

FIGURES OF SPEECH

CHAPTER 7

- v. 1-3 — locusts . . . vision
- v. 4-6 — fire . . . vision
 - eating up the land . . . personification
 - Jacob so small, how shall he stand? (vv.2, 5)
 - metonymy and interrogation
- v. 7-9 — plumbline . . . vision metaphorical
- v. 10 — the land is not able to bear Amos' words . . . personification
- v. 16 — You say, Drop not your word against Israel . . . figurative for Do not preach, as in R.S.V.
- v. 17 — an unclean land . . . metonymy (the lack of purity before God is represented as an actual dirty mess.)

CHAPTER 8

- v. 1-3 — summer fruit . . . vision metaphorical
- v. 4 — you that swallow up the needy . . . verbal metaphor
- v. 6 — you buy the poor for silver and the needy for shoes . . . maybe literal, or a verbal metaphor
- v. 8 — land trembles for this . . . personification of land
 - it rises up like the River, is troubled and sinks again . . . simile
- v. 9 — the sun goes down at noon
 - darkens earth in the clear day . . . maybe literal or metaphor
- v. 11 — send a famine of God's word,
 - seek it from sea to sea
 - seek it from north to east
 - run to and fro and will not find it . . . climax and personification of the Word.
- v. 13 — fair virgins and young men faint for thirst (for the word) . . . ellipsis
- v. 14 — they will fall and never rise up again . . . verbal metaphor

CHAPTER 9

- v. 1 — Lord standing beside the altar . . . vision
 - smite the capitals, shake the thresholds and break them on their heads . . . verbal metaphors
- v. 2 — dig into Sheol . . . verbal metaphor (want to die climb up to heaven)

AMOS

hide in Mt. Carmel
hide in bottom of sea
go into captivity before enemies, but GOD
WILL BE THERE!

These are climactic parallelisms and verbal metaphors.

- v. 4 — the Lord's eyes are set upon them for evil . . . anthropomorphism
- v. 5 — the Lord touches the land and it melts . . . anthro. and verbal met. compare 5b with 8:8.
- v. 6 — God builds his chambers in Heaven
founded his vault upon the earth
calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out . . . see 5:8
This is anthropomorphism and metaphor.
- v. 7 — are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me?
both simile and interrogation
- v. 8 — the eyes of the Lord are on this sinful kingdom . . . anthropomorphism
- v. 9 — I will sift Israel among the nations as a grain if sifted in a sieve, not a kernel will fall on the earth . . . similitude
- v. 11-15 — These are Messianic, see Acts 15:16-18.
- v. 11 — raise David's tabernacle, close breaches, raise up ruins, build it as in the days of old . . . metonymy—covenant people meant
- v. 12 — they may possess Edom's remnant . . . synecdoche
- v. 13 — the plowman shall overtake the reaper
the treader of grapes him that sows seed . . . metaphor
mountains shall drop sweet wine
hills shall melt . . . personification and metaphor
- v. 14 — the returned captives:
shall build the waste cities
inhabit them
plant vineyards
drink wine from them
make gardens and eat the fruit . . . climax of metaphors
- v. 15 — God will plant them upon their land and they shall no more be plucked up . . . metaphor.

SPECIAL STUDY ELEVEN

THE LOVE OF GOD AND HIS DIVINE PURPOSE OF LOVE AS MANIFESTED IN THE PROPHETS

by Gerald Sappington

"For the Lord is a God of justice . . ." (Isaiah 30:18c).

"And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance . . ." (Micah 5:15).

"For the Lord is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host, he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter." (Isaiah 34:2).

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Behold, evil is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth!

"And those slain by the Lord on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground.

"Wail, you shepherds, and cry, and roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come, and you shall fall like choice rams. No refuge will remain for the shepherds, nor escape for the lords of the flock. Hark, the cry of the shepherds, and the wail of the lords of the flock! For the Lord is despoiling their pasture, and the peaceful folds are devastated, because of the fierce anger of the Lord. Like a lion he has left his covert, for their land has become a waste." (Jeremiah 25:32-37).

"For behold, the Lord will come in fire, and his chariots like the stormwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will the Lord execute judgment, and by his sword, upon all flesh; and those slain by the Lord shall be many." (Isaiah 66:15, 16).

"Now the end is upon you, and I will let loose my anger upon you, and will judge you according to your ways; and I will punish you for all your abominations. And my eye will not spare you, nor will I have pity; but I will punish you for your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the Lord." (Ezekiel 7:3, 4).

These and other passages in the Old Testament present a concept of God that to many seems irreconcilable with the picture of the loving

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Father that is woven through the pages of the New Testament. Some speak of the existence of two Gods, one of the Old Testament, and one of the New Testament. Others speak of the evolution of the God-Concept. Even many church members think God somehow underwent a personality change during the intervening years between the Old and New Testaments. However, upon closer examination of the scriptures the truly poignant love of God is seen in no greater depth, and with no greater clarity, than in the Old Testament, especially in the prophets.

In the bloom and elegance of the poetic language of these forth-tellers to Judah and Israel, we have the Love of God revealed through six euphuistic pictures.

THE SHEPHERD

Isaiah speaks of God's bestowing the tender love and care of the shepherd. "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." (Isaiah 40:11). This picture of God is not unlike that given in Luke 10 of the Good Shepherd. Indeed, these two passages seem to indicate no evolution of the concept of God, but, rather the uniformity of expression of God's love for His people.

SAVIOR AND REDEEMER

Throughout the Prophets we find God as a loving Savior and Redeemer of His people.

"For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, every one who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 45:3-7).

"For he said, Surely they are my people, sons who will not deal falsely; and he became their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved thee; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old." (Isaiah 63:8, 9).

Every prophet gives forth with a call to repentance that God might be their Savior and Redeemer; and, that He might ultimately use them to bring forth the "root of Jesse" to be the Savior of the world. God's love as the righteous and faithful Redeemer of His wicked and faithless people is unfathomable.

THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE PROPHETS

HUSBANDMAN

God is a husbandman says the prophet Isaiah. "Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He digged it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes." (Isaiah 5:1, 2). God showed his love to Israel and found his love spurned. The extent of God's love in this allegory can only be imagined in His cry of despair in verse four. "What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?" And yet God's love was so great He was still striving to draw them back and renew the cords of love.

A MOTHER

In most cultures the love of a mother is exalted as being the highest and purest emotion. And surely as William Makepeace Thackeray wrote, "Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children." And as the divinely inspired prophet spoke to the wayward childlike citizens of the nation of Israel, he appeals to this figure of God as a loving mother in yet another effort to call them to repentance. "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you." (Isaiah 49:15). "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you . . ." (Isaiah 66:13)

A HUSBAND

Another beautiful figure of God's love is the love of a husband for his wife. "For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name and the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I forsook you but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer . . . For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you . . ." (Isaiah 54:5-8, 10a).

The prophet Hosea gives further reality to this figurative description of God. The story of Hosea is one of tragedy, the tragedy of a man with an unsearchable love for an unfaithful wife. His beloved Gomer

had gone after other lovers, caring not for her former husband. However, as time passes her paramours grow weary of her and cast her into slavery. But, because of his deep love for her, Hosea "Bought her . . . for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer and a half of barley," looking forward to a renewal of the love and happiness that they had once experienced.

Israel was truly the betrothed of God, but committed adultery with the idols of Baal. Yet, God too was willing to take His wandering beloved back to his bosom. Hosea pictures God as being so deeply in love that he would not be turned aside in His search for His people. He would not let go until love had had its way. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt." (2:14, 15). "I will heal their faithlessness; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them." (14:14). Just as Hosea went to the market place to buy back his wayward wife and take her again into his home, so would the great Lover redeem and take back His beloved Israel. The prophet sees a vision of God waiting, yearning, pursuing, wooing, winning, redeeming, and restoring His wandering bride.

God's love for Israel is typical of the same love that Christ has for his bride, the church. Surely, this Old Testament concept of God's love is not one degree inferior to the concept of His love as presented in the New Testament.

THE LOVING FATHER

One final figure, the most common, and perhaps the most meaningful of all is the figure of God as the loving Father. Again, it is suggested by the uninitiated that the idea of a God as a loving Father is inherent to the New Testament and completely foreign to the Old Testament. However, the one who is not satisfied with a quick superficial examination of the scriptures quickly sees the Fatherhood of God was as much a part of the Old Testament concept of God as it is a part of the New Testament concept. "For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name." (Isaiah 63:16). "Yet, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter; we are all the work of thy hand." (Isaiah 64:8). "With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which

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they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn." (Jeremiah 31:9). "I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him." (Malachi 3:7b).

For the most touching description of the love of God as a Father we again refer to the writings of Hosea. "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them . . . How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboiim! My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy." (Hosea 11:1-4, 8, 9).

Here we get a glimpse into the tender heart of God, the loving Father, who has His heart broken into bits by ingratitude, immorality, ignorance, and rejection. We have pictured the affectionate care with which the Father redeemed his young unattractive slave boy from the land of Egypt. In spite of all the blessings bestowed by the Father, the boy rebelled and broke the Father's heart. Then comes the loving, despairing cry of the crushed father, "How can I give thee up?" Surely God's love for His son Israel, in spite of all his weaknesses and failings, dwarfs any love that an earthly father can have for his son. And it is out of this divine emotion that God brought forth discipline and punishment upon his wayward son, just as an earthly father punishes his erring child out of his deep love for that child.

CONCLUSION

God in the Old Testament, especially as revealed by the Prophets, was the God of Love. His love was so great that His constant purposes of proclamation of His message by the prophets was the redemption of mankind. This not only included Israel, but all living, for we often find God sending messengers to the pagan nations in the pre-Christian era. And in His love, coupled with discipline, He prepared a people and a world to receive perfect redemption. "For God so loved the Israelites, the Assyrians, the Philistines, and the Egyptians, as well as the Americans, the Russians, and the Africans, that in the fulness of time He sent forth His only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but live in the eternal presence of this great God of Love!"

SPECIAL STUDY TWELVE

SHOW ME HOW TO PREACH MORE EFFECTIVELY FROM THE PROPHETS

delivered at Central Christian College of the Bible
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by Paul T. Butler
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I want to commend your President, brother Spratt, and those who assisted him in placing this long neglected, but most important subject matter on the rally program. I have tried for some time now to convince the planners of the OBC Preaching Convention that a whole convention on expository sermons and exegetical lessons from the prophets would be edifying as well as attractive.

To say that there is a revived interest in prophecy would, in some evangelical circles, be the understatement of the year. Coupled with the cataclysmic wars of the past decade or two, the economic revolutions, the ideological mutinies and the very evident headlong plunge downward of morals, we now have impetus for renewed interest in prophecy supplied by a prosperous and victorious nation of Israel rumored to be in the process of gathering materials for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. One must agree with John P. Milton in his book "Prophecy Interpreted," when he states in his introduction, "This *is* an age of fear. There have been times of fear before, great fear, and wide-spread; but the words of Jesus in Luke 21:26, 'men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world,' seems to me uniquely relevant to the situation in the world today."

Since this is an age of fear it is not strange that there should be an increased interest in prophecy. We might call it an interest in eschatology, or "last things." The motivating force at the center of this new prophetic thirst is the same thing that "killed the cat," curiosity. The natural curiosity to know what lies ahead. In times of anxiety or distress it often becomes a cry of fear, "What will the end of these things be?" It expresses the hope for some assurance—some sure word of God, to calm fear. It has always been that way in times of great distress and danger. It is so today.

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Fear, anxiety or curiosity are, I suppose, legitimate motives for leading a person to study the prophets. It certainly is not a motive, especially for Christian people, worthy of what the prophets really have to offer. It will be the shame and eternal regret of the Christian church that its preachers and teachers have neglected to give the proper time and effort to a thorough, correct, and an experiential study of the prophets. All too often the emphasis in the study of prophecy is such as to increase rather than to allay fear. There are preachers and students of prophecy who seem to delight in playing on the fears and anxieties of people. They magnify the threat to peace and say little of "the things that make for peace." They are much concerned to identify men and nations and events today in terms of some specific Biblical prophecy. They focus attention on "antichrists" rather than on Christ; and they seem more concerned to prove what prophecy says about Russia, or about Israel, than to proclaim what it says about the kingdom of God. Dr. Jack P. Lewis, professor of Bible at Harding College Graduate School says in his little book, "The Minor Prophets," "There are still those who think that by diligent search they may find in advance in the prophets what they will read in the papers tomorrow. They search for automobiles, atomic bombs, airplanes, tire rationing, and the rise of world dictators . . . they read these things into the prophets instead of out of them . . . this approach is a frame of mind that tends to blind the student to the true and lasting values in the prophets. It leaves the prophet's message a puzzle to the prophet's hearers rather than being a revelation to them."

This emphasis more often than not leads to an almost "end of the world hysteria." Men delude themselves into presuming to predict "times and seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority (Acts 1:7)." Men "go to seed" on this wrong emphasis and so immerse their minds in elaborate systems and exaggerated interpretations that they soon let this mania sidetrack them from their real calling to preach the good news. It has been reported to me that one preacher in a Christian service camp in teaching premillennialism from the O.T. Prophets so disquieted a group of young people that they went home nearly hysterical. The prophets never intended such consequences from their messages and neither has God. God said to Isaiah, "Comfort my people, says your God." (Isa. 40:1).

Now I have not the time, nor is this the place to debate the various millennial views. Someone has in all seriousness said, "I am neither pre' nor post'. I'm pro." Personally, I prefer Wm. Hendriksen's view of amillennialism. Although it is not my purpose to enter into a lengthy discussion of millennialism, I cannot, by the very nature of the subject

assigned to me, completely disregard the subject. Whatever I have to say about it will be only secondary, however, to offering what, in my opinion, is a more effective way to preach from the prophets. I should like to pursue the subject, from these three aspects: Interpretation, Analyzation, Application.

INTERPRETATION

Governor George Romney is not the only person who has ever been "brain-washed." Quite a number of preachers have had their prophetic-reflexes so conditioned by radio preachers and correspondence courses on prophecy that they have thrown sound judgment and axiomatic hermeneutical principles to the wind. It is an almost foregone conclusion that when a preacher announces he is going to preach a series of sermons on prophecy the congregation is about to hear such subjects as the Jews today, Russia, the Roman Catholic church, Red China, Anglo-Israelism and other like subjects discussed. This is because we have too long allowed ourselves the dangerous luxury of complacency in proper exegesis and exposition of the Old Testament Prophets. It is always easier to preach from the prophets from a presupposed exegetical basis than it is to spend long hours of study to get the true, hermeneutically-sound, apostolically-sanctioned interpretation. There are quite a few principles of interpretation which are peculiar to prophetic literature only, as well as other general principles of interpretation. The most helpful books I have found on this particular aspect are: *Prophecy Interpreted* by John P. Milton; *The Grammar of Prophecy* by R. B. Girdlestone; *God's Prophetic Word*, by Foy Wallace; *Preaching From the Prophets* by Kyle M. Yates; *Prophecy and The Church* by Oswald T. Allis; commentaries by Edward J. Young, Keil and Delitzsch; and Peter Lange. I have borrowed Mr. Milton's terminology for the titles to some of the principles of interpretation I shall discuss:

a. **TIMES-COLORING, OR, HISTORICAL CONTEMPORANEITY:** The first significance of prophecy is as a message for the prophet's own day. The function of the prophet was first of all that of a preacher and teacher of the will of God for his contemporaries. The prophets were men upon whom God called in a critical point in His plan of redemption. Their urgent task was to stem the downward rebellious plunge of the people with whom God had covenanted to bless the world. The prophets were sent to call out from this decadent, idolatrous nation a faithful remnant; a holy people through which God might deliver the Messiah. Now in order to do this God was going to use a chastening process—captivity. But, lest the people despair, while in the servitude of captivity

for two generations, the prophets were commissioned to preach (along with their condemnations of sin and warnings of judgment), a message of hope in the future fulfillment of God's covenant in the birth of the Messiah and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. So, you see, even the messianic prophecies were given primarily for the people to whom the prophets spoke. Now it should be apparent with only a moment's reflection that the prophets could not have communicated to people of their day in a New Testament dialogue or terminology. The book of Hebrews is very implicit in pointing out that the fathers, to whom the prophets spoke in divers portions and divers manners, were instructed on kindergarten level spiritually speaking. The law was but a shadow of the good things to come. The tabernacle, was a "*parabole*" of the better things. In other words, when the prophets wanted to build hope in the hearts of the Jews—when they wanted to exhort them to have faith in God's ultimate fulfillment of what He had promised to Abraham, they had to "times-color" it, they had to couch it in terms the people of their day would understand. The prophets were not commissioned to paint a chaotic, kaleidoscopic, disjointed eschatological picture puzzle to be assembled later without regard to historical contemporaneity. This you must understand! With this principle you must begin if you are going to preach effectively from the prophets because upon this and the principles to follow depends, in my opinion, the God-intended application or relevancy of the prophetic message for our day! Yes, even the predictive element of the writings of the prophets must be interpreted from within this framework of its contemporaneity. The prophets were poets, in a sense. They painted word pictures. And theirs was contemporary art! The colors (words) they had to use were dictated by the times in which they lived. So the words of the prophets cannot always be interpreted literally. For example, when Obadiah says that Jacob will possess Mount Esau, he is really telling the people that God is someday going to fulfill His covenant promise and bless all people through His covenant people. Amos prophesies the same thing—that when the tabernacle of David is rebuilt the covenant people will not only possess Edom but all nations and we have a divinely inspired interpretation of that by James in Acts 15. James said it was being fulfilled by the response and reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God. Baalam made a similar prophecy in Numbers 24:1-17. This also has its ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah and messianic kingdom. Another example; when Isaiah and other prophets speak glowingly of the future glories of Zion, although they talk in terms which some people feel must be fulfilled literally, we know from Hebrews 12:18-29 that Christians have come to Mt. Zion. The church is the object of all the glorious

things said of Zion by the prophets! Well, I might go on for hours with examples of this principle but these two have brought me to the next principle.

