“And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.”* The Israelites did not cry out to God from their hearts when He was dealing with them. They howled upon their beds because of the judgments that had come upon them. They rebelled against the Lord.

7:15 - *“Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.”* Although the Lord blessed them and strengthened them, they plotted evil against Him.

7:16 - *“They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful [or faulty] bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.”* The Israelites did not come back to God. After the fall of Jerusalem, God took them down into Egypt (Jer. 43:7).

This thought of Ephraim’s being *“a deceitful bow”* is brought out in Psalm 78:56-57, which says, “Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.” The Israelites became like a faulty or treacherous bow whose string had lost its elasticity, so that the arrows missed the mark. Israel was missing the mark—they were unfaithful to the Lord. As a result, their princes were going to die (or fall) by the sword.

5

A WARNING OF JUDGMENTS TO COME, CAPTIVITY IN ASSYRIA AND EGYPT

8:1 - 10:15

CHAPTER EIGHT

8:1 - *“Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.”*

The eagle is the emblem of both Assyria and Babylon. Eagles swoop down upon their prey very rapidly, without warning. The Lord was speaking prophetically concerning the destruction of Jerusalem because they had not kept the Law. The Assyrians were going to come against northern Israel, the house of the Lord—His people.

The Lord tells the prophet to *“set the trumpet to his mouth.”* This is reminiscent of what Joel said in Joel 2:1, 15: “Blow the trumpet.” This means Hosea was to declare to Israel the judgments that were going to come upon her very shortly thereafter.

8:2-3 - *“Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him.”* The Israelites thought they would be saved because they knew the Lord and were called by His name,

but as Christ said in Matthew 7:21-22, it is not those who call upon the Lord who will receive salvation, but those who obey the will of God. Because Israel rejected that which is good, their enemies would pursue them and overtake them.

8:4 - *“They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.”* The Northern Kingdom did not consult the Lord in the appointment of their kings. They did not have a dynasty or one line of kings as did Judah. Judah’s kings came from the royal lineage of King David, but Israel had all kinds of people as kings—some of the lowest and worst people.

As leaders of churches, you must only make church appointments after much prayer and after hearing from the Lord whom He has chosen. In Acts 1:23-25, the apostles prayed to the Lord to reveal whom He had chosen to replace Judas in the ministry. Samuel received a sharp rebuke from the Lord not to choose a leader for the nation of Israel by outward appearances (1 Sam. 16:6-7). God alone knows people’s hearts, and whether or not they will be faithful. The Lord must make all of our decisions.

The Lord had blessed the kings of Israel with silver and gold. Regretfully, instead of using these riches to glorify God and give Him offerings, they made idols to their own destruction.

8:5 - *“Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain*

to innocency?” The NKJV says, “Your calf is rejected, O Samaria! My anger is aroused against them; How long until they attain to innocence?” Jeroboam I set up calves in Bethel and in Dan to be the gods of Israel (1 Ki. 12:28-29). God told Israel that this calf would not save them. Then God said, “When will they come clean of their iniquity, and be changed and become holy and innocent before Me?” (Jer. 13:27).

8:6 - *“For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.”* The phraseology might seem a bit peculiar, but it was actually speaking of the prophecy that was given at the very beginning of the kingdom of Israel, when Jeroboam built a calf at the altar in Bethel. (Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, is used to represent the kingdom as a whole.) A young prophet came to Bethel and said that God would raise up a son to the house of David, Josiah, who would destroy the blasphemous altar. The calves, which were set up by Jeroboam and worshipped by Israel, would be destroyed, as was the golden calf at Sinai.

1 Kings 13:1-3 says, “And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priest of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee. And he gave

a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.”

8:7 - *“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.”* The NIV reads, “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no head; it will produce no flour. Were it to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it up.” In actuality, the Lord is saying to them, “There will be no roots in what you sow, and if it does grow, the bud will not develop; and even if it does develop, strangers will come in and eat of it.” Nothing they did would prosper.

8:8 - *“Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.”* This is referring to the time in 722 B.C. when Samaria was besieged and fell to Assyria. All the Israelites were taken to other lands. God was saying that He would have no pleasure in them. They would be swallowed up and become like a despised vessel, which was cast away (Jer. 22:28; 48:38).

8:9 - *“For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.”* Ephraim was an unfaithful spouse to the Lord. She went to the other countries and gave money to them to deliver her, instead of turning to God. That is symptomatic of so many Christians today. When they get into trouble, they turn to the world for help instead of turning to God.

8:10 - *“Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.”* The Israelites have gone to other nations for help, but they will not help them. The king of Assyria will only make them sorrowful and oppress them.

8:11 - *“Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.”* Altars were intended to be used to offer sacrifices to the Lord, as Noah, Abraham, and Jacob used them, but Israel used altars to worship false gods. Ephraim made many altars to other gods. After the Israelites found altars in other heathen countries, they brought some of the altars back to Samaria and their other towns. They made altars in Israel which were like the foreign altars, and that caused the people to sin. The demons behind those altars and images that they brought from other countries actually began to govern over them.

Thus God said to them: “Because you have made these altars to pervert My ways, I will not remove the sin of idolatry from your heart and it shall become your ruin.” People who sin and choose a life of sin, refusing to change, can cross a line of demarcation whereby God says He will not deliver them from their sin, but their sin remains (Jn. 9:41).

8:12 - *“I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.”* God blessed Israel above all nations, and granted them special privileges not given to other nations—Israel was the only country to which God gave His law. Regretfully, they counted His law as

nothing. They did not receive the love of the truth (2 Th. 2:10), but instead despised the law of God.