b. COVENANT BACKGROUND: The covenant is, if not THE major theological idea in the Bible, one of the most important ideas. Jesus Christ, is, of course, the central figure and every doctrine, institution, or historical event focuses on Him (which, by the way is a later principle we shall deal with). He is Malachi's "messenger of the Covenant," so the whole Bible, from Gen. 3:15 to Rev. 22 is one majestic, sublime treatise on the fulfillment of God's covenant of redemption. God, in certain sovereign acts, chose to carry out His redemptive activity in history and so the prophets (as well as other books of the Bible) record their history on a background of covenant fulfillment. When we realize that God acted in history to fulfill His covenant we realize also that history as the prophets interpreted it would be purposive—it would have a goal—fulfillment of this covenant. A right understanding of the covenant will help us in rightly interpreting prophecy, for every prophecy must be seen within the setting of the covenant promise and hope. Every prophecy should be studied against the background of the covenant of blessing with Abraham, which through Moses became the national covenant with God's people Israel and through Jesus Christ found fulfillment in a universal covenant. A thorough study of Galatians and Hebrews is imperative if one is to understand the prophetic message of God's future fulfillment of His covenant. It becomes evident (if one will study the prophets without a presupposed theology) that these men spoke of the covenant of God in more than mere temporal ideals. They were well aware that the fulfillment of that covenant concerned more than a physical land and physical nation. They just did not know *who* the "messenger of the Covenant" would be or *when* it would be." (I Pet. 1:10-12). It ought to be apparent even after a cursory study of their writings that they were concerned with spiritual things. They were borne along by the Holy Spirit to interpret all the history of Israel, past, present and future, in the light of this covenant and its ultimate fulfillment.

c. ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Because the covenant of God presupposes a divine activity in history which looks forward to a future fulfillment or a goal, there is a forward-looking perspective or eschatological aspect to all Old Testament prophecy. Predictive prophecy (even that long span of 600 years of world empires predicted by Daniel) has relevance primarily only as it relates to the divine purpose of fulfilling

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the covenant, Daniel was not writing this history 600 years before it happened just to titillate the curious. He wrote it to strengthen the people of God then and today in the faithfulness of God to keep His word as He kept His covenant. Milton puts it this way: "The prophets were not predictive sharpshooters who sought merely to satisfy human curiosity with respect to the future. They were preachers who sought to renew faith in the ultimate fulfillment of the promises stated . . . in the making of the covenant with Abraham and with Israel. This being true, that predictive prophecy is rooted in covenant theology, it is also true that prophecy is wider in scope than mere specific predictions. In other words, there is a difference between the Messianic hope and specific Messianic predictions. All of prophecy looks forward to the messianic hope—even that which was intended to come to pass in the captivities or restoration. Again, there is a difference between the enunciation of a divine principle of judgment, which may find repeated expression in history, and in the prediction of a specific judgment in time; yet both are forward-looking and both belong to a proper understanding of the prophetic message. The very faith in a God of covenant fulfillment who is actively engaged in judgment and redemption, who can always be counted on to act "in character" reacting in similar situations in the same divine way, is predictive throughout. The theology of the prophets is pregnant with what may be called "the future hope." Specific prediction may be classified in a two-fold way. There may be predictions of events which are quite near, even imminent (judgments, usually). On the other hand, there may be predictions of events which are still in the remote, even indefinite, future (redemption, usually). Biblical eschatology cannot be divorced from the covenant nor the Biblical covenant from eschatology. The one illumines the other. It is equally true that we cannot divorce predictive prophecy from historical contemporaneity. No Old Testament prophecy completely rids itself of the local "times-coloring." But the "times-coloring" does not belong to the essence of a prophecy—it is rather the historical form in which the abiding truth of the prophecy is temporarily clothed."

d. **THE SHORTENED PERSPECTIVE:** The prophets, because the Holy Spirit chose to reveal it that way, sometimes depict the fulfillment of the covenant soon. In some places it seems to be expected right after, and in direct relation to, the historical situation of the moment to which the message of the prophet is directed. Joel 2:27 and 2:28 is a good example of this shortened perspective. Joel interpreted the locust plague and the drought as the Day of Jehovah to bring the covenant people to repentance. Their repentance would sanctify them unto God's purpose

and then God promised to redeem their land from the ravages of the plague—restore their crops, etc. Then suddenly, wham, he compresses or narrows down or shortens his perspective to focus on the Day of Pentecost, oblivious of all the history that transpires between. This he does from one verse to the next one. There is this "*sequence of purpose*" in the prophetic literature which may easily be confused with a calendar of times and seasons. The prophets were men of faith in the living God, who is the faithful God of covenant promise; because they believed that God is faithful they hoped for a glorious experiential fulfillment of the covenant, and they declared this hope as if it were on the horizon just beyond the present judgment.

e. THE DOUBLE EMPHASIS IN PROPHECY: Our interpretation of prophecy must be guided by a clear recognition of the two chief points of emphasis in Old Testament prophecy; Judgment and Redemption. God's goal is to fulfill His covenant made with Abraham to bless all nations through the seed of Abraham. Ever since the creation and the fall of man it has been God's active desire to bless all men in "Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." Gen. 12:3 and Eph. 1:3-14 are like the two ends of a golden string. A composite picture of the fulfillment of this covenant from the prophetic artists would look like this: a spiritually responsive people at last; the law of God finally written upon their hearts; a realization at last of the perfect fellowship between God and men envisioned by the covenant words "their God" and "my people;" a universal knowledge of God in the deep inner and experiential sense which the prophets always had in mind when they spoke of "knowing the Lord;" a complete and permanent experience of the forgiveness of sin which in itself stood as the wall of partition in the way of true covenant fellowship with God; peace, safety, fruitfulness one flock with one shepherd. In one form or another this is the closing note of almost every prophetic book. Get the picture now as the prophets paint it: the victory of God and His kingdom over every foe; unbroken fellowship between a people sanctified and holy to the Lord and their ever present faithful God a new administration of God's covenant which does not supplant but fulfills, completes, perfects, reaches the goal God had set for the Old. SUCH IS THE GOAL OF HISTORY AS THE PROPHETS SEE IT. Now, how does God, acting in history, move towards fulfillment of this goal—preparing a people? HE DOES SO THROUGH SUCCESSIVE ACTS OF JUDGMENT AND REDEMPTION/ Judgments upon the Gentiles, upon the recalcitrant covenant people all are relevant only in view of God's over-all purpose to sanctify a people. Isa. 10:5-19 illustrates this principle. The Assyrian king had it in his

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heart to dethrone the God of Israel and Judah, but God allowed him to make war on them and used Assyria's rebellion to chasten Israel. At the same time God warned Assyria that when He was finished using them He would punish them also. Parallel to and projecting beyond the motif of judgment is that of redemption. God moves forward towards the goal of His covenant with men by redemptive acts, act of goodness and deliverance ("Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" Rom. 2.4). The primary purpose of the prophetic preaching of judgment and redemption was repentance; but often there was no repentance. God is not mocked. When men do not repent at the preaching of the prophets, He acts. The very events of history are made to speak His will—events such as war, famine, plague, drought, pestilence, epidemic, captivity, catastrophic forces of nature. The divine purpose of the judgment is chastisement rather than destruction, and the divine goal is still a penitent people that will truly seek the Lord. It is only in persistent impenitence that the judgments of God become destruction upon the rebellious—and even then the destruction becomes a testimony of the victory of God over all who oppose His holy will and His kingly power. The prophetic phrase, "the day of the Lord," in a special way embodies this judgment motif. In this phrase the chastening judgment of God is seen as contemporary, near, repeated, having a covenant-related purpose, in the far distant future of Messianic times, all toward the purpose of final and complete redemption. While "the day of the Lord" usually relates to judgment it also relates to historical acts of redemption. Malachi 2:17—3:5 speaks of the "messenger of the covenant" who will come suddenly to His temple and judge and purify the sons of Levi. Before this messenger comes another is to appear who is to prepare the way before Him. This can be none other than John the Baptist and Christ. So, you see, even the first coming of Our Lord is spoken of as a judgment. Jesus Himself said, "For judgment am I come into the world . . ." Jn. 9:39. And yet His first advent is always thought of in terms of the great redemptive action of God—which indeed it truly is—but it is also The Day of Jehovah.

f. THE UNIFYING FOCAL POINT: This preceding point brings us naturally to this one. All prophecy has one central focus—God's redemptive purpose and activity in history which is focused on Jesus Christ, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). The Incarnation is the dividing line between the Old and the New. In terms of Biblical interpretation it is the dividing line between prophecy and fulfillment. If Christ and the Church be indeed the *real goal* then

His person, His life, His mission, His teaching, is like the funnel in the hour-glass; in order to be valid and relevant in the new age every prophecy must funnel through the illuminating and transforming reality of the Incarnation and of Pentecost. We shall demonstrate the validity of this as an hermeneutical principle in our next point of discussion. This means that prophecy is significant only in relation to God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. Israel as a political entity is not the significant thing in prophecy: the focus is on Israel as a religious community, which God has chosen to call "my people." As such Israel is representative of the people of God in the new age (spiritual Israel, Rom. 2; Gal. 3-4-5). Even that which was intended to be fulfilled literally and contemporary with the time the prophets wrote it, ultimately focuses on the final work of redemption done in Christ. Even that which Daniel prophesied concerning a succession of four world empires over a span of 600 years finds its focus point on the kingdom of God (Dan. 2:44). Just as all the ritual, doctrines, and institutions of the Mosaic law were "shadows of the good things to come," so prophecy all finds its relevance only as it focuses on Christ and the Church.

g. NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION: In interpreting the prophets there are many principles to follow and many characteristics to consider, but it cannot be stressed too much that the surest and plainest guidelines for interpreting them are to be found in the inspired interpretations of Christ and the apostles. They not only tell us when these prophecies were fulfilled but how and in Whom. There are at least 35 large, New Testament contexts which one may use as specific guidelines in forming principles of interpreting O.T. prophecy. I want to deal with only four to illustrate. The first one is in Luke 1:68-75. What do we find here? We find Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, prophesying the glorious nature of the circumstances that are to follow as a result of the birth of his son John. Zechariah is announcing that the time of God's redemption has come, "as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." He even uses the phraseology of the prophets saying that God's redemption is to be a time when His covenant people would be "saved from their enemies." This was to be the time when God would fulfill the covenant He made with Abraham. So you see, even when the O.T. prophets spoke of the glorious future of God's people as being a time when they would be safe and secure and victorious over their enemies—it was to find its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 2:14-15 and Rom. 8:31-39). I haven't time to amplify this so I will go on to the next illustration. Luke 4:16-21—Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, having

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read from the scroll of Isaiah (ch. 61:1-2), said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." It is impossible to miss the fact that even Jesus interpreted Isaiah 61:1-2 as a figurative description of the work of the Messiah, Jesus did not go around opening literal prison houses setting at liberty those who were oppressed. This certainly shows us that much of what the prophets spoke concerning the future glory of Zion and its inhabitants cannot be assumed to have a literal fulfillment except as it focuses on the Incarnation of Christ, His redemptive work in history, and the church of Christ. Next consider Acts 3:17-26. Here Peter says that "what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled . . . whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old . . . And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days . . ." THE PROPHETS WERE NOT CONCERNED WITH ANYTHING EXCEPT THE WORK OF REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED BY THE INCARNATE WORK OF CHRIST AND THE ESTABLISHING OF THE CHURCH, THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD. Heaven must receive Christ until that be accomplished. Then He is coming again, not to establish a Jewish economy, reinstitute the sacrifices, rebuild the temple, and offer the disobedient Jews another opportunity to repent. When He comes the SECOND time He is not coming to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Heb. 9:28). The fourth N.T. scripture is found in Hebrews 12:18-29. Here the apostle Paul says to Christians, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . ." Had they come to the Jewish temple then? No, this is exactly the opposite of what Paul was trying to teach them! Did Paul mean to say they had already arrived at heaven? No, they knew they weren't there from the persecutions they were enduring. What did he mean? He meant that these beleaguered Jewish Christians, enduring all sorts of pressures and persecutions, beginning to wonder if they had found in Christianity what their illustrious prophets had promised concerning Mt. Zion, the Messianic kingdom, HAD INDEED COME TO THE MOUNT ZION THE PROPHETS SO GLOWINGLY PORTRAYED! The church is Mount Zion! The church is the redeemed of God! The church is what the prophets saw and painted in words contemporary with their own times! (Isaiah speaks of the future glory of Zion throughout his book.) The church is New Israel and members of the church are Jews who are Jews inwardly, spiritually and not literally, (cf. Rom. 2:28-29). Well, I could go on and on, multiplying scripture after scripture from Matthew to Revelation

showing you that the prophetic promises of God were intended to be fulfilled in Christ and the church, but there are a few other things I would like to say. Suffice it to say here as unequivocally and firmly as I know how—THE CHURCH IS NOT A PARENTHESIS . . . IT IS NOT A STOP-GAP MEASURE! THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS . . . THEY HAVE BEEN EVER SINCE THE CHURCH WAS ESTABLISHED AND WILL BE UNTIL THE CHRISTIAN AGE IS OVER . . . AND THEN WILL COME AN END TO THE AGES . . . THERE ARE NO MORE AGES AFTER THIS ONE! I suggest for a thorough study of New Testament Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecy that you buy for your own library a copy of a book by the same name, authored by James D. Bales. Another discussion of this subject is contained in a series of articles in "The Voice of Evangelism," by Burton W. Barber, Spring of 1957, entitled, "Christ is Now Sitting Upon David's Throne."

h. LITERARY ASPECTS OF PROPHETIC WRITING: The prophets, being Oriental, were more poetic than prosaic. Even their prose was written poetically. The prophets were not interested in producing an "objective, news-reporting" type of literature. They were called to stir the complacent, terrify the impenitent, enrage the indifferent, encourage the downtrodden and strengthen and comfort the disheartened. They were called upon by God to paint such a vivid picture of the future glory of Zion that their contemporaries and generations to follow could endure the onslaughts of materialism, idolatry, and even the maniacal rage of Antiochus Ephiphanes (Epimanes the Jews called him). Prophecy, as found in the Old Testament, best fits the description of poetic literature, when we consider its creative results. Prophecy is able to stimulate emotion and draw a definite response from the one who reads. He may dislike it, he may hate it, he may never touch it again, but he reacts. A man may not like the O.T. Prophets because they lay bare his heart, he may love them for their beauty and pristine sacredness, but once reading, he will never be the same. Poetry, whether found in the Bible or elsewhere, is granted a license of extravagance. Prophetic figurative language furnished gorgeous chariots for the conveyance of the emotionally-intended message God had for His people. Many figures of speech were used. Inanimate objects acted or reacted. Parallelism is an outstanding characteristic of Hebrew prophecy as well as Hebrew poetry. Proverbs, parables, fables, hyperboles, types, symbols, doom song, rhapsody vision, drama—all were used to get people excited, to move them to action concerning the very critical hour in which they lived.

HOW MAY I PREACH MORE EFFECTIVELY FROM THE PROPHETS? THIS IS THE FIRST STEP!

HOW TO PREACH FROM THE PROPHETS ANALYZATION

Under this heading I want to discuss briefly a topical analyzation of the prophets. John P. Milton in his book, "Preaching From Isaiah," suggests a number of subjects which might also be discussed from the view of all the other literary prophets. Kyle M. Yates in his book, "Preaching From the Prophets," lists at the end of each chapter a number of "Practical Lessons Of Permanent Value," which would help a great deal in suggesting sermon material. There is also the wealth of biographical material available on most of the prophets. Be careful, however, that you have become thoroughly acquainted with a man like Jeremiah, his times, his writings, before you begin to preach about him as a person or you will not do his biography justice. It is an almost unforgiveable sin for a preacher to get up a hastily prepared sermon from any part of the prophets without thorough preparation as to the background of the time, understanding of the prophetic way of expression, and all the other principles I have discussed.

Some of the themes that might be considered for preaching from the prophets—which by the way are as relevant today as they were then—are:

a. **THE HOLINESS OF GOD:** He is the absolute One, there is none other like Him. He is absolutely pure, righteous, just, merciful, tender and loving and longsuffering (Hosea). He will not tolerate rebellion in any form unless it is repented of. His holiness includes His transcendence. Isaiah saw Him, high and lifted up. It includes His objective personality. God cannot be reduced to ideas or feelings. He cannot be forced into a "buddy-buddy" relationship with man. He is not merely a psychological necessity. His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. My, how this needs to be preached today!

b. **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD:** The God of the O.T. prophets is not provincial. He is not, as one Disciples of Christ publication, depicts Him, the patriarchal God of the mountains whom Moses went up and rescued and put in a box (the ark) and then had carried over into the Promised Land whom the prophets then rescued from the box. The prophets depict God as sovereign over all the thoughts, feelings and deeds of all men everywhere. Amos reveals that the heathen nations surrounding Palestine were specifically held responsible by God for their sin. Daniel offers no equivocation when he tells Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar that they are responsible to Jehovah God for their wickedness. God is the Sovereign of the universe. No one escapes respon-

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sibility to Him. Any action against His Word or against His people is an action against Him, for which the rebel will have to answer!

c. **SIN:** Many sins are listed by the prophets, vividly, disgustingly, in all their horridness and terrifying consequences; drunkenness, idolatry, adultery (each one neighing for his neighbor's wife), cheating, lying, robbing, bribery, murder. But these are simply the symptoms of what the prophets depict sin to really be: unfaithfulness to His covenant! This, of course, is a result of pride and an attitude of independence from the One who took them as a foundling child from the doorsteps of Egypt, nurtured them into a beautiful maiden, married them, then to have them commit adultery (spiritually speaking)—this is Hosea's and Ezekiel's picture of their sin! We could go on and on with this subject. Sin should be denounced today like the prophets did. God made Ezekiel into old "flint face" so that he might preach against sin unflinchingly, courageously and impartially. We should also use the prophetic literature to preach to our contemporaries of the anarchistic, destructive, death-dealing consequences of sin. Both Israel and Judah ended their national existence in a state of political, social and religious anarchy because of the rampages of unchecked sin against the Word of God.

d. **REPENTANCE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS:** The prophets plainly show that repentance and righteousness are a direct result of faith in Jehovah God. Hosea paints a horrible picture of decadence . . . "There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder . . ." (Hosea 4:1-2). In order that people might live righteously they must have faith in God (depicted by the prophets as trust which issues forth in obedience to His revelation). In order to have faith, they must know Jehovah. In order that they may know Him, they must have His omniscience and omnipotence proven to them. They must be convinced of His authority. Hosea gives the reason for their reprobation. Ephraim has played the harlot (that is, spiritual adultery, idolatry, going after other Gods). "Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of harlotry is within them, and they know not the Lord" (Hos. 5:4). How will they be turned from this spirit of harlotry? How will God win back their affections? How will it be shown them that there is only one God? This brings me to the next topic which is most certainly worthy of being preached upon from the O.T. prophets.

e. **EVIDENCE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE; HIS NATURE; THE IMMUTABILITY OF HIS WORD:** Peter knew what he was talking about when he wrote, "And we have the prophetic word made more sure . . ." (II Pet.

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1:19). The fulfillment of prophecy is an even more sure evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ and the infallibility of His word than the things Peter and others witnessed with their own eyes. Fulfilled prophecies are demonstrations to our very own eyes and mind of the supernatural nature of this Word of God. There is simply no way to rationally, scientifically argue against it. You may subjectively deny it, but you cannot objectively disprove it! Isaiah challenges the false gods of Israel, "Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods . . . Behold you are nothing, and your work is nought; an abomination is he who chooses you . . ." (Isa. 41:23-24). Again, Isaiah, "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel . . . I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it, let him declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be . . ." (Isa. 44:6-7). Ezekiel reminds his readers that when they finally see his prophecies come to pass, "Then they will know that I am the Lord." Over and over the prophets themselves appeal to fulfillment of God's word in order to bring the people back to their senses. This is certainly imperative in our day.

f. **WORSHIP:** Some of the most exalted phrases of all the literature available to man are found in the prophets. Why? Because these men were overwhelmed and lifted to the heights of glory by the revelation of God and His plan they were given. What preacher in the Christian Church has not wished he could teach his congregation to be more reverent? We have lost, or have never had, that reverence, awe, respect for God which the prophets of old had. They beheld His Majesty, Glory, Omnipotence, Awfulness, and prostrated themselves bodily before Him, and were never quick to speak in His presence lest they be found irreverent. Words of reverence, adoration, praise, thanksgiving were ever on their lips. Let us then, by preaching from the prophets, reveal to men and women the majesty, glory and holiness of God—let us overwhelm them with the love of God as He is seen fulfilling His covenant according to the prophets, and bring men and women to worship God truly.

Now the best way to preach on these topics from the prophets is to preach expository sermons. This takes work. There is no easy way to preach effective, true-to-God's-word expository sermons. You must thoroughly study the background of history for each prophetic book. You must read and read and read the book until you are empathetic with the prophet. You must analyze and synthesize. You must take each book apart, chapter by chapter, paragraph by paragraph, analyze the

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context, outline it, put it back together again, view it in the proverbial "birds-eye-view," (i.e. each chapter in light of the overall purpose and background of the book). Remembering that its first purpose was its message for the people of the day of the prophet; secondly that everything the prophet said had also an eschatologically forward look to the time of the Messiah and His kingdom; thirdly that the revelation of God's immutability, love, faithfulness in all this is what is most relevant for us. I would suggest that you study some good Old Testament Survey books on the prophets before you begin to preach from them—books like G. Campbell Morgan's, "The Unfolding Message of the Bible;" "The Doctrine of the Prophets," by Kirkpatrick; "Bible Survey," by William Hendriksen; even Edward J. Young's, "An Introduction to the Old Testament," would be helpful. Be careful of selecting books on the prophets written by those with premillennial presuppositions. This a priori approach so clouds the thinking that it obscures the real place each of the books of prophecy has in the overall scheme of God's revelation of His plan of redemption.

APPLICATION

When you have learned to interpret the prophetic message by using correct hermeneutical axioms, and when you have become familiar with the content of their writings then you will begin to grasp one of the greatest truths the Bible has to offer man—a God-centered philosophy of history. This is as relevant as anything could possibly be. It is imperatively contemporary! A philosophy of history determines the political philosophy, social philosophy and religious philosophy an individual or a nation of individuals will take. The reason for so much sin, materialism or complete sensuality is a perverted philosophy of history. On the other hand the hippie anti-mind mood and their anarchistic rejection of mores so necessary to an adhesive society is simply due to a perverted philosophy of history.

In his essay "A Free Man's Worship," Bertrand Russell says that "man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving." The human venture, he says, is the outcome of "accidental collocations of atoms." Consequently, the whole edifice of man's achievement must eventually be "buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins."

The Marxist philosophy of history with its godless dialectical materialism has poisoned millions of minds today. Spengler, who wrote "The Decline of the West" in 1917, said, there is first a "dictatorship of money," followed by man becoming "the slave of the machine," followed

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by the growth of absolutism in government, which leads to race suicide. Schweitzer said, the "suicide of civilization is in process." Sorokin says we are passing through a "grim transition" from sensate values toward social, economic, political, intellectual and moral decay." According to Sorokin we cannot stop the transition from taking place;" we can only hasten the change and make it less violent . . . there is no alternative."

Since the pages of history are strewn with the wrecks of past civilizations, man is forced to ask questions concerning the meaning of history and the relation between specific events and the course of history as a whole. Are there ends that are being achieved and values that are being built up? Is there progress in the direction of rationality, liberty, individuality, justice and human welfare? Is there pattern, order, a plot, a theme, a development that we can discern? What do all these historical events mean? Why do we have the rising and falling of great cultures and civilization? Why do we have wars, famines, natural calamities? Is there any purpose or goal to these things or are they chaotic, unconnected, purposeless events gradually grinding the human race into oblivion?

God knew that the people of the days of the prophets, if they were to be awakened to repentance for their sins on the one hand and brought to trust in the faithfulness of God on the other hand, must be given a God-centered philosophy of history. They must be shown that there is purpose, God-controlled purpose, in all the cataclysmic events falling upon them; plagues of locusts, droughts, earthquakes, wars, captivities and redemptions. If there was to be any people to carry on the purpose of God in the earth, they would have to be made aware that what appeared to be inevitable doom was filled with hope because God was in control of all of it! So God, through the prophets, revealed His omnipotent, omniscient hand in all of history. The rising and falling of world empires, wars, famines, earthquakes, captivities, redemptions—all were shown to be under the control of God and being used to serve His purpose. History is purposeful! It is to have a climax and a consummation. History is headed for a completion which God has planned. History is the process by which God has chosen to reach that goal.

The prophets speak of God as being completely sovereign in history to work His will. There is no realm in which God does not work. He is the Dynamic behind daily events as well as historic happenings of world-wide import. If the prophets teach one thing, it is that God's sovereignty in history cannot be challenged. Though evil empires may rise, still God controls. Though world-shaking events transpire, God still is on His throne. His ultimate victory is inevitable. No one will ever

dethrone God. Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Darius, Alexander the Great, Antiochus Euphrates, Caesar, all tried, but God's purpose and plan was not in the least hindered. His plan reached its climax exactly at the time, in the place, and in the manner in which it was foretold.

History is not chance, but plan; not fate, but God. History is purposeful. There is a design and a Designer in the course of events. When one studies the prophets, he cannot but help cry out with the hymn writer of old, "Faith is the Victory!" What is the goal of history? It is: Redemption! Man has sinned, but through history God is effecting redemption. With every event, God is bringing history to a logical conclusion. His goal and His purpose is immutable. Though world powers come and go, they shall never deter God's purpose; that being to effect redemption, and to establish forever His supremacy. It is evident that each event is not a separate entity in itself, but is an integral part of the whole course of events. Prophecy views events in their relation to the total Divine purpose.

Fairbairn in his book "Prophecy" says, "History is the occasion of prophecy, but not its measure; for prophecy rises above history, borne aloft by wings which carry it far beyond the present, and which it derives, not from the past occurrences of which history takes cognizance, but from Him to whom the future and the past are alike known. It is the communication of so much of His own supernatural light as he sees fit to let down upon the dark movements of history, to show whither they are conducting. For the most part, the persons who live in the midst of events are the least capable of understanding aright the character of their age. But God is elevated above it, and, by the word of prophecy, he so informs the minds of his people in respect to the end that they come also to know better than they could otherwise have done the beginning and the middle."

Edward J. Young in his book "The Study of Old Testament Theology Today," says, "It is necessary today to stress the importance of history. Remove from it its historical basis and there is no true Christianity. For the Christian religion is founded squarely upon certain things which God did in history. Remove from it its historical basis and there can be no true study of Old Testament theology . . . in the fulness of time, God entered the realm of history in a unique way. He sent forth His Son, and the second person of the Trinity became man. To Him the kings, and priests, and prophets of the Old Testament dispensation pointed. And in Him was the fulfillment, for He was the true Prophet, Priest and King, and it was He who by a definite act in history, namely His atoning death and resurrection healed the breach between man and God and brought salvation to the earth."

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Merrill C. Tenney, in his book "The Reality of the Resurrection," says, "The historical evidence supporting the resurrection, because it is forever engraved in history's archives, is still as valid as it has ever been . . . Because this divine act is a part of recorded experience, it is proof in understandable terms that God can transcend death by life and that He has opened a new dimension of existence to believers in Christ . . . The resurrection demands the attention of those who contemplate the basic problems of death and life, for it has thrust into them a new factor which must be included in evaluating the whole of human experience . . . Any attempt to explain the processes of history will be incomplete without it . . . the resurrection is permanently relevant to any scheme of thought . . . THE EVENT IS FIXED IN HISTORY, THE DYNAMIC IS POTENT FOR ETERNITY!"

This is what the prophets had to say to the people of their day! In God's own good time He was going to historically fulfill the covenant promise He had made with Abraham. In the meantime, the prophet's whole purpose was to interpret for the people of their day the historic events of the past and the present and predict historic events of the future all in a matrix of a God-controlled and God-purposed philosophy of history. This they did by showing great spans of secular history, as much as 600 years at a time (Daniel), leading to the greatest of all historical events, the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom.

Isaiah prophesies, "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth for the Lord has spoken." Isa. 25:6-8. This, my friend, was the climax of all the history toward which the prophets depict God moving relentlessly, immutably, actively, lovingly. It was climaxed when God swallowed up death forever in the resurrection of Jesus Christ the greatest event ever to transpire (excluding, of course, the second Advent).

This is what our world needs today! This is the application of O.T. prophecy we must make today! God-consciousness! Every individual must come to know intellectually and experientially that God's purposes are going to be served; that His purposes are holy, righteous, just, eternal and joyous. The world must surrender to a God-centered philosophy of history. Then it will be able to overcome all the fiery darts of the evil one. Then it will stop its headlong plunge into spiritual schizophrenia!

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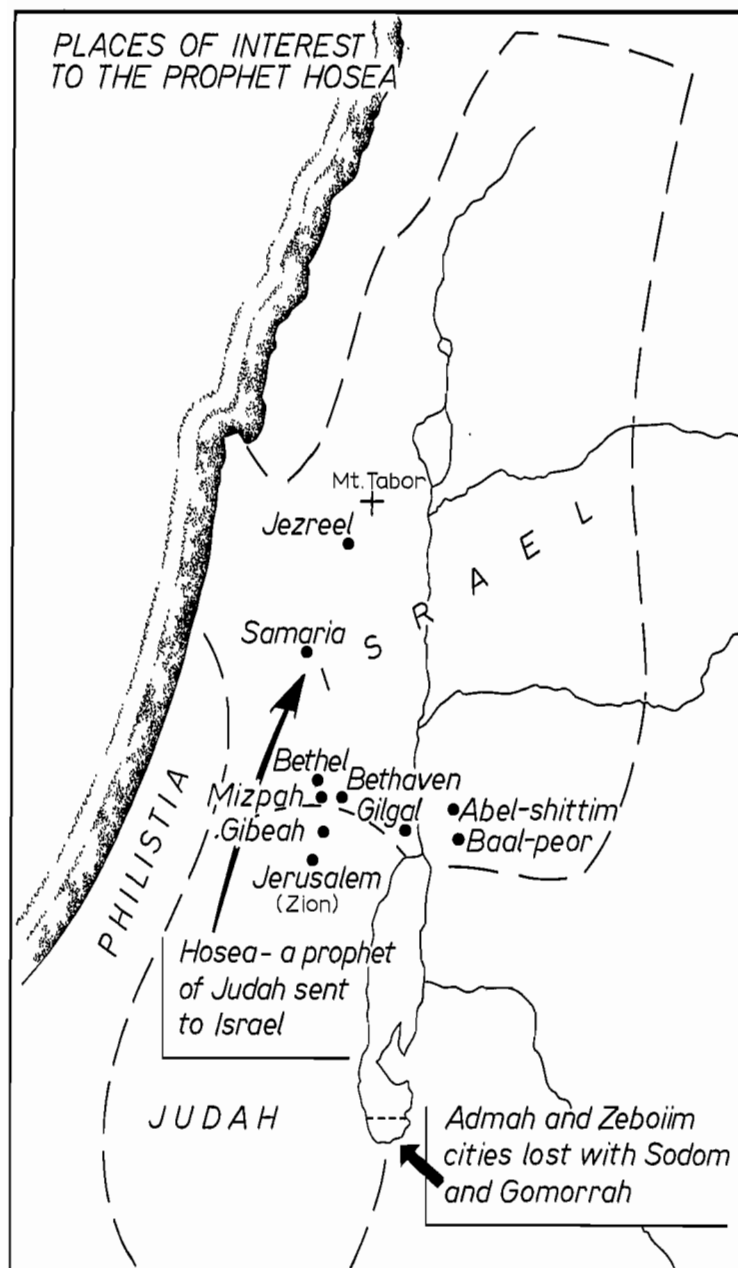
It will lose its debilitating pessimism! It will break its bitter bonds of hopelessness! Then men and women will be able to say with Habakkuk:

Though the fig tree do not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the product of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet will I rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my
salvation.

God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like hinds'
feet,
he makes me tread upon my
high places.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

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Hosea 14:1-4

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.

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.

Hosea 11:8, 9

1 O Asrael, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

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 of our lips.

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.

4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

HOSEA

INTRODUCTION

Author: Hosea means "Jehovah Saves" or "Salvation." Hosea appears to have been a gentle man but one of deep and fervent feelings. He expresses himself with many of the same emotions as Jeremiah. He has been compared with the apostle John of the New Testament because of his emphasis on the love of God. He was the son of Beeri (meaning either "fountain" or "one who explains"). He began his prophecy in the last days of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, and probably preached until the early days of Hezekiah, king of Judah. He was a young man when Amos was almost through with his preaching. While Hosea was preaching to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom, Isaiah was preaching to Judah, the southern kingdom.

Date: We have assigned the probable date of the writing of Hosea's book somewhere between 790-725 B.C. The opening verses of the book itself (1:1) give us a basis for this period of time. Furthermore, its place in the canon indicates it was one of the earliest books. A tradition recorded in the Jewish Talmud places the book among the earliest of the prophets.

Background: At the beginning of Hosea's ministry Jeroboam II, the last strong king of Israel died. He was succeeded by Zechariah, his son, and this ended the dynasty of Jehu. Zechariah was murdered after only six months on the throne by Shallum (cf. II Kings ch. 15, 16, 17). Shallum was in turn murdered by Menahem after only one month on the throne. Menahem reigned for ten years and was succeeded by his son, Pekahiah. In two years Pekahiah was murdered by Pekah. Hoshea murdered Pekah and reigned nine years and then the kingdom of Israel came to a disastrous end in the Assyrian captivity about 722 B.C.

Hosea's ministry also overlapped the reigns of Tiglath-Pilezer, Shalmanezar IV and Sargon II, all of Assyria. Uzziah's long rule in Judah took place during the time of Hosea.

Although Hosea predicts, but does not record, the actual captivity of Israel which took place in 722 B.C., he still may have lived through the event. He would have been very old. The time of Hosea's early ministry was a time of material prosperity (cf. 2:8-13), but it was a society falling apart at the seams morally. The entire land, except for a very small remnant, was decadent and utterly corrupt. The evil which Amos had condemned earlier had grown worse. Religious apostasy and refusal to know God led to social and moral anarchy.

HOSEA

Kings and princes are entertained by the people's misbehavior and sin (7:2ff); a degenerate priesthood wrings its hands in greedy glee over the sins of the people because its coffers are enriched through them (4:6-8); virtue and uprightness is gone and killing, stealing and bloody violence has come to the land (4:1-2; 6:8; 7:1; 10:4; 11:12); sin is rampant (8:1); the people will not tolerate rebuke (5:4) but persecute and revile the true prophets who are sent to them.

While Amos was sent from Judah to Israel as a stranger, it would appear that Hosea was a native of the northern kingdom. Hosea writes as one perfectly familiar with the internal condition of Israel socially, morally, politically, religiously and even geographically. As Kirkpatrick says, "The picture is drawn with a force and feeling which attest an eyewitness; and an eyewitness who does not merely view things from the outside as a stranger, but is keenly and bitterly alive to the sense that his own country is being dragged headlong down to ruin by the sins and crimes which he rebukes but cannot reform."

Hosea's Marriage: It is well to deal with the problem of Hosea's marriage before any attempt is made at exegesis of the text for such exegesis is necessarily based upon one's interpretation of the marriage.

Lange says, "The question . . . is encumbered with difficulties so great as to seem almost insuperable, and it is probable that it will never be satisfactorily settled. Instances might even be quoted of the same interpreter holding directly opposite opinions within a very short period of time." We recognize that competent Bible-believing scholars have held to the symbolical or allegorical view but we prefer, on the basis of what appears as good evidence, the literal view. Note:

- (a) The whole narrative bears the stamp of reality.
- (b) Only by literal interpretation does the narrative of the first chapter receive its natural meaning.
- (c) Only by literal interpretation do we get the connection between Hosea's life and his teaching which is the true key to his writings.
- (d) The name of the wife strongly indicates literal interpretation for if the story were allegorical we would expect the wife's name to bear some symbolical or allegorical significance but there is no such significance attached to the name Gomer whatsoever.
- (e) There is not the slightest hint or inference in the book itself that the marriage is allegorical.