8:13 - *“They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.”* The Israelites were very religious people at this time—not pious, God-fearing people, but *religious* people, in spite of much drunkenness and immorality everywhere. They were dutifully offering up sacrifices all the time, but God did not accept their offerings because their hearts were not right. They returned to Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem.

8:14 - *“For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.”* The land was filled with temples and palaces, but Israel had forgotten their Maker. This is hard to understand unless you have been to heathen nations. We might tend to think that people who forsake God would not have any interest in religion at all, but it is the exact opposite. They become the most religious of people and nations. They fill the land with idols and temples. What they are doing though in reality is worshipping the devil, and the devil is ruling over them.

The thing the devil craves more than anything else is worship. This is seen in the temptation of Christ in Matthew chapter 4. When people turn away from Christ, they often become very religious. That is so true with many Christians who backslide.

They actually become more religious than before, hoping to excuse themselves from judgment.

Uzziah had many towers built to protect himself because he was a famous general, but God says that will not help. All these fenced cities and fortresses they made gave them a false sense of security, and they placed their trust in them. But God was going to show them that none of these could protect them in the day of His wrath, only a righteous life could.

CHAPTER NINE

9:1-2 - *“Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor. The [threshingfloor] and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail her.”* God told Israel not to rejoice in their harvest and their field-produce, because they were going to be taken into Assyrian captivity for their unfaithfulness to Him.

The NIV says: “Do not rejoice, O Israel; do not be jubilant like the other nations. For you have been unfaithful to your God; you love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor.” The NASB reads: “Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations! For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God. You have loved harlots’ earnings on every threshing floor.” The Hebrew word *ethnan* translated “reward” in the King James Version means *a harlot’s hire*. Israel played the role of a harlot, forsaking their true love, Jehovah. Thus the fruits of their labours, their harvest, would not feed them and their wine would fail them.

9:3 - *“They shall not dwell in the Lord’s land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria.”* Egypt and Assyria were the two nations Israel was looking to for help in their time of trouble. God said they would refuse, and the Israelites would end up in those countries since they had gone to them for help.

God said, “I brought you out of Egypt, but because you have sinned I am going to send you back to Egypt.” Some actually

did go to Egypt (2 Ki. 25:26), but the primary judgment was the Assyrian captivity.

We must relate this story of Israel to the Church, who is called the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). The Israelites were the people of God; they were not heathen. So what happened to them can also happen to those in the Church if we are not careful. Hosea’s message is very timely for the Church today. There are many who need to hear this warning not to go to the world for help.

Quite often Christians today do not listen to the Lord’s warnings. They go into the world, and after a time of ignoring God’s warnings, they become engrossed and totally entrapped by the world, and that is where they remain. Jesus said in John 8:35, “The servant abideth not in the house for ever.”

9:4 - *“They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the Lord.”* There was coming a time when the Israelites would not even be able to bring offerings into the house of the Lord, because God would not accept their sacrifices.

9:5-6 - *“What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the Lord? For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles [or weeds] shall possess them: thorns shall be in their [tents].”* Memphis is one of the capital cities of Egypt. What a terrible thing!

God said to a people who had been delivered from the world, “The world will swallow you up.” One of the most treasured things for a Jew was to be buried in the land of Israel. The worst thing that could happen to a Jew was to be buried in a foreign land. Memphis is in Egypt and God said that they would be buried in a foreign land.

9:7 - *“The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.”* God limits a day. There is a time when He judges. God gave Israel prosperity, but it only caused them to go astray from Him. Therefore, He said that the day of their visitation would come. In the parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25:10-13), once the door was shut, it was not reopened (cf. Lk. 13:25). God limits a day; therefore, let us respond to Him today!

“The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.” Those who had been anointed by God and had been given a ministry became fools and mad because they allowed iniquity to govern their lives.

9:8-9 - *“The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God. They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.”* Israel had deeply corrupted herself. Hosea compares the wickedness of his days to the days when the tribe of Benjamin was almost

completely exterminated because of the conduct of the men of Gibeah (Jdg. 19:16-30).

9:10 - *“I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baalpeor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved.”* Israel was like the pleasant grapes of the wilderness and the first ripe figs to the Lord.

The Israelites were the Lord’s pleasure in their beginning when He led them out of Egypt. However, they became an abomination to Him because they went after the gods of Baalpeor and the gods of the Moabites in the wilderness (Num. 25:1-3). The phrase *“their abominations were according as they loved”* means *“they became an abomination like the thing they loved”* (NKJV).

9:11-12 - *“As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!”* The book of Hosea abounds with illustrations related to birds. Consider verse 11 in the NKJV: *“As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird; no birth, no pregnancy, and no conception!”*

The glory which God had bestowed upon Israel was going to fly away and vanish like a bird. Israel’s punishment for the worshipping of idols was that they would diminish in numbers

through lack of childbearing by the Hebrew women. We must remember that the fruit of the womb, children, is a blessing from the Lord. We must not take it for granted. It is His to give or take away.

The Lord said that the few children they did bear would be slain when they grew up (Deut. 32:25). There would be a tremendous slaughter upon the mountains of Israel of those who came to maturity by the Assyrians. God warned; woe to the nation or individual from whom the Lord withdraws His favour.

9:13-14 - *“Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. Give them, O Lord: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.”* What a tremendous judgment upon Israel! The wombs of the Jewish women would not be able to give birth. They would not be able to give nourishment to the few children that their wombs did bring forth, and their children would be for murderers to kill. This is the result of sin—no *fruit* (spiritual or natural) at all!