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- (f) An allegorical interpretation does not relieve the supposed moral difficulty for if God's commanding Hosea to marry a literal harlot or adulterer would raise a moral difficulty, it would raise the same difficulty to Hosea's mind, or to anyone's, to command him to do so allegorically.
- (g) The exegesis based upon a literal marriage involves no wresting of the rest of the texts as, we believe, an allegorical marriage does.

Purpose: Hosea is the prophet of "unrequited love." His great commission was to break the hearts of the people of Israel unto repentance.

He plunges the plow of God's righteous indignation into the fallow ground of their calloused hearts. Sometimes tenderly, sometimes roughly, but always purposely he paints vivid, dramatic pictures of their unfaithfulness to the God who so passionately loved them. Kirkpatrick says, "Hosea's personal history supplies the master-key to his teaching." Indeed, it was his own heartbreaking experience with the infidelity of Gomer that branded on Hosea's soul the message God wished conveyed to the unfaithful bride, Israel. Hosea learned something of God's feelings through his own personal experience. G. Campbell Morgan writes, "The great burden of Hosea is first a recognition of sin, and sin in its ultimate and worst form, infidelity to love. The supreme sin is disloyalty to the love of God, and it is all here in Hosea."

But Hosea not only shows the ugliness of such sin, he also warns of the terrible and perfect wrath of God upon the impenitent. *Perfect love must* punish the impenitent rebel.

Yet the great undertone running all through the book of Hosea, breaking through over and over again, is that of the constancy of God's love. As Dr. Morgan points out, Hosea validates the lines of Shakespeare which go—"Love is not love . . . Which alters when it alteration finds." The most touching and beautiful picture of God's love toward the people is in the dialogue between the penitent people and Jehovah with which the book closes (chapter 14). The people approach Him in a prayer of repentance, confessing their sin and promising no more to turn to worldly powers or material forces for help. Back comes the tender, gracious promise of God to "heal their faithlessness, . . . love them freely . . ."

Hosea's message is not as specifically Messianic as Isaiah. That it was intended to find its overall and ultimate focus on the Messiah and the Messianic kingdom, however, is plainly evident from the few quotations interpreted for us by the divinely guided apostles (Rom. 9:25-26; Matt. 2:15; II Pet. 2:10).

Hosea's book, in our opinion, falls into four main divisions as we have outlined below:

Theme: The Love of God

I Love Rebuffed, 1:1—2:13 and 4:1—8:14

A. Gomer's Ingratitude

1. Spirit of harlotry, 1:1-9; 1:10-11; 2:1-5
2. Spurious Lovers, 2:6-8
3. Shame Revealed 2:9-13

B. Israel's Ingratitude

1. Lack of knowledge, 4:1—6:11
2. Love of Sin, 7:1-13
3. Lament of the Lord, 7:14—8:14

II Love Rebuking, 9:1—13:16

A. Reproving ("Thou hast sinned"), 9:1—10:11

1. Forsook God, 9:1-9
2. Followed Baal, 9:10-17
3. Fell into anarchy, 10:1-11

B. Remonstrating ("Seek Jehovah") 10:12—11:12

1. Renovate "fallow ground" 10:12-14
2. Recognize the Lord's compassion, 11:1-9
3. See Judah's unfaithfulness, 11:10-12

C. Requiring ("I will destroy"), 12:1—13:16

1. Ephraim has provoked, 12:1-14
2. God will punish, 13:1-8
3. Israel will perish, 13:9-16

III Love Reconciling, 2:14-23; 3:1-5; 14:1-8

A. Penitence Required, 2:14-23

1. Lured, 2:14-15
2. Laved, 2:16-20
3. Loved, 2:21-23

B. Pardon a Result, 3:1-5

1. Lured, 3:1-2
2. Laved, 3:3-4
3. Loved, 3:5

C. Peace Remains, 14:1-9

1. Lured, 14:1-3
2. Laved, 14:4-6
3. Loved, 14:7-8

IV Postscript, 14:9

LOVE REBUFFED

GOMER'S INGRATITUDE—
SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

TEXT: 1:1-8

- 1 The word of Jehovah 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.
- 2 When Jehovah spake at the first by Hosea, Jehovah said unto Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom; for the land doth commit great whoredom, departing from Jehovah.
- 3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; and she conceived, and bare him a son.
- 4 And Jehovah 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 the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease.
- 5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.
- 6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And Jehovah said unto him, call her name Lo-ruhamah; for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, that I should in any wise pardon them.
- 7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by Jehovah their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.
- 8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.
- 9 And Jehovah said, Call his name Lo-ammi; for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

QUERIES

- a. Was it right for God to command Hosea to marry an immoral woman?
- b. Why would God command Hosea to do so?
- c. Why did God command Hosea to give such names to his children?

PARAPHRASE

The word of the Covenant God came to Hosea and took possession of him during the reigns of these four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; and during the reign of Jeroboam, son of Joash,

who was king of Israel then. The Lord commanded Hosea, Go and marry a whorish woman and have children of the same character by her. This experience will symbolize the actions of Israel who has committed spiritual whoredom against Me by worshipping other gods. So Hosea married a whorish woman by the name of Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Now the Lord commanded Hosea, Name the child Jezreel (God disperses or God scatters) for I am about to punish the dynasty of Jehu and avenge the blood shed in the valley of Jezreel at which time I will make Israel into a "Jezreel" (dispersed or scattered). That is when I will strip Israel of her military power—I will do it in the very valley of Jezreel. Soon Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Jehovah commanded Hosea, saying, Name this child Loruhamah (She finds no sympathy) and let her name symbolize the fact that I will not show Israel any more mercy to forgive her again. I will, however, have mercy on Judah and save her by My own Mighty Arm—and without any help from her armies or weapons. Now just as soon as Gomer weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to another son. God commanded Hosea, saying, Name this child Lo-ammi (not mine) and let his name symbolize the fact that Israel is not My people any longer and neither will I be their God any more.

SUMMARY

Hosea is commanded to marry a "whorish" woman which symbolizes the attitude of the people of Israel toward God. The prophet is further commanded to give his children symbolical names depicting God's attitude toward the idolatrous people.

COMMENTS

v. 1 THE WORD OF JEHOVAH THAT CAME UNTO HOSEA; The word "came" is from a Hebrew word which is often used to mean "took possession of," and is so used of the evil spirit sent by the Lord upon Saul (I Sam. 16:23; 19:9). What Hosea says to Israel is not simply Hosea's idea of what he thinks God might want to say to Israel—what Hosea says is exactly what God put into his mind to say. Peter writes (II Pet. 1:21), "Being borne along by the Holy Spirit, men spake from God" (translation by Edward J. Young in "Thy Word is Truth"). The prophets possessed the Spirit of Christ (I Pet. 1:10-12), were possessed by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21), so what they wrote did not come by the impulse of men, did not

originate in their minds; what they spoke and wrote originated in the Mind of God and they became the spokesmen. Warfield says, "The term 'borne' is very specific . . . not to be confounded with guiding, directing or controlling or even leading . . . it goes beyond all such terms . . . The things which they (the prophets) spoke under this operation of the Spirit were therefore His things, not theirs." That individuality of expression is apparent in the Biblical writings is obvious. Peter does not express God's message with the same vocabulary and style as John or Paul and vice versa. But this cannot be construed as evidence to deny their infallibility. We quote again from B. B. Warfield: "Revelation is made in both words and deeds; it is necessary therefore that both the words and deeds be recorded inerrantly. If the Lord makes any revelation to man (or through man) He would do so in the language (and style) of the particular man He employs as the organ of His revelation . . . The accommodation of the revealing God to the several prophetic individualities . . . is a concursive operation. The Spirit works confluent in, with and by them elevating them, directing them, controlling them, energizing them, so that, as His instruments, they rise above themselves and under His inspiration (influence) do His work and reach His aim. The product, therefore, which is attained by their means is His product through them . . . Although the circumstance that what is done by and through the action of human powers keeps the product in form and quality in a true sense human, yet the confluent operation of the Holy Spirit throughout the whole process raises the result above what could by any possibility be achieved by mere human powers and constitutes it expressly a supernatural product . . . Even the very words were God's intended words—the apostles were acutely conscious that they were citing immediate words of God; (cf. Gal. 3:16) here Paul hangs an argument on the very words of Scripture and so does Jesus (cf. Jn. 10:34; Mt. 22:32, 43).

Hosea means literally, *Salvation*, or, *the Lord saveth*. His father's name, *Beeri*, means, *my well or welling-forth*. We have already considered the background of the time in which Hosea prophesied (cf. Introduction). There can be very little doubt as to the time of the composition of this book and Hosea's ministry for it is specifically declared to be in the reign of Jeroboam II (see Introduction).

V. 2 JEHOVAH SAID UNTO HOSEA, GO, TAKE THEE A WIFE OF WHOREDOM AND CHILDREN OF WHOREDOM; We have discussed in our Introduction to this book whether Hosea's marriage was an actual,

historical event or whether it was visionary and symbolical. Our view is that it was an actual event which was intended to symbolize the then existing spiritual relationship of Israel to God. G. Campbell Morgan, emphasizing the phrase in this verse "spake at the first," says, ". . . notice very carefully that little phrase, 'at the first.' The writer was looking back, from the end of his ministry, when he was writing out his notes, committing them to manuscript form, and said in effect: When away back there my ministry began, when, before the tragedy came into my life, Jehovah spoke with me, it was He Who commanded me to marry Gomer. The statement distinctly calls her a woman of whoredom, but it does not tell us that she was that at the time. It certainly does mean that God knew the possibilities in the heart of Gomer, and that presently they would be manifested in her conduct, and knowing, He commanded Hosea to marry her, knowing also what his experience would do for him in his prophetic work. When Hosea married Gomer, she was not openly a sinning woman, and the children antedated her infidelity. The earlier life of the prophet was in all likelihood one of joy and happiness."

So Dr. Morgan believes that Gomer had the spirit of harlotry in her heart before Hosea married her but that she did not actually commit adultery until after the children were born. This would be one way to solve the seeming incongruity of God commanding Hosea to marry a woman who had already become a harlot—a command which some think would put God in the position of violating His own Holy Nature. Others say that God simply commanded Hosea to marry a woman of Israel—equating "a woman of whoredom" with the spiritual harlotry of all Israel at that time—and that she became an adulteress after the marriage. The visionary or allegorical interpretation of the marriage does not solve the alleged moral problem here since a command from God to engage in such a relationship would have been just as contrary to the thinking of Hosea as to command the actual thing (see Introduction). Furthermore, as Kirkpatrick points out, ". . . if the prophet had a faithful wife, it seems incredible that he should have exposed her to the suspicion of infidelity, as he must have done by using an allegory which certainly does not bear its allegorical character upon the face of it." Kirkpatrick's view of the situation is like that of G. Campbell Morgan's. Pusey deals with the moral difficulty thusly, "Holy Scripture relates that all this was done, and tells us the births and names of the children, as real history. As such then, must we receive it. We must not imagine things to be unworthy of God, because they do not commend themselves to us

(cf. Isa. 55:8-9). . . . as Sovereign Judge, He commanded the lives of the Canaanites to be taken away by Israel . . . He has ordained that the magistrate should not bear the sword in vain, but has made him His minister, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Rom. 13:4) . . . He willed to repay to the Israelites their hard and unjust servitude, by commanding them to spoil the Egyptians (Ex. 3:22) . . . The Prophet was not defiled, by taking as his lawful wife, at God's bidding, one defiled, however hard a thing this was."

God is absolute Sovereign. He may supercede "natural law" as He wishes. He is Lord of all and may command men and nature to do what seems to finite thinking unjust, perhaps immoral, while in His omniscience He is not at all self-contradictory.

Laetsch says that even if Gomer had been guilty of harlotry before Hosea married her, his marrying her would still not have constituted an immoral act for, ". . . An act is immoral, . . . only if it violates a clear command of God. There is no divine commandment forbidding such a marriage, hence no reason to condemn it as immoral, particularly since God *commanded* this marriage. Only priests were forbidden to marry a harlot (Lev. 21:7) . . ."

Kirkpatrick writes, "The true view, which at once relieves the moral difficulty, gives the natural explanation to the narrative, and supplies the key to Hosea's teaching in the experience of his life, is that while we have in these chapters a record of actual facts, Gomer was as yet unstained when Hosea took her to be his wife. The expression used in chapter 1:2 is peculiar. She is not called a harlot, but *a wife or woman of whoredom* ("a wife of harlotry," R.S.V.). The hideous tendencies to evil were latent in her heart. The prophet's love did not avail to restrain them . . . She abandoned him for the wild orgies of the licentious worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. Then, as he sat in his homeless home, and pondered over this . . . as he 'watched the ghastly ruins of his life,' he saw that even this cruel calamity was not blind chance but the will of God . . . Then he recognized that it was by God's command that he had chosen the wife who had proved so faithless."

Lange adds, ". . . it is one thing to have intercourse with an unchaste woman, in order to practice fornication with her, and quite another to marry such a woman. The one is as assuredly sinful as the other is in itself not so, any more than it was for Jesus to be a friend of publicans and sinners. For the prophet would not have

entered into such an alliance that he might be assimilated to the woman, but in order to raise her up to his own level, to rescue her from her sinful habits . . ."

It would seem to us that whether God commanded Hosea to marry a woman who, until after marriage had not committed harlotry but who had the spirit of harlotry hidden in her heart—or whether Hosea married a woman whom he knew to already have committed harlotry—God cannot be represented as commanding Hosea to do something immoral for two reasons: (a) To marry even an unchaste woman was not a sin in the Old Testament; (b) to obey any command of God is not immoral—to disobey is immoral.

Whatever the case, the prophet is commanded by God to take a "woman of harlotry" to wife for the express purpose of mirroring to the people of Israel their spiritual relation to Jehovah. It was intended to shock the people's consciences. That which would be shocking enough (a prophet marrying a whorish woman) in the temporal realm representing what they were actually doing in the spiritual realm! Symbolizing the shameful whoredom of Israel in going after (worshipping) calf-gods and Baal is the express purpose of Hosea's marriage to a "woman of whoredom." As a part of this symbolizing, Hosea was to have children by this unchaste woman and to give them symbolical names.

v. 3 SO HE WENT AND TOOK GOMER . . . DAUGHTER OF DIBLAIM; AND SHE CONCEIVED . . . "Gomer" means, "completion; completed whoredom." "Diblain" means, "Daughter of fig-cakes," or some say it may mean, "daughter of embraces." However, there is not the slightest indication from the text that these two names were to have any symbolical significance. We have here a simple statement of historical facts. Hosea married Gomer, she conceived and bare him a son. Lange says the latter part of this verse should be translated, "and she conceived and bore *to him* a son." This removes all doubt, says Lange, as to the father of the child. He was Hosea's child—not an illegitimate one. Laetsch disagrees with Lange; he says that the child was illegitimate but was presented by Gomer to Hosea with the demand that this illegitimate child be accorded all the privileges of one who was his own child. This, says Laetsch, better symbolizes the brazen impudence of Israel. The individual Israelites (illegitimate children of their harlot-mother, Israel) acting with the same impudence demanded recognition from God as children of His while in fact they were not!

v. 4 . . . CALL HIS NAME JEZREEL . . . I WILL AVENGE THE BLOOD OF JEZREEL UPON THE HOUSE OF JEHU . . . In II Kings 9:1ff you may read of Jehu's purging Israel of the prophets of Baal and in II Kings 10:30 you may read where God commended him for carrying out His orders. Yet here Hosea is told that God is going to avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu. Why? Plainly because Jehu is held responsible for the present "whoring" of the whole land in that he perpetuated the calf-worship and Baalism. After Jehu gained the throne through this uprising against Baalism, he arrogantly "struck out for himself a false path" by returning to the worship of the calves. This shows that Jehu's obedience to Jehovah's command was motivated from the very beginning by selfishness and pride. Jezreel means "to sow." God will "Sow" the nation of Israel among the heathen in captivity—He will disperse them. Its opposite use is found in 1:11.

God is about to visit upon the idolatrous offspring of the idolatrous Jehu extermination—the same judgment Jehovah visited, through the hand of Jehu upon the house of Ahab. This promised judgment, symbolized by the name of Hosea's first born, followed not long after the death of Jeroboam II in the murder of his son through the conspiracy of Shallum (II Kings 15:8ff). But God's punishment will not end with the extermination of the dynasty of Jehu, He is going to "cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease." When Shallum murdered the son of Jeroboam II, there began a plunge into political anarchy from which Israel never recovered. Only Menahem had a son for a successor. All the rest of the kings of Israel were overthrown and slain by conspirators. The fall of the house of Jehu was the beginning of the end for Israel.

v. 5 . . . AT THAT DAY . . . I WILL BREAK . . . ISRAEL . . . IN THE VALLEY OF JEZREEL. When the kingdom falls it is to happen in the valley of Jezreel in which the city of Jezreel lay near Mount Gilboa. Ahab built a palace there. Jezebel met her death by being thrown from a window of this palace, and her body was eaten by dogs (II Kings 9:30-35). The valley of Jezreel was the natural battlefield of the northern kingdom (cf. Judges 4:5; 6:33). No definite enemy of Israel is named as the executor of the judgment here pronounced but in the second part of the book of Hosea we learn it will be Assyria. It is not mentioned in the books of the Kings where Assyria dealt the final blow but we must assume Hosea knew where it would occur.

v. 6 . . . SHE BARE A DAUGHTER . . . LO-RUHAMAH . . . I WILL HAVE NO MERCY Lo-ruhamah means literally, "she finds no pity," or, "is not compassionated." It may be significant, as Lange points out, that a female child was chosen to be given this symbolical name for the female can usually find pity when no more is given to men. It makes the fact that God will soon withdraw His compassion all the more emphatic. The prophesied withdrawal of pity here is simply an enlargement of the punishment coming upon Israel foretold earlier by the symbolical name of the son, Jezreel. The ten tribes of Israel would shortly be cut off from the tender mercy of God and scattered by Him, never to be restored as a whole nation. Only those of the ten tribes who returned with Judah in the restoration or were subsequently united to Judah found a place in the holy land again. How long God had suffered with this rebellious and stiff-necked people! How long He had withheld His terrible wrath! How long He had compassionately sent them warning after warning; prophet after prophet; but they would not hearken.

v. 7 BUT I WILL HAVE MERCY UPON THE HOUSE OF JUDAH . . . This verse was intended to be a rebuke to Israel. If Israel had only been like Judah they too would find compassion. Israel was a rebel from its very inception as a nation. It began with idolatry and continually grew more idolatrous and decadent. Judah, on the other hand, retained the true place of worship, the lawful priesthood and the God-ordained lineage of the monarchy. Judah was on the whole, a true witness to God. Judah still trusted in Jehovah for her security and deliverance from her enemies (cw. also Hosea 11:12). The latter half of this verse found fulfillment more than once. When Assyria besieged the city of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah God delivered Judah not by the military might of Judah but by His Own power in sending the death angel to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Furthermore, it was not by battle or military strength that Judah was delivered from her captivity in Persia, but God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to send the people of Judah back to their promised land (cf. Ezra 1:1ff; II Chron. 36:22-23). This verse probably has its ultimate fulfillment in the deliverance to the "Jew who is one inwardly," in Christ since the whole context here is interpreted by both the apostles Paul and Peter as Messianic (cf. Rom. 9:25ff; I Pt. 2:10ff). We will comment at length upon this in verses 10-11 below.

v. 8-9 . . . SHE BARE A SON . . . LO-AMMI . . . FOR YE ARE NOT MY PEOPLE . . . Lo-ammi means literally, "I will not be for you, i.e., not be yours, not belong to you." The covenant relationship between God and His people is to be completely dissolved. They are no longer His. They have "rejected for themselves the counsel of God . . . " and "judged themselves unworthy of God's covenant." They spurned His love. They broke the covenant. They deliberately chose other gods. Therefore, they are not His people. It was their own doing. The blame for their judgment is not to be placed upon God. They are responsible. Their sin is not excusable by ignorance at all! Remember the original covenant God made with Israel was "I will be your God, and you shall be My people . . ." (Lev. 26:12; Ex. 6:7). But when they wilfully rejected Him as their God, how could they any longer be His people?!

QUIZ

1. What does verse one tell us of the method of prophetic revelation and inspiration?
2. Was Hosea's marriage an actual marriage or symbolical or visionary? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Would it be wrong for God to command a prophet to marry a "woman of whoredom?" Explain!
4. Were the children born those of Hosea or were they illegitimate?
5. What symbolical significance is attached to the name "Jezreel"?
6. What does Lo-ruhamah mean and what application does it have to Israel?
7. Why did God say of Israel, "ye are not my people, and I will not be your God"?

GOMER'S INGRATITUDE— SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

TEXT 1:10-11

- 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, it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.
- 11 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

QUERIES

- a. When would they be called "sons of the living God?"
- b. How will they be "gathered together?"
- c. Who will be the "one head" appointed over them?

PARAPHRASE

Yet in spite of the judgment of God that is surely coming, God will just as surely keep the covenant He made with Abraham when He promised that his descendants would be as innumerable as the sand of the sea. It shall come to pass that just as it has been said Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto all, both Jew and Gentile, who follow the example of Abraham's faith, Ye are the sons of the living God. And all the people of God, whether Jew or Gentile, shall be united together in one spiritual nation and they shall have one Leader, the Messiah, over them and they shall be delivered from their bondage. Out of the "sowing" (Jezreel) of judgment God will bring a great, victorious day of "sowing" (Jezreel), a new "sowing of a new Israel.

SUMMARY

Immediately upon the announcement of the complete judgment and rejection of the northern kingdom of Israel follows an announcement of deliverance and covenant fulfillment to spiritual Israel.

COMMENT

v. 10 . . . ISRAEL SHALL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA . . . AND . . . IT SHALL BE SAID UNTO THEM, YE ARE THE SONS OF THE LIVING GOD. It is very interesting to note here that the opening phrase of this verse is almost verbatim the words of the covenant promise made to Abraham in Gen. 22:17; 32:13. This confirms our Introductory principle of interpretation called "Covenant Background." All the events of history, as interpreted by the Prophets, take place on a *covenant background*. Even the future restoration of the Jews to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity in the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, and, the future kingdom of God under the Messiah, the New Testament Church, is portrayed as the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham.

Hosea announces the complete rejection of Israel, the northern kingdom, from being God's people. Some of the faithful remnant might then conclude that God had forgotten His immutable covenant with Abraham. So Hosea is directed by God to write that Jehovah will

eventually fulfill His covenant with Abraham (to make of Israel an innumerable people), even though the physical nation of Israel would be forever overthrown.

Perhaps this received its initial fulfillment in the restoration under Zerubbabel when a few of the Ten Tribes returned to Palestine in company with the nation of Judah. But its primary fulfillment is to be found in the founding of New Israel, the Christian Church, under the Messiahship of Jesus Christ. This cannot be misunderstood! It has the sanction of apostolic pronouncement (cf. I Pet. 2:10; Rom. 9:25). The restoration of the Jews in 536 B.C. was only typical of the New Israel to be instituted on the Day of Pentecost.

Lange says, "As to the main application of these verses, it is probably best to regard its promise as partially and but to a very small degree fulfilled in the case of those out of the Ten Tribes who returned to Jerusalem after the Exile, and to be constantly undergoing its fulfillment in the increase of the true Israel until the 'great multitude which no man could number of all nations' (the 144,000, the mystical number of those sealed of the *twelve* tribes of Israel), shall be completed. That the Messianic application is almost exclusively the true one is evident both from the grand comprehensiveness of the promise, and from paucity of evidence as to subsequent reunion to any extent of the representatives of the two kingdoms."

Pusey says, "Both St. Peter and St. Paul tell us that this prophecy is already, in Christ, fulfilled in those of Israel, who wear the true Israel, or of the Gentiles to whom the promise was made . . ."

Peter applies the prophecy to "the exiles of the Dispersion" in his day while Paul specifically applies it to the Gentiles in Romans 9:25. The Gentiles, formerly called "not My people," would henceforth, by believing in the Seed of Abraham, be called "My people."

v. 11 . . . JUDAH . . . AND . . . ISRAEL SHALL BE GATHERED TOGETHER . . . ONE HEAD . . . UP FROM THE LAND . . . GREAT . . . THE DAY OF JEZREEL. Pusey says, "A little image of this union was seen after the captivity in Babylon when some of the children of Israel, i.e. of the ten tribes, were united to Judah on his return, and the great schism of the two kingdoms came to an end. More fully, both literal Judah and Israel were gathered into one in the one Church of Christ, and all the spiritual Judah and Israel; i.e. as many of the Gentiles, as by following the faith, became the sons of faithful Abraham, and heirs of the promise to him."

Ezekiel symbolizes the union of all God's people under the leadership of one shepherd, David (the Messiah) in Ezekiel 34:1-24. Ezekiel symbolizes the same Messianic union by the two "staffs" in Ezekiel 37:15-28, (cf. also Jer. 3:15-18; Isa. 11:12-13). This, of course, finds its fulfillment in such N.T. scriptures as Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:4-11; etc.

The name Jezreel loses its stigma. Henceforth it will be great. Jezreel means, as we have pointed out before, "sowing." There, in 1:4 it meant God would disperse them in judgment. Here in 1:11 it is used in an exactly opposite way to mean that God will, out of the wreckage of former Israel, make a new sowing or planting and raise up a New Israel.

QUIZ

1. How do these two verses fit into our principle of interpretation called "Covenant Background."
2. Where in the New Testament do we have an inspired interpretation of the fulfillment of these two verses?
3. How can the Gentiles be included in the fulfillment of these verses?
4. What other O.T. scriptures refer to the union of Israel and Judah in a Messianic sense?
5. What does the name Jezreel signify used in this context as compared to Hosea 1:4?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

TEXT: 2:1-5

- 1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.
- 2 Contend with your mother, contend; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband; and let her put away her whoredoms from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts;
- 3 lest I strip her naked, and set 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.
- 4 Yea, upon her children will I have no mercy; for they are children of whoredom;
- 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.

QUERIES

- a. What is the meaning of "Ammi" and "Ruhamah?"
- b. How were her children, "the children of whoredom?"
- c. Who were her "lovers"?

PARAPHRASE

Oh Jezreel, rename your brother and sister. Call your brother Now You Are Mine (Ammi); name your sister Beloved (Ruhamah), for now God will have mercy upon her. Plead with your mother (Israel); for she has committed spiritual adultery and married another; I am no longer her husband; she is no longer my wife. Reason with her to stop her spiritual adultery, to quit giving herself to other gods. If she doesn't, I will strip her naked of all that she calls her own; everything will be taken from her and she will be like she was when she was first born as a nation in Egypt; I will also make her desolate like a wilderness, arid like a dry land, and she will die because I shall withhold the life-giving water. Furthermore, I will take away the special favors from the people of Israel for in worshiping idols they show that they are her children. Israel, their mother, has committed spiritual adultery. She did a shameful thing when she said, I am determined to go and join myself to and consort with other gods for they are the ones who supply me with things I enjoy.

SUMMARY

Israel's apostasy is portrayed here under the figure of a wife leaving her husband for paramours. The Prophet pleads with the people to reason with one another and repent of the spirit of religious harlotry (idolatry) in their hearts.

COMMENT

v. 1 SAY . . . UNTO YOUR BRETHREN, AMMI; AND TO YOUR SISTERS, RUHAMAH. The Hebrew text of the O.T. makes 1:10-11 to become 2:1-2 and thus as we have it here in the English version would be 2:3 of the Hebrew text. This preserves the continuity of context and is to be preferred above our present English version. In other words 2:1 as we have it in the English version, belongs contextually to 1:10-11. Our present 2:2 begins another context and so the division in the English version leaves much to be desired. The English version has followed the arrangement of the Septuagint (LXX) and the Latin Vulgate in dividing the context as it has.

Ammi, means "My people." *Rubamah*, means "Pited or Beloved." The victory which is accomplished (1:10-11) at the fulfillment of the covenant and when *all* Israel (spiritual Israel) is gathered together under one head will so change man's relationship to God and God's relationship to man that redeemed man would thereafter be called "God's people," and God would thereafter "have pity upon them." So this is the conclusion of that which would be accomplished according to 1:10-11 and rightfully belongs to that context.

v. 2-3 CONTEND WITH YOUR MOTHER . . . LET HER PUT AWAY HER WHOREDOMS . . . LEST I STRIP HER NAKED . . . The word *contend* would be better translated, *reason, persuade, plead* or *beg*. The "mother" is Israel the nation. The children are the individual Israelites. This is simply a rhetorical mode of expression. Although the nation, regarded as a whole, had fallen into idolatry, a very few faithful formed a remnant and to these the Prophet pleads. They are the last hope for the nation. They must persuade the nation to "put away its whoredoms."

"Whoredom" here probably refers to the idolatry practiced by the nation. Israel had entered into the covenant with Jehovah its God; Israel had joined itself to God as a woman joins herself to a husband. When it went after other gods its idolatry became a breach of the faithfulness which it owed to its God. Its idolatry was even more deplorable than that of the heathen for the idolatry of Israel constituted rebellion and ingratitude against greater privilege, more blessed circumstances, and greater revelation. Idolatry is referred to as "whoredom" (cf. Ex. 34:14-15; Lev. 17:7; 20:5-6; Num. 14:33; 15:39; Deut. 31:16; 32:16, 21).

Actually, this section (2:2-5) would better fit our outline under I. B. 2., "Israel's Ingratitude, Love of Sin." But that would place it out of its textual order and since we wish to deal with the text in the order it is given, the outline must become secondary.

The "face" can mirror or display either modesty or immodesty, shamelessness or shame (cf. Jer. 6:15; 8:6; 9:21). It was customary even in that day for the harlot to "paint" her face with cosmetics to attract and allure lovers. Nationally speaking, Israel was in some way displaying outwardly the face of a spiritual harlot. The harlot also adorned and exposed her breasts in order to allure. We have here a synonymous parallelism; an exhortation that Israel should correct the outward display of idolatrous practices for they exhibit the spirit of harlotry and rebellion that is within her national heart.

Israel is warned that if she continues in idolatry, God will "strip her naked . . . like she was the day she was born." When Israel was "born" as a nation, she came from a disorganized, penniless, mass of slaves then serving the Egyptian pharaoh. She had no worldly goods, no worldly position or nationhood and no land she could call her own, (cf. Ezek. 16). God took her from Egypt, gave her a land, blessed her with material abundance, gave her national prominence and influence. But now that she has been unfaithful, God is going to "disinherit" her and cast her off and take away from her all that He has given. She will once again become the slave of a foreign nation; once again she will be without nationality and without material abundance. Israel as a nation will *be like* a land that has become arid, desolate. As a nation she will become worthless, cease to produce and die.

V. 4-5 . . . UPON HER CHILDREN WILL I HAVE NO MERCY . . . THEIR MOTHER HATH PLAYED THE HARLOT . . . SHE SAID, I WILL GO AFTER MY LOVERS, THAT GIVE ME MY BREAD . . . We like the statement of K & D, "The fact that the children are specially mentioned after and along with the mother, when in reality mother and children are one, serves to give greater keenness to the threat, and guards against that carnal security, in which individuals imagine that, inasmuch as they are free from the sin and guilt of the nation as a whole, they will also be exempted from the threatened punishment." The nation and its leadership (civil and religious) played the harlot by becoming idolaters and they led the people into the same sin. The "children" were not forced into "whoredom." They "loved to have it so," and willingly followed the leading of the nation.

The "mother," however proud and vain she might represent herself, did a shameful thing when she was unfaithful to her God. "I will go after" could be literally translated, "Let me go," or, "I would go after." She does not wait to be enticed or allured or seduced. She brazenly goes, uninvited, unsought and contrary to the instinctive feelings of woman, after those who make no overtures to draw her and away from her Husband (God) who has loved her and beckoned her. Enviously she regarded the surrounding nations (Phoenicia, Egypt, Assyria) who did not worship Jehovah, yet possessed far greater political power and prestige, worldwide commerce, huge riches, marvelous luxuries, and far greater freedom from moral restraints than God's people. The spirit of worldliness made Israel think of her God as a cruel and unloving taskmaster and of His law as an unbearable yoke. She began to worship idols. Then as her prosperity and

political prestige grew she rationalized that "her lovers" had supplied all these things she so greedily wanted. In the days of Jeroboam II idolatrous Israel suddenly gained power and riches rivaling those of David and Solomon. It seemed that idolatry paid better wages than service to Jehovah. God had warned them against such pride and ingratitude and idolatry in plain words (Deut. 8:1ff). It is interesting to note that the people of Judah said the same thing of their idols (Jeremiah 44:15-18); they attributed their prosperity to the heathen gods they worshipped rather than Jehovah. It is frighteningly true that people in so-called "Christian" America (and other "Christianized" nations) have not learned much from Israel and Judah. A great number of people today attribute the material and political affluence and prestige to their idols of science, man, sex or some other philosophy. This is just as brazen and shameful and just as much spiritual whoredom as Baalism was in the days of Hosea. Let us take the exhortation of Hosea to heart and "plead with our mother" that she "put away her whoredom from her face."

QUIZ

1. What is the proper division of chapters 1 and 2? Where should 2:1 go?
2. Who is the "mother" and who are the "children"? What literary form is being used here?
3. What is the "whoredom" of which both "mother" and children are guilty?
4. How will God "strip" Israel naked?
5. What makes Israel's going after other gods so shameful?
6. Why did Israel think her heathen gods supplied the things she wanted?
7. How do nations act the same way today as Israel acted then?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— SPURIOUS LOVERS

TEXT: 2:6-8

- 6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, that she shall not find her paths.
- 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.

- 8 For she did not know that I gave her the grain, and the new wine and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.

QUERIES

- a. Of whom is the prophet speaking in this context?
- b. Why did "she" not find the lovers "she" was seeking?
- c. Why did "she" now know the person supplying her grain and wine?

PARAPHRASE

So, because Israel insists on playing the harlot I am going to put an obstacle in her way to finding her lovers. She will pursue her false gods but she will not catch up with them; and she will search for them but she will not find them: then, having realized they are impotent and spurious lovers, she will have learned her lesson and say, Oh, it was so much better for me when I was with my first husband—I will humble myself and return to Him, seeking His forgiveness. She became a harlot because she allowed herself to forget that I gave her the food, clothing and enjoyments of life; she allowed these gifts of Mine to be employed in worshipping Baal.

SUMMARY

God is going to make Israel realize the impotency and spurious nature of its false lovers, their idols.

COMMENT

v. 6 . . . I WILL HEDGE UP THY WAYS . . . AND . . . BUILD A WALL AGAINST HER . . . Is the prophet speaking of Gomer or Israel here? We believe the context insists upon Israel being the object of this warning. It is possible that Hosea took a similar action toward Gomer in an attempt to reclaim her before she sold herself completely into slavery (cf. ch. 3). However, the primary object of this prediction is Israel. God is going to place such an insuperable obstacle between Israel and continued idol-worship that she will not be able to find any way to worship idols again. The path leading to idol worship was going to be blocked with a solid wall of resistance. The "hedge of thorns" probably refers to the intense suffering they endured in the captivities. This was a lesson they never forgot. The Jews never again worshipped idols! Over and over again Ezekiel

repeats the phrase "Then will you know that I am Jehovah . . ." referring to the lessons they would learn from the sufferings of their captivity.

v. 7 . . . SHE SHALL FOLLOW AFTER HER LOVERS, BUT SHE SHALL NOT OVERTAKE THEM . . . THEN SHALL SHE SAY, I WILL GO ANE RETURN TO MY FIRST HUSBAND . . . At first, when they are in distress and tribulation at the judgment of God in the siege and captivity they will search with zeal for some comforting oracle or action from their "lovers"—the false gods. But they shall not even find their idols for the king of Assyria will come and take their idols away and then Israel will realize that there is no deliverance or comfort to be found in these false gods. She will wake up to the utter nothingness of idols. Although Israel was taken into the midst of an idolatrous empire (Assyria), and there had even more opportunity to practice idolatry, it learned the worthlessness of all trust in idols quickly and was thus impelled to turn to the Lord God Jehovah, her first Husband, in faith and repentance, seeking His mercy. While in her captivity she came to herself and saw the shame of her former religious promiscuity. She said, like the prodigal in Jesus' parable, "I will return." This is the purpose in all of God's "hedges of thorns" and His "walls"—to bring us to say, "I will return."