9:15 - *“All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers.”* Gilgal had been a place of sanctification, but now the Israelites had turned it into a place of wickedness. It is interesting that it was at Gilgal where God offered to deal with their hard hearts and sin nature, and to give them a new heart (Josh. 4-5), but they rejected God’s

provision to deal with their sin nature. The area of a person's life where he rejects cleansing is the area that will cause him to fall into sin.

Many places, which have been renowned for visitations of God, have corrupted themselves and become shrines, places where wickedness is permitted. May we seek the Lord to spare us from the same fate as Gilgal—from becoming people who once knew the Lord and were visited by Him, but then lost the presence of God.

The church of Sardis in the Book of Revelation had a name that they lived, but they were actually dead. They were living on the reputation of former years when they had a vital relationship with the Lord, but at the time John wrote to them they were spiritually dead (Rev. 3:1). May this never be said of us!

9:16 - *“Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.”* Ephraim (symbolic of Israel, the northern kingdom), whose name means “fruitfulness,” was not bearing any fruit. Their root dried up because they stopped seeking the Lord. We only bear fruit as we abide in Christ, the True Vine (Jn. 15:1-2).

9:17 - *“My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.”* Because they did not hearken unto Him, the Lord cast off the Israelites and scattered them among the nations.

Since the Middle Ages, the Jews popularly have been called “the wandering Jews.” The Israelites have not had a homeland, with their own sovereign nation and kingship, since 722 B.C. It is only now that they have a homeland. They have been wanderers throughout the nations of the earth.

The judgment of God upon a nation and a person for rejecting Him and His ways is to make them wanderers, spiritually and naturally. After being cursed by God, Cain went and dwelt in the land of Nod (Gen. 4:16), which means “wandering.” If a person will not walk uprightly, he ultimately becomes a spiritual wanderer, walking in spiritual darkness.

CHAPTER TEN

10:1 - *“Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.”* It is very important for us to understand this verse. Israel was self-centred, rather than God-centred. They sought only to increase their riches and possessions, to produce fruit for themselves, rather than for the Lord. The more Israel was blessed, the more they forgot the Lord and made altars unto Baal.

Many pastors are like Israel of old. They demand the best of everything and the luxuries of this world. Their whole motive for being in the ministry is to prosper themselves, like the Israelites. If you are like this, you will only bring forth fruit for yourself, instead of bringing forth eternal fruit. May we seek to produce fruit for the Lord.

10:2 - *“Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty [or guilty]: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.”* The hearts of the Israelites were divided. King David cried out to the Lord in Psalm 86:11, “Unite my heart to fear thy name.” We want to be whole-hearted for the Lord, in every area of our lives. Caleb entered the Promised Land because he wholly followed the Lord (Num. 14:24).

10:3 - *“For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the king, because we feared not the Lord; what then should a king do to us?”* God took away the kings of

Israel so that they no longer had a king. The NIV says, “Then they will say, ‘We have no king because we did not revere the LORD. But even if we had a king, what could he do for us?’ ”

10:4 - *“They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.”* The NIV says, “They make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field.” The prophet was saying that lawsuits were springing up like weeds everywhere because they were making false oaths and agreements.

10:5 - *“The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.”* The altars at Bethel, about 11 miles north of Jerusalem, were destroyed under the reign of Josiah (2 Ki. 23:4-20); and the people mourned because of it. Hosea calls *Bethel*, which means “house of God” by the name *Bethaven*, which means “house of idols” or “city of a false [god]” because Bethel was the place where false gods were erected.

10:6-8 - *“It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present unto king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water [or like a twig on the surface of the waters]. The high places also of Aven [or Bethaven], the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn*

and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.” This judgment upon the Israelites by the Assyrians is prophetic of the last days. The phrase, *“They shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us,”* is repeated in Revelation 6:16, “[And people] said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

10:9-11 - *“O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them. It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows. And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck; I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.”*

The NKJV reads better than the KJV: “O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah; There they stood. The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them. When it is My desire, I will chasten them. Peoples shall be gathered against them when I bind them for their two transgressions. Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh grain; But I harnessed her fair neck, I will make Ephraim pull a plow. Judah shall plow; Jacob shall break his clods.” Since the days of Gibeah (Jdg. 19), as has already been mentioned in chapter 9:8-9, Israel has persisted in sin.

10:12 - *“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.”* We see the call to repentance in this verse. God tells the Israelites to break up their fallow ground. What is fallow ground? Fallow ground is untilled ground that is not arable or fit for cultivation. It is ground that was ploughed, but then neglected, with the result that it had become hard. God uses this illustration from nature to show us that we, as Christians, must break up the fallow (or unploughed) ground of our hearts. (See the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13.) The Word of God cannot penetrate our hearts unless the hard soil is broken up.

What we sow, we will reap. The Israelites understood this from nature, but they were blind to this spiritual truth. We should sow acts of righteousness, and a life of righteousness. If we do, we will reap God’s mercy.

Also, the Lord tells them it is time to seek the Lord. There are times when we can seek the Lord year after year, and seemingly nothing happens in our lives. There are specific times that God has appointed for individuals and for the Church to seek Him. Every revival is preceded by a time of seeking the Lord.

Today we are living in the time when the spiritual Feast of Tabernacles, the Last Day revival promised in the Old and New Testaments, is going to be realised. This revival will only come, however, as the Church of Jesus Christ earnestly seeks Him and births it into existence through prayer. I believe

that today is the time to seek the Lord for all of His promises for the Last Day Church to come to pass.

10:13 - *“Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.”* Surely, we reap what we sow. The fruit of sin is spiritual death. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” God told Israel that they trusted in their own way and in the strength of their armies. It is so important to trust in the Lord and not in our own way (Prov. 3:5-6).

10:14 - *“Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.”* There is no historical record of this battle. It is quite likely that Shalman refers to Shalmanezar, the king of Assyria (2 Ki. 17:3; 18:9). The Assyrians were very cruel. They killed everyone in sight, including women and children.

10:15 - *“So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.”* Here we see the picture of a people that knew God, and then went into immorality and drunkenness; their hearts were completely taken away from the Lord, and lead them to idolatry. God in His anger said that He was going to destroy the land and cover it with weeds (nettles). Grass and nettles were going to cover all the many places where their temples

had been. God was going to take away their king and leave their land barren. All these awesome judgments came upon Israel when the Assyrians eventually overran the land. There comes a time when God says, “That is enough.”

6

GOD'S COMPASSION FOR ISRAEL

11:1-12

CHAPTER ELEVEN

In chapter 11 there is a completely new theme—the compassion of God. It is important to see the contrast between chapter 10 and chapter 11. God declared in chapter 10 that His judgment upon Israel was that their land would be made utterly desolate, and that is exactly what has happened. In chapter 11, we are going to see a complete turnaround. God is going to show forth His great compassion to Israel.

11:1 - *“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.”* God said to Moses in Exodus 4:22-23 that Israel was His firstborn son. This is the reason God’s love for Israel never failed, even when they went astray.

The Lord “called His son out of Egypt.” This is a prophecy of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is quoted in Matthew 2:13-15 when Jesus went down into Egypt. When my wife and I first went to Egypt to speak at a pastor’s conference, I was having trouble thinking of something good to say about Egypt as I started the meetings. The Lord clearly spoke to me to tell the Egyptians that He has never forgotten how they cared for His beloved Son. As you can imagine, that really opened up the

hearts of the Egyptian pastors and leaders, and God really met us in that seminar.

11:2 - *“As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim [or the Baals], and burned incense to graven images.”* When Israel was a child, or when God bore them upon eagle’s wings and brought them out of Egypt, He loved them dearly and they were His special treasure. However, shortly thereafter Israel went deep into idolatry and was led astray from the only true God. It is very important to notice that God constantly reminds us in Hosea of Israel’s sin in the wilderness. This was the time when Balaam induced Israel to idolatry on the borders of Moab. The Lord keeps repeating this because it was at this time when idolatry and the worship of Baal entered into the Israelites.

To deal with a physical problem, we all know that we must not deal merely with its symptom, but with the root of the problem. It is the same with sin. To deal with a particular sin in a person’s life, we must deal with the root of that sin.

11:3 - *“I taught Ephraim also to go [or walk], taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.”* The Lord taught Israel to walk, showing His paternal care for them, leading them by their arms. God gave them deliverance, but they did not realise it. They did not realise that the Lord was Jehovah Rapha, the One who had healed them (Ex. 15:26).

11:4 - *“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke of their jaws,*

and I laid meat unto them [or I bent down and fed them].” Here we see a picture of God’s great love for Israel. They were the apple of His eye. He had engraved them upon the palms of His hands. He stooped down to feed them. Psalm 139:17-18 says, “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.”

Isaiah 43:1-4 says, “But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.”

11:5 - *“He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.”*

Many of the Israelites decided to go back to Egypt. While the children of Israel were in the wilderness, many of them constantly wanted to go back to Egypt, and this desire to return to Egypt resurfaced many years later. They wanted to have an affinity with Egypt again, even though this tie with Egypt had already been taken out of their hearts at Gilgal when they were circumcised. God said in Joshua 5:9, “This day have I rolled away [taken away] the reproach of Egypt

from off you.” After this day they no longer had a desire to return to Egypt. Yet as soon as they started practicing immorality and idolatry, they wanted to return to Egypt (a type of this world). God said to them, “No, you will go into the land of Assyria, and the Assyrian shall be your king.”

11:6 - *“And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.”* God was going to cause the Israelites to die by the sword because of their sin. Yes, it is true that God is a God of love, but because of His awesome holiness, the Lord cannot allow habitual sin or unrepentance to go unpunished.

Many Christians say: “God is a God of love, and He would never punish sin. I am saved, and therefore I can continue on in my worldliness and sin, and God will not punish me.” This attitude that God will not punish sin is very predominant among charismatic Christians. We must remember that God’s love is just as perfect as His wrath.

11:7 - *“And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.”* The children of Israel were *bent* to backsliding. They refused to exalt and honour God. Ephraim was a proverbial backslider. You would naturally think that God would have been completely finished with Israel.

11:8 - *“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my*

repentings are kindled together.” This is one of the most remarkable verses in the whole of the Word of God. Admah and Zeboim are the two little cities that were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29:23; Gen. 14:2).

11:9 - *“I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.”* The only excuse that God gave for not destroying Ephraim was that He is God and not man. That is the only reason why Ephraim was not removed from the face of the earth.

They were very wicked. They had committed every possible sin, and they rejoiced in their iniquity. They mocked God and despised His prophets. God had every justification for destroying them. Instead, He said, “I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.” *“I will not enter into the city,”* means that He would not destroy the city.

This is why we have to be so very careful in dealing with people, especially backsliders. The tendency, after continuously warning a person who rejects counsel, is to say that God is finished with him. However, we must be patient and hear what God has to say about that person. It might well be that God says, “Yes, just leave him alone; he is finished.” At the same time, the Lord might choose to rekindle the fire and bring that person back to Himself.