Augustine wrote, "I escaped not Thy scourges, for what mortal can? For Thou wert ever with me, mercifully rigorous, and besprinkling with most bitter alloy all my unlawful pleasures, that I might seek pleasure without alloy. But where to find such, I could not discover, save in Thee, O Lord, Who teachest by sorrow, and woundest us, to heal, and killest us, lest we die from Thee." This is somewhat the same as Paul wrote in II Cor. 1:3-10 and II Cor. 12:7-10; Hebrews 10:32-39; 12:1-11. This was the experience of Job and countless others whom the Lord loved enough to chasten. The Lord loved Israel "with an everlasting love" and so he chastened them. The moment of crisis was when they decided, "I will return."

v. 8 . . . SHE DID NOT KNOW THAT I GAVE HER THE GRAIN . . . WHICH THEY USED FOR BAAL. Israel should have known the source of her blessings for the law of Moses in all its institutions of sacrifices and offerings and its precepts was intended to remain them. However, the law, the word of the Lord had been forgotten. Israel's ignorance was wilfull and culpable (cf. Amos. 7:10-16; Hosea

4:1-6, 5:4; Micah 2:6-11; Jer. 6:10, 14, 16-19). She deliberately ignored the word of God and used what God provided to worship and perpetuate the religion of Baal. But her captivity restored her to sanity. She was taught again Whom she was dependent upon for life.

Baal worship was brought into Israel by Jezebel, daughter of a king of Sidon. Jehu destroyed it for a time, because its adherents were followers of the house of Ahab. The worship was cruel, like that of Moloch, immoral and abominable. It advocated (at least by Jezebel) the extermination of worship of Jehovah and its most zealous adherents caused many of the prophets of God to be slain. To such an abominable curse the people of Israel attributed the blessings which only Jehovah could give the people.

QUIZ

1. What is probably meant by the "hedge of thorns" and the "wall?"
2. What is meant by "not finding her lovers?"
3. What is the significance of the phrase "I will return?"
4. Why did Paul say he was chastened or afflicted?
5. Why did Israel not know where her material blessings originated?
6. What is Baal worship?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— SHAME REVEALED

TEXT: 2:9-13

- 9 Therefore will I take back my grain in the time thereof, and my new wine in the season thereof, and will pluck away my wool and my flax which should have covered her nakedness.
- 10 And now will I uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of my hand.
- 11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feasts, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn assemblies.
- 12 And I will lay waste her vines and her fig-trees, whereof she hath said, These are my hire that my lovers have given me; and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.
- 13 And I will visit upon her the days of the Baalim, unto which she burned incense, when she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. How will Jehovah "uncover" the lewdness of Israel?
- b. How would Israel's vines and fig-trees become a "forest"?
- c. Who is the "Baalim"?

PARAPHRASE

And so, because Israel refused to acknowledge Me as Giver of all her abundance, I will more clearly manifest Myself as Giver by taking away my grain and my wool and my flax just at the time when men feel quite sure of harvesting it. This abundance which I gave her is the only thing that kept her from utter destitution and complete barness. Now when I take away the veneer of material prosperity I will expose her to disgrace, miserableness and shame before her idol-paramours and none of her idols shall deliver her from this disgrace which I bring upon her. I, Jehovah, will stop all the feasts, holy seasons and sabbaths from which she gets such joy and festiveness. I will take all her vines and fig-trees, from which she gets her delicacies, which she says are blessings gained from worshipping idols, and unattended and uncultivated they shall become like forests where the beasts of the field roam and graze. Inasmuch as she claimed to be wise she became a fool and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles, therefore I will give her up in the lusts of her heart to the consequences of the life of sin she has lived in worshipping and serving the Baals. She dressed and groomed herself immodestly and consorted promiscuously with these idols and spurned My love.

SUMMARY

Because Israel has not regarded the material blessings she received as gifts of Jehovah God, and has not used them for His glory, Jehovah will take them away and her folly in worshipping idols will be exposed; she will be disgraced before her false gods.

COMMENT

v. 9 THEREFORE WILL I TAKE BACK MY GRAIN IN THE TIME THEREOF . . . Just at the time when they would expect to normally reap the regular harvest of grain, wool and flex, God would take it away. At this time the absence of the crops would be all the more significant and striking and thus more clearly the work of Jehovah. K & D say, "If God suddenly takes away the gifts then,

not only is the loss more painfully felt, but regarded as a punishment far more than when they have been prepared beforehand for a bad harvest by the failure of the crop." Since they did not acknowledge Him as Giver when He gave these crops, He will manifest Himself more clearly as such in taking them away! Their material prosperity was a thin veneer covering up the shame and disgrace in which the nation was actually engaged at this time. Take away the material prosperity and what is left—nothing but decadence, weakness, folly. There is no moral fibre in the nation; there is no truth or justice. So, when God takes away the outward appearance of well-being which covers her nakedness, her shame will be exposed.

v. 10 . . . I WILL UNCOVER HER LEWDNESS IN THE SIGHT OF HER LOVERS . . . The hypocrisy, weakness, decadence will be fully exposed even to her "lovers." The word translated "lewdness" means literally, *wicked folly or sexual depravity*. As soon as God strips the veil of prosperity off their sin, and her folly is apparent, even her "lovers" will despise her. Her "lovers" are the heathen gods (idols) she worshipped. We wonder why Hosea personifies an idol as a "lover." An idol may be loved, but does an idol love? If not, to what purpose is the uncovering of Israel's lewdness in the sight of her lovers? Could it be that Israel's folly or lewdness will be exposed to the demon-spirits who are persons associated with idols (cf. I Cor. 10:18-22)? When one worships an idol there is more involved than doing obeisance to a piece of wood or stone! Idol worship (it makes no difference what the idol may be; whether an object or a philosophy), involves worshipping the "god of this world," Satan and his demonic hosts! Yes, Israel, stripped of her false power and wealth, brought low, will be despised even by the Devil and his demons whom they formerly worshipped and trusted! Some commentators believe her "lovers" to be heathen nations with whom she made alliances (esp. Assyria).

v. 11 I WILL ALSO CAUSE ALL HER MIRTH TO CEASE, HER FEASTS . . . NEW MOONS . . . SABBATHS . . . SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES. It appears that even though Israel worshipped idols she still retained the outward formalities of Jehovistic worship such as feasts, new moons and sabbaths. Even while disobeying God they kept enough of the outward forms to soothe their consciences. Evidently they regarded these days and kept them in a very festive, merry-making, mood. God will cause all this revelry and merry-making to cease. There will be no more such gatherings for sensual indulgence.

v. 12 . . . I WILL LAY WASTE HER VINES AND FIG-TREES . . . AND . . . MAKE THEM A FOREST . . . The vine and the fig-tree are the finest productions of Canaan and afford the choicest delicacies (cf. Joel 1:7-12). Israel's paths to superficial pleasure must be barricaded; her diversionary interests must be obscured; the objects of her indulgences must be removed. Her own stupidity will mock her in her remorse. That which she said were payments from her idols for the worship and adoration she accorded them, God would make desolate and ruined. Her vineyards and fig-tree orchards would be left unattended after the captivity and become overgrown with brush and weeds like a forest and the beasts of the field would tramp through them grazing.

v. 13 AND I WILL VISIT UPON HER THE DAYS OF THE BAALIM, UNTO WHICH SHE BURNED INCENSE . . . *Baalim* is the plural of *Baal*. There were many Baals; Baal-berith, Lord of covenants or oaths; Baal-zebub, Lord of flies; Baal-Peor, Lord of sin. In our *Paraphrase* we used phrasing from the first chapter of Romans because we feel this is what Hosea means. The Israelites had so joined themselves to these idols, they became like them. Hosea specifically says so in 9:10, "But they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to Baal, and became detestable like the thing they loved." When man, by the exercise of his own free will, refuses to have God in his knowledge and exchanges the truth of God for a lie and worships the creature rather than the Creator, God can do nothing else but give man up to serve these evil passions and natures. Paul wrote that when men *take pleasure* in unrighteousness and *have no love* for the truth, God sends them a strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, if that is what they want (II Thess. 2:10-12). The very evil, wickedness, depravity and foolishness which was represented by the Baalim they worshipped would be visited upon them in all its foulness and ugliness and self-destructiveness! Such was the actual case of both Israel (in 721 B.C.) and Judah (in 586 B.C.). Anarchy, treason, murder, theivery, crimes of sexual passion were rampant in the last days of these two nations (and in many nations since). If a nation or a people sows the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind! If a nation plays with fire it will get burned! In Jeremiah's day society was so corrupt one could not trust his neighbor, his brother, not even those of his own household (cf. Jer. 9:36; 20:10). Let every nation and every individual beware of the vicious circle of ignorance of God which leads to sin and depravity which in turn leads to deeper darkness and ignorance and then to deeper sin! Only if we fellowship (share)

with God and the Light which He alone gives may we be freed from falsehood and sin (cf. John 8:12-38; I John 1:5-10; 2:1-11).

QUIZ

1. What bearing would the time of God's withdrawal of crops have on Israel?
2. Who were the "lovers" of Israel?
3. What connection does Israel's "mirth" have to her "feasts," "sabbaths"?
4. How important were vines and fig-trees to Israel?
5. In what way did God visit upon Israel "the days of the Baalim?"

LOVE RECONCILING— ISRAEL IS LURED

TEXT: 2:14-15

- 14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.
- 15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall make answer there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

QUERIES

- a. Where is the "wilderness" where God will bring Israel?
- b. Where is the valley of "Achor"?

PARAPHRASE

Because I am the faithful Covenant God who never retracts His promise, and because you have forgotten Me, I am going to make love to you again and woo you by speaking words to your heart when you are in your despondency in captivity. Out of her deprivation shall come again to her prosperity; out of her tribulation and trouble shall be opened to her a door of hope. And she shall compose and sing her songs of faith in answer to My love as she did in her early days of deliverance from Egypt.

SUMMARY

God will use the judgment which Israel brought upon herself to woo her back to Him. Out of her tribulation will come an open door to hope.

COMMENT

v. 14-15 . . . I WILL ALLURE HER . . . GIVE HER . . . VINEYARDS . . . AND THE VALLEY OF ACHOR FOR A DOOR OF HOPE; AND SHE SHALL MAKE ANSWER THERE . . . "Therefore" points back to v. 13. Not only in spite of, but because Israel forgot God and went "a whoring" after other gods, Jehovah-God initiates action designed to allure or "woo" Israel back to Him. "Love divine, all love excelling . . ." "Oh, what mercy, and what grace!" Israel had played the fool. Headlong she had plunged into idolatry which was the path of self-destruction. Headstrong and stiff-necked she rejected Jehovah and delighted in perverting His Law and blasphemously keeping His feasts and sabbaths. And *because of this* God loved her! We are reminded of the song:

"The love of God is greater far
 Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
 It goes beyond the highest star,
 And reaches to the lowest hell . . .
 "Could we with ink the ocean fill,
 And were the skies of parchment made;
 Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill,
 And ev'ry man a scribe by trade;
 To write the love of God above
 Would drain the ocean dry;
 Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
 Tho' stretched from sky to sky.

by F. M. Lehman

It also reminds us of Francis Thompson's poem, "The Hound of Heaven." This beautiful poem about the ever-seeking love of God is reproduced at the conclusion of this book. Please read it and re-read it until you feel it.

The phrase, ". . . the valley of Achor for a door of hope" is an interesting figure of speech. Two ideas are placed in close connection and declared to be inter-related—Troubling and Hope. God would have Israel understand that her "troubling" in captivity is the reason she may have "hope." In Joshua 7:26 we find the valley named "Trouble" because of the terrible and swift judgment of God which fell upon Achan, the man who "troubled" Israel because of his secret sin. It was only when Joshua dealt with this trouble that hope and victory returned to Israel.

Many are the New Testament passages which teach us to understand that our "tribulation" gives us reason to "hope." In Hebrews 10:32-39

we are told that our tribulation builds confidence; we have need of endurance so that we may do the will of God and receive what is promised. In Hebrews 12:3-11 we are told that only through chastening may we have hope that God loves us as sons. If God did not chasten us and trouble us what would happen to us? We would be left to our own self-destruction and most certainly destroy ourselves! Paul relates in II Cor. 1:3-11 that he was brought to despair of life itself in tribulation in order that he should be brought to rely not on himself but upon God! Read Paul's revelation in II Cor. 12:7-10 in this connection also.

These two verses use the history of Israel's deliverance from Egypt to typify God's future deliveries of His New Covenant people through Christ, the Messiah. Just as the wilderness wanderings of Israel in the days of Moses were days of probation and trial wherein God was training a people by want and privation to the knowledge of its need of Divine help, and on the other hand by miraculous deliverance in the time of need to trust to His omnipotence, so the entire time from the captivities (of both Israel and Judah), through the restoration, culminating in the coming of the Messiah would be a time when God would "allure" a *New Israel*. God would test and try this New Israel and speak "comfortably" to her through her prophets of the exile; through the post exilic prophets; through His acts of redemption and material blessing and finally through the coming of the Messiah. This would be the "return of her vineyards from thence."

The valley of Achor is a type showing how God restores His favor to His people after the expiation of guilt by the punishment of the transgressor. God will so exiate the sins of man, and cover them with His grace by punishing them in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), that the covenant of fellowship with Him will no more be broken by transgression—victory for His people will be assured. The *New Israel* (the church of Christ) will then "answer" the Lord in praise and promise by keeping the *new* covenant just as Israel did in the days of her youth at Sinai (cf. Ex. 15; Ex. 24).

QUIZ

1. What did the bringing of Israel into the wilderness have to do with alluring her back to God?
2. How did God speak "comfortably" to Israel?
3. What does the name "Achor" mean and how could it become a door of hope?
4. In what way did Israel "make answer . . . as in the days of her youth . . ." ?

LOVE RECONCILING— ISRAEL IS LAVED

TEXT: 2:16-20

- 16 And it shall be at that day, saith Jehovah, that thou shalt call me Ishi (That is, My husband), and shalt call me no more Baali (that is, My master).
- 17 For I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be mentioned by their name.
- 18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the birds of the heavens, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely.
- 19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betho thee unto me in righteousness, and in justice, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.
- 20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. What "day" is Hosea speaking of in verse 16?
- b. Why make a covenant for Israel with the beasts?
- c. When did Jehovah betroth Israel to Himself in righteousness?

PARAPHRASE

And when that day comes, the day when Achor becomes a door of hope, you, Israel, will have become a chastened wife and you will return to Me and dwell with Me and I shall become your Husband, saith Jehovah. You shall no longer be in bondage to your idol-masters, because I will have delivered you from all association with the Baalim. And when this is accomplished, I will remove the curse I put upon all creation in the beginning because of man's sin; I will conquer all the enemies of My people and they shall have peace and safety. At this time I will make a new marriage covenant with a new people. The character of this new relationship will be righteousness, justice, loving-kindness and abundant mercy. I will display My everlasting faithfulness in this new relationship, and My new people will know Me, each one, personally, and in a new, tender, experiential way!

SUMMARY

This is the "shortened perspective" again. From the "allurement" in the former section which refers to the captivity and return, we come in this section to the new relationship established by the Messiah.

COMMENT

v. 16-17 . . . THOU SHALT CALL ME ISHI . . . I WILL TAKE AWAY THE NAMES OF THE BAALIM . . . The phrase, "at that day," refers back to the former section—the "day" when "the valley of Achor would become a door of hope." When the Suffering Servant of Jehovah came and was punished for our transgressions, His troubling became the door of hope for all mankind; "that day" refers to the coming of the Messiah. At that time the Israel which has been purged of idolatry by its captivities and "allured" through all its testing and blessing (culminating in the One in whom we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places) will turn to Jehovah-God in a new relationship of Husband. The church calls God Husband when she stands in right relation to Him. On the other hand people call God Baal when they place the true God on the level of the Baals and worship other gods along with Jehovah, or obliterate the absolute distinction between Jehovah and the Baals. The new life in righteousness which is to belong to this *new* Israel (cf. v. 19-20 and Zech. 13:2ff) is depicted as the extermination of idols because idolatry was the principle form in which ungodliness manifested itself in Israel.

v. 18 AND IN THAT DAY WILL I MAKE A COVENANT FOR THEM WITH THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD . . . AND WILL MAKE THEM TO LIE DOWN SAFELY. "That day" refers again to the day when God will climax His redemptive labors in Christ—the "day" when He will fulfill the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel), swearing, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." That covenant of redemption for fallen man was uttered first in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15), just prior to the pronouncement of God's curse upon man and upon the earth for man's sake. In his innocence man was given dominion over all the earth and over all the creatures of God's creation. But that dominion was taken from man when he fell in sin. Jesus removed the curse that was pronounced upon man (Gal. 3:10-14) and has *potentially* (though not yet in reality) restored man to his God-given dominion (Heb. 2:5-18). Jesus did this by becoming Man and living a sinless life in the flesh, condemning sin in the flesh, winning for man the victory and dominion man had previously lost by surrender-

ing to sin in the flesh. God, through Christ, made peace between Himself and man. Man is no longer at enmity against God or the law of God if he is *in Christ*. Man need no longer fear any enemy if he is in Christ. He is more than conqueror through Christ who loved him. Christ has despoiled the principalities and powers triumphing over them. He has delivered man from the bondage of the devil. What glory it will be when it is all consummated in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

This figure of speech (taming of the wild beasts and causing war to cease) is a favorite way of the prophets in describing the peace, security and harmony of the coming Messianic kingdom (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 9:1-7; 11:1-10; 35:8-10; Ezek. 34:20-31; Micah 4:1-4; Zech. 9:9-10). The Christian *now* enjoys a peace, security and harmony with God and His purposes which is incomprehensible to the sinner ("the peace which passeth understanding") and will, in the future, realize it in all its realness and eternality.