I have known of remarkable instances of God restoring people who have been deep into sin. There was a very well known

minister who fell into adultery, and he could not face his wife because of the awesome guilt he felt. He left the city where he had been and went to Los Angeles. He ended up homeless and on skid row. His wife and church kept praying for him. After about seven years had passed, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him that the Lord wanted him to go back to his wife and to his church. He went back home and God enabled him to get back on track.

In Scripture, one of the most remarkable stories of restoration is King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Because of his pride, God turned him into a beast for seven years. After that time, Nebuchadnezzar repented and came to know the Lord (Dan. 4:28-37). Be careful not to write people off. Ask the Lord what He has to say about a person. Remember, with God there is always hope of restoration.

11:10-11 - *“They shall walk after the Lord: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord.”* The Lord said that after a time of captivity, He would bring them back to their land, they would dwell in their houses, and they would walk after the Lord.

11:12 - *“Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.”* Even though there was gross iniquity in northern Israel, there were still many faithful kings in Judah. Judah remained faithful at this time.

7

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF ISRAEL

12:1-14

CHAPTER TWELVE

Hosea's prophecies are repeated many times. Ephraim is a type of the backslider. He was experiencing judgment because of a progression of sin. Basically, the progression was (and still is today) drunkenness, immorality, and idolatry. Either drunkenness comes first and then immorality or vice versa. Then comes idolatry. From these three principal sins the nation of Israel became engrossed in every imaginable form of sin—robbery, murders, the shedding of innocent blood, and a multitude of others.

They deteriorated to such a state that God was going to destroy them. This is what happens with the backslider. This moral breakdown is seen in Romans 1:21-32, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God

into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” Once a person is on this downward slope, which leads to hell, it is very hard to turn around. The only hope for such a person is that God will be merciful and grant him repentance.

12:1 - *“Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.”* Wind is a type of vanity. In other words, Israel feeds on vanity. Ephraim placed their hope in Assyria and Egypt. They were turning to other nations to strengthen

themselves against their enemies, yet all their enemies were raised up by God (Ps. 105:25). We must see that God is in control. Assyria and Egypt would later turn against Israel (Ezek. 23:9, 22).

Israel was very deceitful. They sent oil to Egypt and made Egypt their ally, while at the same time they were making a covenant with Assyria. This was fulfilled during the reign of King Hoshea, who tried to deliver Israel from the yoke of Assyrian rule by an alliance with Egypt (2 Ki. 17:4).

12:2 - *“The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.”* In other words, God was saying that although the southern kingdom of Judah was faithful, there were many things that were not right, and God was not going to overlook them. The Lord was not going to overlook Judah’s sins simply because Ephraim’s (the northern tribes) sins were greater.

We must be very careful not to be deceived by the concept of *situational ethics*. This system of ethics judges acts by their situational context rather than by the moral standards of God. Right is right and wrong is wrong. Sin has greatly increased over the last 20 years. Twenty years ago, divorce and remarriage were not accepted in the Church, but today they are. All kinds of compromise have come into the Church.

12:3-4 - *“He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God. Yea, he had power*

over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us.” Here the prophet gave a brief summation of the history of the children of Israel.

The first part of verse 3 refers to the birth of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:23-26). Esau was born first, but Jacob grabbed Esau’s heel. The latter part of verse 3 and the first part of verse 4 speaks of the time when Jacob wrestled with an angel, who was actually the Lord Jesus Christ; Jacob prevailed and would not let Him go. The Lord said to Jacob in Genesis 32:28, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”

Jacob’s name was changed from *Jacob*, meaning “supplanter and deceiver,” to *Israel*, meaning “a prince with God.” His nature was also changed because he saw God face to face. The latter part of verse 4 refers to Genesis 28:10-22, when Jacob had the vision of the ladder to heaven. The Lord was at the top of the ladder when He spoke to him.

12:5-6 - “*Even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial. Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment [or justice], and wait on thy God continually.*” We must major on mercy and judgment, especially if we are in the ministry. A pastor is a shepherd of the sheep, but he is also a judge. We must be merciful, but we also must judge righteously and uprightly. We cannot be *partial* in our judgment and treatment of others.

If the wealthiest person in a pastor's congregation unfairly treats another church member who does not give as much financially, and there is a dispute, then the pastor is often tempted to take the side of the wealthy person because he does not want to lose his financial support. This is wrong. Come what may, we must always take a stand for justice and for what is right. It is better to lose the wealthiest member of your church than to lose the favour of God.

We are also commanded to “*wait on God continually.*” We need to learn the art of waiting upon the Lord in His presence and ministering to Him. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “Pray without ceasing.” We must constantly be in communion with God. Our hearts must always be reposed in His presence. There must always be a flow of life between God and us; otherwise our spiritual life will dry up.

12:7 - “*He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.*” The Hebrew word for *merchant* literally means a “Canaanite.” The NKJV says, “A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales are in his hand; he loves to oppress.” The Israelites had adopted the deceitful practices of the Canaanite merchants in their business dealings. They used dishonest scales to cheat people.

God condemns dishonesty and deceitfulness in Deuteronomy 25:13-16: “You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure,

that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the LORD your God” (NKJV) (cf. Lev. 19:36). We must be honest and upright in everything we do.

God has dealt very strongly with me over the years concerning the matter of ministers and business. While it is true that God often requires pastors to obtain secular employment until the ministry can support them full-time, pastors must be very careful about getting into business. I am not saying that God would never tell a minister to go into business, but having been in the ministry for over 40 years, I have seen many ministers destroyed by business entanglements. Often, a pastor has started a business out of his home to support the ministry. Unfortunately, greed begins to possess that pastor. He will then start selling his products from the pulpit, and use his position as pastor to pressure people in the congregation to buy his products.

God does not bless those who are lazy. The Lord loves diligent, hard workers. The Apostle Paul would make tents from time to time so that he would not be a financial burden to the people to whom he ministered (Acts 18:1-3). There is a warning in Scripture to be very careful not to become deceitful in our business dealings. As ministers of the Gospel, we should ask the Lord to spare us from falling into this pitfall.

12:8 - *“And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance [or I have found wealth for myself]:*

in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.” Although Ephraim was backslidden, he was prospering financially and economically. Hosea was prophesying during a time of great economic prosperity, and the people were saying: “We are rich. Therefore, there can’t possibly be any iniquity in us.”

This is the danger in the Charismatic movement today. There is such great affluence in many churches that people think everything is fine, even though they are not walking uprightly. They say, like Ephraim of old, “Look at all of our financial blessings. We have been blessed by God,” while at the very same time they are committing iniquity and compromising God’s holy standards, especially in the area of divorce and remarriage.

Financial prosperity is a blessing from God, but it is by no means a sign of God’s favour. God can bless someone, and yet at the same time be ready to judge him for his sin, as in the case of Israel.

12:9 - *“And I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.”* During the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites would dwell in booths for seven days to remember the days when they dwelled in booths (or tents) after the Lord brought them out of Egypt (Lev. 23:42-43).

When the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in the days of Ezra during the Restoration Era, the Israelites made booths

in the street of the Gate of Ephraim (Neh. 8:16). Ephraim represents the backslider—not a heathen, but one who once knew the ways of God, and then turned from them to walk in the ways of wickedness. In revival times, the Lord restores the backslider, as He did in the days of Ezra.

In Jerusalem, there was a gate that pointed north to Ephraim, because the tribe of Ephraim was in the north. The spiritual signification is that in the Last Day revival, of which the Feast of Tabernacles is a type, a large number of backsliders will return to the Lord. God is going to restore many people whom we had written off and thought would never make it.

12:10 - *“I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.”* God said that He had sent prophets unto Israel who had spoken unto them. Hebrews 1:1 says, “God . . . spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.”

12:11 - *“Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity [or worthless]: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrow of the fields.”* Israel offered sacrifices unto the Lord, but God did not accept their sacrifices because their hearts were not toward Him. God said He would destroy their altars.

12:12 - *“And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.”* This verse is referring to Jacob and Rachel, during the time when Jacob served Laban, Rachel’s father, for Rachel’s hand in marriage.

12:13 - *“And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.”* God brought preservation to the Israelites through the hand of the prophet Moses.

12:14 - *“Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.”* God was looking back into Israel’s history and saying to the Israelites, “Your father is Jacob. I watched over him and your fathers. I was also with Moses, but how did you requite Me? You sinned against Me in payment for all My kindness to you.” They repaid all the Lord’s kindness to them with iniquity. Therefore, the Lord said that they would bear the consequences of their sin, and the guilt of their bloodshed.

8

THE FORETELLING OF THE DESTRUCTION OF SAMARIA

13:1-16

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

13:1 - *“When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal [or through Baal worship], he died.”* The prophet was speaking of the early time when Israel served God faithfully. Then they went astray from Him and served other gods. Hosea stated that many of them died physical deaths, but they also died spiritually. It is clear, therefore, that a born-again Christian can backslide and die spiritually, as have some of God’s people in the past.

13:2 - *“And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.”* This is speaking of an actual requirement in the worship of the two calves that Israel set up in Dan and Bethel. When people came to offer sacrifices, they had to kiss the golden calves (1 Ki. 19:18).

13:3 - *“Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of*

the chimney.” The Lord was saying that the Israelites had no substance. The morning cloud and dew pass away, leaving no substance behind. Similarly, the smoke out of the chimney vanishes away. When God judged them, they would vanish as the morning cloud and the dew. Nothing abiding would be found in their lives.

13:3 - *“Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.”* The Lord rebukes Israel for going to other gods for help, because other gods could not save them. The Lord alone is the Saviour of Israel and the world.

13:5-6 - *“I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.”* Hosea was prophesying during a time of great economic prosperity when God had blessed Israel. God had given wool, wine, oil, cattle, silver and gold. God had made His people prosperous, but that prosperity led them astray. In the wilderness, in the time when they had to depend upon God, He knew them and they knew Him, but as soon as He gave them good pastures they became fat and forgot Him.

God’s desire is to abundantly bless His people and cause them to prosper. This is repeated again and again throughout the Word of God. The book of Deuteronomy says that if we will keep the laws of God, He will bless us. “Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it

shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle” (Deut. 7:11-14).

Unfortunately, very few people are able to handle the blessing of God properly. Many people can go through hard times, but cannot handle prosperity. Only a truly great man is able to handle being blessed of God and to continue walking with Him. It is so important for us to know the ways of God and develop good habits and character traits so that when God blesses us, we will continue walking with Him.

13:7-8 - *“Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul [or lining] of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.”* Because Israel had turned against the Lord, He was going to destroy them. He would devour them like a lion, spring suddenly upon them like a leopard, and tear them to pieces like an angry bear.

13:9 - *“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.”* Israel destroyed herself through sin. It is a terrible

thing for heathens to sin, but it is even worse for those who have known the ways of God to turn against the Lord and backslide. This is what happened to Israel. They became worse than the heathen nations who did not even know the Lord.

13:10 - *“I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?”* We can see the heartache of God. The Lord was the King of Israel, but Israel rejected God from being their King and wanted a human king like all the other nations.