V. 19-20 AND I WILL BETROTH THEE UNTO ME FOR EVER . . . IN RIGHTEOUSNESS . . . IN JUSTICE . . . IN LOVINGKINDNESS . . . IN MERCIES . . . IN FAITHFULNESS . . . AND THOU SHALT KNOW JEHOVAH. This describes the work of God as He redeems His wife (the covenant people) and changes her into a *new* woman! Indeed, Ezekiel speaks of the fact that the covenant nation will be given a new heart and a new spirit and resurrected, as it were, from the dead, a new people (Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:25-26; 37:1ff). The new covenant people would be cleansed from all impurity (cf. Zech. 13:1). The mercy of the Lord will be so all-encompassing it will not only forgive, it will forget (cf. Micah 7:18-20; Isa. 1:18-20) our transgressions. When God performs this work of regeneration in those who will permit Him to do so, those who are "betrothed" to Him *know* Him in the fullest sense of the word! Righteousness, justice, lovingkindness and mercy describe the results of God's transforming work in the *new* Israel; faithfulness of God is the method of bringing it about. God will demonstrate His faithfulness in sending Christ, the Messiah. He will demonstrate His trustworthiness in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the establishment of the church through sending the Holy Spirit. So, through the preaching of the gospel (the good news) of God's faithfulness demonstrated in history through Christ, men will be "betrothed" to God forever. Men will know God and be known of Him. Men will know that God is love; that God is truth; that God is above all and in all. Men will know God as Father and Divine Friend. Read the writings of John, the apostle, for a glorious revelation on the knowledge of

God. It is through this renewed knowledge of God that we are able to fellowship (share) in His divine nature (cf. II Pet. 1:3-11; I Jn. 1:1-4).

QUIZ

1. What "day" is Hosea referring to here in this section?
2. How did God "make a covenant with the beasts"? Cite other scriptures.
3. What did God promise to do for His *new* Israel? How did He do it?
4. To what extent is the knowledge of God promised here?

LOVE RECONCILING— ISRAEL IS LOVED

TEXT: 2:21-23

- 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, saith Jehovah, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth;
- 22 and the earth shall answer the grain, and the new wine, and the oil; and they shall answer Jezreel.
- 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 that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

QUERIES

- a. What is the point in giving answer to "Jezreel"?
- b. How is God going to "sow" her in the earth?

PARAPHRASE

And on that day when I make a new people, says Jehovah, I will hear. Yes, I will hear the heavens as they pray to Me to allow them to supply the earth with fertility. The heavens will, in turn, hear the supplications of the earth and supply what the earth asks for. The earth will hear the needs of the grain and the vine and the olive tree and supply them with sustenance. The crops of the earth will hear the supplications of the changed Jezreel, and give to her in abundance. At that same time I will take the Israel I "scattered" and "gently sow" a new seed for a harvest of My own. I will pity those who are Not Pitied, and I will call those who are not My people, Now You are My People. They will respond and say, You are our God!

SUMMARY

In highly figurative language the prophet now describes the overflowing love which Jehovah promises to shower down upon the *new* Israel

COMMENT

v. 21-22 . . . IN THAT DAY, I WILL ANSWER, SAITH JEHOVAH . . . AND THEY SHALL ANSWER JEZREEL. The phrase "in that day," refers to the same time as the preceding section—which is the Messianic age. This is plainly evident from I Peter 2:10 where the apostle quotes Hosea 2:23 as being fulfilled in the establishment of the church and calling of men and women to become a "royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people . . ." There is *double* apostolic confirmation of this section in Hosea being a Messianic prophecy. The apostle Paul says (Romans 9:19-26) that Hosea 2:23 is a prophecy of the receiving of the Gentiles into the scheme of God's redemption through their faith in Christ.

The word "answer" should be translated "hear." Hosea uses highly figurative language here to depict the shower of blessings upon this new betrothal of God to new Israel. The betrothal having been completed (in Christ, Eph. 5), the prophet now represents heaven and earth standing nearby ready to serve the Bridegroom as He showers His bride with presents. The heavens and the earth are represented as earnestly asking the Husband (God) which presents are to be showered upon the Bride. The Husband *hears* and directs that all the riches of His domain be given Her. So the church is blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). K & D say, ". . . the prophet represents the heaven as praying to God, to allow it to give the earth that which is requisite to ensure its fertility; Whereupon the heaven fulfills the desires of the earth, and the earth yields its produce to the nation . . . all things in heaven and on earth depend on God . . . without His bidding not a drop of rain falls from heaven, and consequently all nature would . . . be barren, unless He gave it fertility by His blessing."

The name *Jezreel* (formerly used figuratively to predict God's "scattering" of Israel in the captivity—in the sense of judgment) is now used in the good sense to denote a *new* sowing. This is evident from the context and the following verse (v. 23). So the figure represents God, the Husband, showering down gifts upon His Bride, the Church, through the agency of His whole creation. The reader should read in connection with this Ephesians 1:3-23 and Colossians 1:9-29.

v. 23 AND I WILL SOW HER UNTO ME IN THE EARTH . . . AND I WILL HAVE MERCY . . . AND . . . SAY TO THEM . . . THOU ART MY PEOPLE . . . The new Israel comes as a result of a *new* sowing—one of Divine grace instead of Divine judgment. The former references to "Jezreel" (1:4, 5, 11) had to do with "scattering" or "dispersing" rebellious Israel by the judgment of God in captivity. But now, through the "seed of Abraham" (singular, cf. Gal. 3:16), God sows a new covenant nation, the one noted in I Pet. 1:9-10 and Romans 9:19-26. So the name "Jezreel" is turned into something blessed, just as the names in Hosea 1:6, 9; 2:1 were changed into blessing. Lange says of this section, "The fulfillment is not to be seen in the return of the Jews from the exile. This was, to be sure, a fulfillment, but only a small and feeble beginning. For the promise is to be regarded as essentially Messianic . . . in Christ the new 'betrothal' of God to his people has already taken place . . . Israel, to whom salvation is here promised by the Prophet, comes into view, not according to its natural nationality, but according to its divine destiny, or according to its typical significance as the *People of God*." This we heartily endorse because to interpret it otherwise would be to contradict inspired, apostolically confirmed fulfillment, as we have shown before.

QUIZ

1. What specific historical age does "in that day" refer to here?
2. What confirmation do we have as to the fulfillment of this section?
3. What does the figurative language represent here?
4. What new meaning is given to the name "Jezreel" here?

LOVE RECONCILING— GOMER LOVED

TEXT: 3:1-5

- 1 And Jehovah said unto me, Go again, love a woman beloved of her friend, and an adulteress, even as Jehovah loveth the children of Israel, though they turn unto other gods, and love cakes of raisins.
- 2 So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer of barley, and a half-homer of barley;
- 3 and I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be any man's wife: so will I also be toward thee.

- 4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim:
- 5 afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness in the latter days.

QUERIES

- a. Who is Hosea's command to "Go again" and "love"?
- b. Why did Hosea insist that they must live in continency?
- c. What is the connection between Hosea's action and God's?

PARAPHRASE

Then the Lord said to me, Go, get the wife whom you love, that woman who has been an adulteress, and bring her back and love her again. This will symbolize the love Jehovah has for His wife, the spiritually adulterous nation of Israel, which has turned to other gods and has sensually worshipped them. So I bought her back from her degradation for the price of a slave, fifteen shekels of silver and fifteen shekels-worth of barley, and I told her, You must live in complete conjugal abstinence for many days; you must not again play the harlot nor shall you be permitted to have intercourse with your husband and I, your husband, will act the same towards you. This will symbolize the many years of captivity that are coming upon Israel when she shall dwell without civil leadership, without religion and without a revelation from God and without any idols. After their period of chastening the children of Israel shall turn and seek Jehovah their God, and their Messiah-king, and they shall come trembling at their own unworthiness and at the holiness and goodness of Jehovah in the Messianic dispensation.

SUMMARY

This very short chapter completes the heart-rending account of Hosea's marriage. Hosea redeems Gomer; Gomer is chastened in order that she may repent; the account ends leaving us to assume Gomer's reconciliation. It all is to symbolize God's dealing with adulterous Israel ending in Messianic blessings.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . GO AGAIN, LOVE A WOMAN BELOVED OF HER FRIEND . . . This chapter opens with an authentic note—a command from Jehovah. Hosea is commanded to love again a "woman beloved of her friend." The word in the original for "friend" would better be translated here *companion*, for it denotes a friend or companion, with whom one cherishes intercourse and fellowship, one with whom another lives in the closest intimacy. The woman beloved of such a "friend" can only be Gomer and the friend can only be Hosea. Gomer is called a woman *ishah*, not, thy wife, *ishteca*, in order to describe the state of separation in which she was living. Hosea is bidden to take the initiative and act toward Gomer with love even when she was unloved and unloveable! Hosea was to love her freely, just as God loved Israel freely (cf. Hosea 14:4). God took the initiative and "lured" Israel wooing her back to Himself (cf. Hosea 2:14ff). It is plain that what Hosea will experience in loving "again" his wife is to symbolize what God's experience is with Israel when He shall have redeemed her from her captivities and loved her again in the Messiah. Raisin cakes are delicacies, figuratively representing that idolatrous worship which appeals to the senses and gratifies the carnal impulses and desires (cf. Job 20:12 and Jer. 7:18). Loving such carnal indulgence is the reason Israel turned to other gods!

v. 2 SO I BOUGHT HER TO ME FOR FIFTEEN PIECES OF SILVER . . . Evidently, Gomer had fallen to such depths as to be sold from one owner to another like a common slave. Perhaps her first paramours, having satisfied themselves, grew tired of her and sold her into slavery. This is always the end of illegitimate love, or false love. Sensual love or carnal love always tires and grows cold. True love is altogether different. True love always seeks the good of the other person. True love is a love that loves with the mind, the heart, the will and not just with the flesh. True love is described in I Corinthians, chapter 13, and the parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15, and the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10. Gomer thought her paramours loved her, but she was to find out that only Hosea truly loved her.

What Hosea paid for her (since at that time an ephah of barley was worth one shekel and Hosea paid 15 pieces of silver and 15 ephahs of barley) was the price of a slave, 30 shekels (cf. Ex. 21:32). It is interesting indeed that the price paid for Jesus' betrayal was 30 pieces of silver (cf. Zech 11:12). Gomer was redeemed for 30 shekels and

our redemption (though His blood was more precious than all the silver and gold ever coined) was obtained for 30 pieces of silver.

v. 3 . . . THOU SHALT ABIDE FOR ME MANY DAYS . . . AND THOU SHALT NOT BE ANY MAN'S WIFE . . . Gomer is to abide in the house of Hosea in a state of conjugal abstinence for many days. She is not to be allowed to engage in sexual intercourse with any man for a long period of time, not even with her husband, and especially not with other men. This is to be a period of chastening and testing. It is done out of love for her in order to reform her and train her up as a faithful wife. She must prove her fidelity and repentance before she is restored to full wifehood.

v. 4 FOR THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL ABIDE MANY DAYS WITHOUT KING . . . Now we see that Gomer's experience symbolized the experience of Israel during her captivities and afterward until the coming of Christ (David their king). "King and prince" represent civil government. Israel's polity ceased at the Assyrian captivity in 721 B.C. "Sacrifice and pillar" represent Israel's syncretistic religion. Israel's religion was obliterated with the captivity. "Ephod and Teraphim" represent the two means (Mosaic and idolatrous) of receiving religious revelations.

And so for 700 years the 10 northern tribes (except those who returned to Palestine with Judah in 536 B.C.) waited for God, as Gomer waited for her husband, kept apart from God under His care, yet not acknowledged by Him; not following after their idolatries, yet cut off from the sacrificial worship which He had appointed, cut off also from revelations from Him. Into this estranged condition Israel was brought by the Assyrian captivity (721 B.C.) and ever since they have remained in it, unless they have turned to "David their king."

v. 5 AFTERWARD SHALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL RETURN, AND SEEK . . . DAVID THEIR KING . . . IN THE LATTER DAYS . . . After Israel has been estranged from God for a long season she will *turn back* (the meaning of the original) and seek God. The Hebrew word for *seek* is the intensive seeking like that seeking which Christ enjoins in the Sermon on the Mount, "Keep on seeking and ye shall find . . ." It means a diligent search.

"David their king" is no other than the Messiah, the Son of David. K & D say, "we must not understand it . . . as referring to such historical representatives of the Davidic government as Zerubbabel, and other earthly representatives of the house of David, since the return of

the Israelites to 'their King David' was not to take place till (the end of the days.).” Every school of the ancient Jews (Talmudic, mystical, Biblical or grammatical) explained this prophecy of Christ, the Messiah. They even paraphrased it thus: “Afterward the children of Israel shall repent, or turn by repentance, and shall seek the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey the Messiah the Son of David, their King.” Such an interpretation is found in some of the Targums and the Midrash and by such authors as Ibn Ezra and Kimchi. (cf. also Ezek. 34:23-24; Jer. 23:5-6).

The “fear” with which they come is a reverence and holy awe which causes them to “flee to Him for help.” It is a reverent dependence upon Him which impels them toward God for fear of losing Him.

The “latter days” is, in Hebrew *acharith hayyamim*, and means the final dispensation of God. That final dispensation is, of course, the Gospel dispensation. There will be no other age after the second coming of Christ (Heb. 9:27-28). Even the Jews (Kimchi so interpreted it: “Whenever it is said in the latter days, it is meant the days of the Messiah.” This prophecy has been fulfilled ever since the coming of Christ and the establishment of the church when Jews of all tribes obeyed the commands of Christ and the apostles and became christians. All the Israel that is ever going to be saved (Rom. 11:26) is the “Israel of God” (including Gentiles) who seek God through the Son (David’s son according to the flesh) during the Gospel dispensation. When Jesus comes again, the Gospel dispensation will be over—all dispensations of time will be over—and all Israel will then have been saved. Anyone found outside of Christ at that time will not belong to the Israel of God and there will be no further offer of salvation—only judgment. These are the latter days! (cf. Isa. 2:2, etc.)

QUIZ

1. Who is the “woman” whom Hosea is to love?
2. Who is the “friend” of the woman?
3. How much did Hosea pay for this woman? What did this signify?
4. Why did Hosea require her to live in conjugal abstinence?
5. How long did Israel remain estranged from God?
6. Who is “David their king?”
7. What are the “latter days?”
8. What symbolical relationship does all this have to God and Israel?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

TEXT: 4:1-5

- 1 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye children of Israel; for Jehovah hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land.
- 2 There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood.
- 3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.
- 4 Yet let no man strive, neither let any man reprove; for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.
- 5 And thou shalt stumble in the day, and the prophet also shall stumble with thee in the night; and I will destroy thy mother.

QUERIES

- a. Why was there "no knowledge" of God in the land?
- b. What does the prophet mean, "blood toucheth blood?"
- c. What is wrong with "striving with the priest?"

PARAPHRASE

Listen to the word of the Lord, you children of Israel. The Lord has an indictment against you and is going to bring judgment against you because there is no truthfulness, nor goodness, nor personal knowledge of God in the hearts of the people of the whole country. On the other hand there is false swearing and covenant breaking, murdering, stealing, adultery everywhere! There are men breaking in and robbing and one bloody death after another throughout the whole land. When the Lord brings drought and famine upon you for your sins, the whole land will mourn. The people and even the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens will grieve—yes, even the fish of the sea will perish. When all this happens let no man blame anyone else for such disaster—every man is equally to blame. And so, God's judgment will come, unceasingly; the slaughter of an unfaithful people and of the false prophets who led them will have no respite neither day nor night—and I will destroy national Israel.

SUMMARY

These first five verses form the first stanza of a long ode of Judgment. They contain the theme of the whole remaining section of the book of Hosea, and especially this fourth chapter—cause and resultant judgment of God.

COMMENT

V. 1 . . . JEHOVAH HATH A CONTROVERSY WITH THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND . . . There is a similar arrangement of the covenant people (Judah in this instance) in Micah 6:2ff. God is personified as both the Plaintiff, Prosecutor and the Judge. God has a case against the covenant people. They are arraigned. God presents His case listing the many ways and instances by which the people broke His covenant. He proves their guilt and pronounces sentence. In His prosecution God even bears witness to the cause—there is no knowledge of God in the land. This specially blessed and favored people certainly could not claim ignorance of the terms of the covenant as an excuse (for the terms of God's covenant were reiterated over and over and they were plain enough for the dullest child to understand, cf. Deut. 8:19-20). They could not claim that God had not warned them for He sent one prophet after another attempting to call the people back to covenant keeping—all to no avail.

A nation is almost beyond hope when "there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land." Jerome said, "Truth cannot be sustained without mercy; and mercy without truth makes men negligent; so that the one ought to be mingled with the other." When there is no truthfulness no one trusts another (cw. Jer. 9:3-4).

Truth is the basis of all morality. The Bible, God's revealed will, is the only infallible standard of objective truth. Morality cannot be determined on any subjective basis. Morality cannot be determined on any humanistic basis. Morality cannot be reasoned on any philosophical basis. Morality must be determined by an objective standard and this standard must be infallible, supernatural truth. All other attempts to determine what is moral must ultimately end in complete moral anarchy (which leads to political anarchy) and the "autonomous man." The "dark ages" of the covenant people, during the period of the Judges, was a result of "every man doing that which was right in his own eyes!" When the divine standard of truth, God's revealed word, is rejected moral and political suicide is the result. This is exactly what

was happening to Israel in Hosea's time and also what happened to Judah in Jeremiah's time—complete moral and political anarchy! The same will happen to any nation which rejects God's Word, the Bible.

Hosea depicts the situation in Israel as one in which there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God. The "knowledge of God" is an experiential knowledge, to be sure, but this experience of God in our hearts only comes as a result of knowing God from His revelation of Himself through His written Word. That God does exist may be known from nature (Rom. 1:20-21; Psa. 19; Acts 14:14-18; etc.), but we must also know that He is a "rewarder" (Heb. 11:6). In other words, we must know what kind of a Person God is. This can only be known by a knowledge of what He says about Himself and how He has proved Himself through His marvelous deeds in the past (cf. II Pet. 1:3-9, where we "know" Him through His "precious and very great promises," and also become partakers of the divine nature). Of course, when God tells us what He is like and promises us that His will put to practice in our lives will give us certain blessings such as peace, love, joy, fruitfulness, forgiveness and etc., we cannot "know" such blessedness until we *do* what He says. Then our knowledge of God becomes experiential. First, however, our knowledge of God must be intellectual, based upon facts of history which record God's deeds. We must be able to trust Him with our reason before we can experience Him with our hearts. We must know He is historically trustworthy before we can be convinced that what He says to do is the right thing to do!