13:11 - *“I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.”* King Saul was not God’s choice; he was the people’s choice. The children of Israel rejected God, and wanted a mortal man instead of God Himself to be their king. The Lord said to Samuel, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7). Although God had given promises concerning the throne to the tribe of Judah and had ordained for David to be king, the issue was that Israel did not want to submit to the Lord’s dominion. Their motive for asking for a king was to be like other nations. They did not wait for God, instead, they took matters into their own hands and chose Saul.

13:12 - *“The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.”* The Israelites would not acknowledge that they had done wrong. Rather than confessing their sin, they tried to hide it. The truth of the matter is that until a backslider is brought to the place where he acknowledges his sin, he will

never change (Lk. 15:17-18). Adam and Eve, who brought in original sin, sought to hide their sin from the Lord and cover it up—this is inbred in the human race. Job said he would not cover his sin like Adam (Job 31:33). David said in Psalm 51:2-3, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions.” (See also Psalm 32:3-5.)

13:13 - *“The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.”* Israel only stayed in the land from the reign of Jeroboam I to Hoshea, the last of the 20 kings of Israel. The Northern Kingdom only lasted about two hundred years, from 930 B.C., when Rehoboam became king of Judah and Jeroboam I formed the Northern Kingdom, to 722 B.C. Judah also had 20 kings, but they remained in the land for nearly 350 years (930 B.C. to 586 B.C.).

13:14 - *“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.”* The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in 1 Corinthians 15:55 to speak of the Christian’s victory over death on Resurrection Day because of Christ’s sacrifice.

It is sometimes beneficial to read stories of people who are on the verge of death. I knew a dying man who was constantly reading his Bible, but his heart was not right. He kept saying as he was dying: “It’s getting hotter, and hotter, and hotter.

Please keep putting water on me.” His life gave me a vivid picture of what it is like for a backslider to die and end up in the lake of fire.

At a certain Bible school there was a girl who was asked to take care of a missionary from India who was dying. The missionary kept asking the girl to pray for her. She kept saying, “The devil is coming; the devil is coming.” The missionary had not been living right, and she knew that she was not going to make it to heaven.

13:15-16 - *“Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.”* This happened historically in 722 B.C., when Assyria defeated Samaria (2 Ki. 17:5-6). The Assyrians were known for their terrible cruelty. (The land of Assyria is known today as Iraq.)

Ephraim was very prosperous at this time. God said that an east wind, speaking of Assyria, would come and Israel would lose everything. History repeats itself. Therefore, we can expect this to happen again in the last days. The enemies of the Lord will come from the east of the Euphrates to battle Israel, and the land of Israel will be divided again. The danger for Israel is always from the east (Rev. 16:12).

9

THE ULTIMATE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

14:1-9

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Before we consider Hosea chapter 14, let us look at some verses in the previous chapters, which show that God's purpose in everything He did to Israel was for them to be restored and come back to Him.

One verse that would best describe the condition of the Northern Kingdom is Hosea 12:8, "And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin." Hosea 5:15 says, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." God brought affliction upon the Israelites so that they would cry out to Him in that affliction and return to Him (Hos. 6:1).

The Lord has appointed times of restoration. It is only when the Lord begins to draw a person back to Himself that the backslider can repent. Hosea 10:12 says, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."

One of the most extraordinary verses found in the whole of the Word of God is Hosea 11:8. After enumerating all the sins of Ephraim, the Lord says, “*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.*” God never wants to give up on a person. He always seeks to restore people who have fallen into sin. Let us now consider chapter 14, *The Steps to Restoration*.

14:1 - “*O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*” Here is the cry of the Lord. A soul is so important in the Lord’s sight, and must therefore be important in our sight.

14:2 - “*Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves [or fruit] of our lips.*” This shows us not only how to return to the Lord, but what to say when we have backslidden. The prophet Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 3:12-14: “Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.”

We have to come to God, acknowledge our sins, and say, “Take away *all* iniquity.” This is the criterion for true restoration. We must seek God earnestly in order for Him to receive us back. We cannot presume upon the mercy of God.

David said in Psalm 40:1-2, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit.” David had to wait a long time before God lifted him up out of the pit of adultery into which he had fallen. Even when a person has sought the Lord for restoration, God has His timetable to restore him.

“So will we render the calves of our lips.” As a person turns from his wicked ways and God begins to restore him, he can begin to offer the Lord the fruit (or calves) of his lips. Hebrews 13:15 says, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” We cannot truly worship the Lord when we are not walking in His ways.

14:3 - *“Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.”* Asshur is another name for Assyria. Israel had turned to others for help when hardships came instead of turning to God. Once Ephraim turned back to God, he would no longer trust or turn to Assyria for help.

This is true repentance—acknowledging the error of our ways. As a person repents and forsakes his old ways, the Lord speaks

to him, and makes promises to him. Ephraim was speaking in verses 2-3, but now in verses 4-9 the Lord is speaking.

14:4 - *“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.”* In the natural, when a person has a sickness, that sickness can get better, but it is possible for the sickness to remain in him and be able to break out again at any time. That person needs a cure that completely removes the sickness. The same is true of backsliding.

A backslider can repent and come back to the Lord, but there is still a deeper work that needs to be done. He needs to be spiritually healed of the iniquity that used to bind him. To be totally free of sin, we need not only to cut down the obvious fruits of sin (the tree), but we need to deal with the roots of sin, as well. The blood of Jesus is able to cleanse us from any sin and turn our weakness into our strongest point.

God said He would love them freely, without reminding them of their past sins. This is brought out in Micah 7:19, where the prophet says of the Lord, “He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” When the Lord forgives us, He forgets our sin, and we should forget it too!

I knew a minister who had committed a certain sin. Even though he had confessed it and the Lord had forgiven him, he was still tormented by the tremendous guilt he felt. Every

time he would pray, he would ask the Lord to forgive him of that sin. This continued for several months. Finally, one day when he asked the Lord to forgive him again, the Lord replied, “Forgive you for what?” This man said, “You know what for, Lord.” “I forgave you the first time you asked Me to and forgot your sin,” the Lord responded. “Now you forget it!”

14:5 - *“I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.”* The Lord will be as the refreshing dew unto Israel. Restored Israel will grow as the lily, which grows and reproduces very quickly. Moreover, her roots will have great depth like the renowned cedars of Lebanon, making her stable and steadfast.

14:6 - *“His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.”* His branches will spread forth, and go over the wall (Gen. 49:22), meaning they will be a blessing to, and have an impact upon many nations outside of Israel. Israel will have the beauty of an olive tree, which speaks of peace. When Israel is ultimately restored in the Millennium after the Lord’s Second Coming (of which Hosea chapter 14 is prophetic), the Prince of Peace will reign in the midst of her and she will have great peace.

Also, Israel will be decked with the beautiful fragrance of the cedars of Lebanon. This is a description of the Bride of Christ, as typified by Solomon’s bride in Song of Solomon 4:11, “O my spouse ... the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”

14:7 - *“They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”* Those of the Northern Kingdom who had backslidden, and caused others to sin will be used to lead others to repentance and restoration after they are restored.

Wine is symbolic of joy. Therefore, the deep joy of Jesus will be restored to Israel and the backslider. David cried out to the Lord after he committed adultery, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation...” (Ps. 51:12). When a person sins, he loses the joy of the Lord, which is founded upon right living. The Lord restores His joy when a person repents.

14:8 - *“Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.”* Idolatry was the main problem of the tribe of Ephraim (and the other northern tribes); it was in their genealogy. Ephraim was the son of Joseph and the grandson of Rachel. Rachel stole the idols from the house of her father, Laban (Gen. 31:19). The sin of idolatry skipped a generation (Joseph), but was imparted to Ephraim. Sin can sometimes skip a generation, but it is still in the family line. A sin can sometimes come on one child and not on another.

It is very beneficial to study our genealogies and our family history. We need to know what traits have been passed on to us, and what bondages have afflicted our ancestors so that we can ask God to break them in our lives. It is essential

that we get deliverance from sins that we have received from our parents and grandparents so that we do not pass them on to our children.

There is a popular saying in America that says, “Like father, like son.” Ephraim, however, was not like his father, Joseph. Joseph was upright. Ephraim was like his grandmother, Rachel, filled with idolatry. We must break spirits and curses that are passed on in our family line. We can deal with things in our lives prior to the conception of our children so that iniquity or spirit is not passed on to our children. We must seek for a complete purifying and cleansing. *“Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?”* When the Israelites are restored, they will no longer worship idols. They will say, “I will no longer have anything to do with idols. Now I have become a fruitful tree, and the Lord is receiving fruit from my life.”

Great spiritual skill is needed to restore a backslider. Galatians 6:1 speaks of the gentle and meek nature, which a person who desires to be used in the ministry of restoration must have. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Isaiah 1:5-6 describes the pitiful state of a backslider, compared to a disease-ridden individual, sick from the bottom of his foot to the top of his head. Someone who is sick needs a physician to heal him. A physician is someone who has extreme compassion and tells the sick person that he can heal

him if he does what he says. Christ is our Great Physician who can heal our backsliding.

14:9 - *“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”* This was a challenge, not only to the generation in which Hosea prophesied, but also to all generations. Hosea was not just prophesying to Israel and Judah, but he was actually declaring the ways of God, which do not change with time.

Here is the challenge: Have we been seeking wisdom? If we have been seeking wisdom, then we will understand what Hosea is speaking about. If we are prudent we will understand the ways of God as they are revealed in the book of Hosea. When a person sins, God begins working in his life to lead him back to His ways and to cleanse him.

God is a God of love, but He is also a God of righteous judgment against those who continually refuse to hearken to Him. Let us, therefore, hearken unto the Lord so that we will not be cast away, but rather be very fruitful in His kingdom.

EPILOGUE

As we have seen in our study of the book of Hosea, which reveals God as the compassionate, tender, and loving Heavenly Father, God is the God of restoration. The Lord wants to restore the backslider and all of those who have fallen away. Let us briefly review now the basic steps to restoration.

Steps to Restoration

1. Acknowledgment and confession of sin
2. Asking God for forgiveness
3. Cleansing

Let us remember the words of 1 John 1:8-9, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Our part is to ask for forgiveness, and God says He will be faithful to forgive us.

God can bring even the wickedest sinners unto Himself. The lady in John chapter four had been divorced and remarried five times and was presently living with a man, but she was used to turn a whole city to the Lord. Those who have known the Lord and have backslidden can find restoration, as did the Prodigal Son, who came to his senses and returned to his father’s house. He received back his robe (meaning he was clothed again with the righteousness of Christ), a ring

(speaking of his position and authority in the Church), and his shoes (speaking of the fact that he was again taking up his calling of preaching the Gospel).

Beloved, there is a way back to God. “Draw nigh unto Me and I will draw nigh unto thee,” is the cry of the All Compassionate One. As we turn toward our Father’s home again, there is our loving Heavenly Father with His arms wide open running to receive us and embrace us.

Let us also so encourage others who may have erred from the path that there is a way back. Simply acknowledge your sins and cry out, “Turn me, O Lord, and I will be turned. Cleanse me, dear Lord.” You will feel again His tender, loving embrace. I pray that this exposition on the book of Hosea has been a blessing to you.

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