Israel had long ago taken the revealed truth of God away from the people. They built false "calf gods" and instituted a false priesthood. The verbal revelation of God in the Mosaic Law was no longer revered or practiced. So the inevitable consequences of moral rotteness followed.

V. 2 THERE IS NOUGHT BUT SWEARING AND BREAKING FAITH, AND KILLING, AND STEALING, AND COMMITTING ADULTERY . . . AND BLOOD TOUCHETH BLOOD . . . Here the prophet merely enumerates the sins of the nation. In later chapters he describes in detail the immoral practices of the people. In this list we find violations of five of the ten commandments of the decalogue. The people are guilty of false witnessing, covenant breaking, murder, theft, and adultery. And this is on a national scale. There are not just a few isolated cases of such crimes but the prophet says, "to the contrary, there is nothing else going in the land but such criminality!" One bloody deed follows another ("blood toucheth blood.")

v. 3 THEREFORE SHALL THE LAND MOURN . . . Such flagrant violations of all that is moral, right, good, reasonable and true inevitably bears fruit. God created the universe and sustains it through inexorable laws, both moral and physical. When those laws are transgressed the penalty must be paid. Where there is no penalty, there is no law; so where there is law there must be penalty. The penalty for violating a physical law of the universe is usually death or some other disastrous consequence. The penalty for violating a moral law is moral ruin, moral darkness, injustice, greed, cruelty, distrust and all the other decadent practices resulting from falsehood.

In Israel's case God brought pestilence, drought, plague and other forms of divine chastisement upon them. Not only does the inanimate creation suffer in consequence of the sins and crimes of men, but the moral depravity of man causes the physical destruction of all other creatures through such punishments of God. Even the beasts of the field, the birds and fish, mourn.

v. 4-5 . . . LET NO MAN STRIVE . . . REPROVE . . . THOU SHALT STUMBLE IN THE DAY . . . The fundamental requirement of God's covenant was willing, unfaltering, obedience (Ex. 19:5; 23:20-22; Deut. 6:1-25; I Sam. 15:22). Three times the people had solemnly pledged obedience (Ex. 19:8; 20:19; 24:3-7). But alas, they rebelled only forty days later and continued to rebel until their rebellion was culminated in the divided kingdom. Hosea writes to the people and tells them they are like those who strive with the priest. This is a reference to the Mosaic ordinance which prohibited people from striving or rebelling against a priestly decision (cf. Deut. 17:8-13). It may also indicate that the people were trying to blame the priests for their waywardness. In any case, the nation is a nation of rebels, rebelling against the rule of God. They are like the wicked servants of the parable Jesus told concerning the "pounds" (cf. Lk. 19:11-27) who said, "We do not want this man to reign over us."

So they would have to bear the consequences of their rejection of the light of God's truth. When the divine Light is rejected the darkness of falsehood and lie must follow. When people love the darkness they will refuse to come to the Light (cf. Jn. 3:18-21). When such people have their say they prefer "teachers after their own lusts" (cf. II Tim. 4:3-5) and they will be like the "blind leading the blind" (cf. Lk. 6:39), they will both fall into the pit! This goes on all the time—day and night. And God is going to destroy the "mother"—the whole nation.

QUIZ

1. What picture does the figure of speech "controversy" paint for us?
2. What was the cause of God's controversy against the nation?
3. Why is truth the basis for all morality?
4. Why must we have a divine, objective standard of truth?
5. When does one's knowledge of God become experiential?
6. Why does the land mourn when people sin?
7. How were the people like those "that strive with the priest?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE—
FORGETTING THEIR GOD

TEXT: 4:6-10

- 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 also will forget thy children.
7. As they were multiplied, so they sinned against me: I will change their glory into shame.
- 8 They feed on the sin of my people, and set their heart on their iniquity.
- 9 And it shall be, like people, like priest; and I will punish them for their ways, and will requite them their doings.
- 10 And they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall play the harlot, and shall not increase; because they have left off taking heed to Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why are the people to be destroyed for "lack of knowledge?"
- b. Who is feeding "on the sin" of Jehovah's people?
- c. What does the phrase "like people, like priest" mean?

PARAPHRASE

My covenant nation is destroyed because they have no knowledge of Me, and so I will reject it from being a priestly nation because it has refused and rejected My law. Since this nation has forgotten My law, I will forget to bless its children. The more the population of My people increased, the more they sinned against Me. I will take all

their present glory and turn it into shame upon them. The priests grow fat because of the sins of my people. They set their heart on the people increasing their sins because as a result the sin-offerings which go to the priests for food, will also increase. Therefore, what is going to happen to the people, will also happen to the priests, they will perish with the nation because of their greed. And because they have stopped paying heed to the law of Jehovah, Jehovah will withdraw His blessing from both priests and people so that they may eat but they shall not be satisfied and they may commit whoredom but they shall not produce off-spring.

SUMMARY

The destruction of the nation of Israel is inevitable. Israel has stopped giving heed to God. God is going to stop blessing Israel. It is just as simple as that. When blessings are deliberately spurned, when the laws of God are purposely disobeyed, disaster inexorably follows. It all comes from a deliberate lack of experiential or covenant-knowledge of God.

COMMENT

v. 6 MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE . . . The knowledge of God which the people lacked was, of course, an experiential knowledge of God. But even an experiential knowledge of God must come from, first, a knowledge of God's existence and God's will as God is pleased to reveal Himself. In other words, there is no way to come to an experiential knowledge of God except first coming to an intellectual knowledge of Him through His verbal and natural revelation of Himself. We must first *know* that He exists (through the various proofs of His existence in both nature and His Word); then we must *know* what He is like and what He invites us to be and promises we may be; and then, when we have trusted Him to be what He is and able to do what He promises, and when we have done what He commands—we *really begin to know Him as we ought to know Him!* Such a knowledge as this brings peace, joy, forgiveness, satisfaction, fulfillment, purpose and eternal life. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" Jn. 17:3. But, conversely, to lack such knowledge of God is to be lost in ignorance, despair, hopelessness, guilt, purposelessness and eternal separation (death) from God. See our comments on the preceding section, Hosea 4:1-5. One is led to think of the terrible

condition of the Gentiles described in Romans 1:18ff when one sees the knowledge of God rejected. They "refused to have God in their knowledge . . ." "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie . . ." and so God gave them up to serve the enslaving and degrading passions of their bodies. One is also reminded of II Thess. 2:10-12 where those who have no love of the truth are given over by God to self-delusion and to believing a lie. And this is, for all practical purposes, the condition Israel had come to—enslaved, degraded, and self-deluded!

And so God has rejected this nation, this nation with which He had covenanted, from being a priestly nation. God had chosen this nation for a special purpose, to be "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). They stood in a privileged position to both God and the rest of mankind. They were a "bridge" between God and all of creation over which the rest of mankind would eventually be reached by God through the Messiah. But now they were no longer fit for such a calling and God rejects them until they are purified and cleansed and made fit again for the bringing in of the Messiah.

V. 7 AS THEY WERE MULTIPLIED, SO THEY SINNED AGAINST ME . . . As their population increased, so their prosperity and, apparently, their power increased. But, so did their sin! Prosperity and power does not solve the problem of sin, crime and immorality. Prosperity without God only increases the problem! Why? Because prosperous man without God loses spiritual perspective. Affluent man without God deifies "man, the flesh and the devil." Prosperous man without God deludes himself into thinking he is self-reliant, self-made and self-contained. That is the crucial problem—SELF! Soon, it is every self for self, and the devil take the hindmost! God created man to be more than flesh. So when man concentrates on the flesh to the exclusion of the real man—the spirit—he is out of harmony with the eternal purpose and out of harmony with himself, with the world, with his fellow-man, and is thus a true schizophrenic. The man who persuades himself that the physical is the ultimate and refuses to acknowledge the spiritual is the true schizophrenic—withdrawn from reality! He is afraid, he is guilt-ridden, he is neurotic (deep down in his soul), and so he actually goes out of his way to seek self-destruction. He, "having itching ears, heaps to himself teachers after his own lusts and is led away into foolish myths . . ." (II Tim. 4:3-4).

So, what God intended for glory (Israel) or, what Israel intended for her own glory (which we are not certain), would be changed into shame when they should be taken into captivity and slavery by Assyria.

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE — FORGETTING GOD 4:6, 7

v. 8 THEY FEED ON THE SIN OF MY PEOPLE . . . The Hebrew word that is used here for "sin" *chatt'ath*, is also translated "sin offering." Evidently the priests of Israel (a mongrel priesthood to begin with) were eager to see the people sin since when they sinned they brought sin-offerings for atonement. The sin-offering was, of course, to go to the priest for a part of his sustenance according to the Mosaic law (Lev. 6:26; 10:17.) Figuratively speaking, then, the priests were "feeding on the people's sins." To "set the heart on" the iniquity of the people means to "long for the people to commit iniquity." We are reminded of the 19th century when the Roman Catholic pope Leo X and Tetzels sold "Indulgences" and used the money to build St. Peter's cathedral. The leaders of religion feeding on the sins of the people.

v. 9 AND IT SHALL BE, LIKE PEOPLE, LIKE PRIEST . . . Since the priests were as corrupt and, perhaps, even more debased (longing for the people to commit sin in order that they might profit), they would be destroyed with the nation. The sins of the religious teachers and leaders would certainly not go unpunished, for the one called to such a high responsibility as that must know that he will receive the more severe judgment (cf. Rom. 2:1-9; 2:17-25; James 3).

v. 10 AND THEY SHALL EAT, AND NOT HAVE ENOUGH . . . Whatever they shall do will not prosper. All their attempts at self-dependency shall end in vanity and emptiness. They will find the same thing Solomon found and about which he wrote in Ecclesiastes. Money, fame, power, sensual indulgence—all is vanity—all is unsatisfying without God. The "whole of man" is to fear God and keep His commandments. When men stop paying heed to God, God's only alternative is to withdraw His proffered blessings. God's blessings are given conditionally, when man refuses those conditions, God will not force His blessings on him. When that happens, man is left frustrated, lost and hopeless. Man cannot hope to defeat God so man, the enemy, is defeated!

QUIZ

1. What "knowledge" of God did the people lack and how did it destroy them?
2. What did their population explosion and prosperity have to do with their sin?
3. Why did the priests "set their heart" on the iniquity of the people?
4. How were they to "eat and not have enough?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— SPIRIT OF IDOLATRY

TEXT: 4:11-14

- 11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding:
- 12 My people ask counsel at their stock, and their staff declareth unto them; for the spirit of whoredom hath cause them to err, and they have played the harlot, departing from under their God.
- 13 They sacrifice upon the top of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks, and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters play the harlot, and your brides commit adultery.
- 14 I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go apart with harlots, and they sacrifice with the prostitutes; and the people that doth not understand shall be overthrown.

QUERIES

- a. What are the "stocks" from which the people ask counsel?
- b. Why were the people burning incense under the trees?
- c. Why would God *not* punish the woman for harlotry and adultery?

PARAPHRASE

Licentiousness and debauchery is robbing men of their reason and understanding. My people seek wisdom and religious revelations from their divining sticks. The spirit of promiscuity and sensuality in their hearts has caused them to depart from Jehovah and the truth and to worship idols. They indulge in the immoral and vain pagan worship on the mountain tops and in the pleasant groves. Their daughters and wives have become prostitutes and priestesses in such heathen worship services. But why should I punish them when you men are so reprobate and, as leaders of society, have corrupted the women by your own indulgence in sexual immorality and idolatry. So this people which has allowed its understanding to be taken away by drunkenness and paganism will be cast headlong into destruction.

SUMMARY

In one quick stroke, Hosea tells the nation why they have no knowledge of God. They have allowed debauchery to take away their understanding.

COMMENT

v. 11 WHOREDOM AND WINE . . . TAKE AWAY THE UNDERSTANDING . . . Licentiousness and debauchery robs man of his reasoning power and of his will-power. Sexual excess and alcoholic addiction will reduce any self-assured man or woman to abject, whimpering, slobbering slavery. The Bible has a great deal to say about self-control in both sex and alcohol (cf. I Cor. 7; Prov.20:1; 23:20, 31; Isa. 5:11, etc.). Many an individual, home and nation has been destroyed because of one or both. Belshazzar lost an empire because of this; Alexander the Great died a debauched profligate at the apex of his power; the Roman empire of the Caesars disintegrated because of this—and in our day the British empire is about to fade away because men in high places betrayed their country after they had become enslaved to such excesses. And let Americans tremble when they think of the drunkenness, the the partying, the carousing and whoring that goes on in high levels of government, business and the arts in her own fair land! How can we trust men with such tremendously cataclysmic responsibilities in places of political leadership to make the true, good and right decisions when their minds are sated with sensual excess?! These two excesses are "demons"! They literally possess men and women! Men who are so possessed will compromise and surrender, they will pervert and poison, they will even steal and kill to satisfy their lusts. They become senseless (cf. Rom. 1:18ff).

v. 12 MY PEOPLE ASK COUNSEL AT THEIR STOCK . . . AND THEIR STAFF . . . This is a demonstration of the preceding statement. Men who lose their reason by allowing themselves to be overcome with sensual excess turn to falsehood to deliberately shield themselves from the truth! It sounds impossible but it is true nevertheless (cf. Jn. 3:19-21). The people of Israel turned deliberately to dumb, speechless, powerless idols in order to rationalize their lust for licentiousness. Men today are not any wiser. Men who delight in sensual indulgence will turn to dumb or dead gods of scientism, psychology, philosophy, liberal theology, or some pagan cult in order to rationalize and find credence for their indulgences. Many form their own philosophy or system of ethics (all relative, of course) and turn to "fate" or the "stars" to ask counsel. Some have made "love" a god (their definition of love, of course, precludes any discipline or moral responsibility). God is love, but love is not God! People will turn to every source under the sun for counsel but the divine revelation of God propositionally delivered and inerrantly recorded in human language

in the Bible. This is too objective for people, too restrictive for those with "the spirit of whoredom."

The "spirit of whoredom" is that spirit of promiscuity, license, libertinism or anarchy which desires to be free of all reasonable, moral and physical restraint. It is a totally selfish spirit for it considers only its own pleasure or satisfaction. It is a spirit of envy, greed and covetousness for it desires to possess that which does not rightfully belong to it. It is a spirit of rebellion, a spirit of pride which says, "I know better than God and His law." It is the spirit which is susceptible to being led astray into ignorance, lie, and spiritual death by the devil.

This describes the people of Israel in Hosea's day. So they were turning to their "sticks" for revelations and wisdom. Cyril of Alexandria says this refers to a practice which was an invention of the Chaldeans where two rods were held upright and then allowed to fall while forms of incantation were being uttered; and the oracle or message was inferred from the way in which they fell, whether forwards or backwards, to the right or left, or (if they had inscriptions) which inscription was facing upward, (cf. also Isa. 44:9-20; 45:20; Jer. 10:3-11). What foolishness men will succumb to when they allow their minds to be thus darkened!

v. 13 THEY SACRIFICE UPON THE TOPS OF THE MOUNTAINS, AND BURN INCENSE UPON THE HILLS . . . AND YOUR BRIDES COMMIT ADULTERY . . . The "sacrificing upon . . . the mountains" refers, of course, to Israel's practice of pagan idolatry. They were infected with the paganism of Jezebel, the heathen wife of Ahab (I Ki. 16:32; 18-19), early in their history as a nation. Earlier than this though, Jereboam I started the nation in idolatry when he built golden images for the nation to worship. In the pleasant, shady, cool groves they indulged themselves in the grossly immoral religious rites of Baalism (cf. Jer. 2:20; 3:6, 13; II Ki. 16:4; 17:9-18). According to Henry H. Halley, in the Pocket Bible Handbook, in the religion of the Cananites, 'Priestesses were temple prostitutes. Sodomites were male temple prostitutes. The worship of Baal, Ashtoreth, and other Canaanite gods consisted in the most extravagant orgies; their temples were centers of vice . . . Under the debris, in one of the High Places, Macalister (of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1904-09) found great numbers of jars containing the remains of children who had been sacrificed to Baal. The whole area proved to be a cemetery for new-born babes. Another horrible practice was

what they called 'foundation sacrifices.' When a house was to be built, a child would be sacrificed, and its body built into the wall, to bring good luck to the rest of the family. Many of these were found in Gezer. They have been found also at Megiddo, Jericho, and other places. Also, in this High Place, under the rubbish, Macalister found enormous quantities of images and plaques of Ashtoreth with rudely exaggerated sex organs, designed to foster sensual feelings."

The literal meaning of the word *baal*, is "possessor, husband." Very lascivious rites accompanied the worship (I Ki. 14:23-24). Sometimes priests, dancing around the altar in a state of frenzy, slashed themselves with knives (I Ki. 18:26-28). When people commit themselves to *worship* (which really means to adore, to practice and believe in something or someone as the reason for existence and the motivating center of life) in such immoral, fleshly indulgence, one can understand why the society became politically corrupt and falls apart.

J. N. D. Anderson, in "The World's Religions" states (from his own knowledge as a missionary) that in India today young girls are still provided in Hindu temples to serve as religious prostitutes. If a worshiper visits the temple prostitute he is doing only what is customary and taking advantage of what is provided for him by his gracious gods.

v. 14 I WILL NOT PUNISH YOUR DAUGHTERS . . . AND THE PEOPLE THAT DOTH NOT UNDERSTAND SHALL BE OVERTHROWN . . . God does not mean to say that He will not *ever* punish the adultery and harlotry of the women of Israel. What is meant is evident from the last phrase of this verse—namely that God is going to leave the people in their deliberate, rebellious ignorance to choose their own course. God has spoken. God has sent calamity after calamity, but the people refuse to hear. There is nothing left for a merciful God to do but "give them up" (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). So, because this is the way Israel wants it, the presence of Jehovah has left them—they are left to their own devices. They are given up in their headlong plunge into utter ruin.

QUIZ

1. How does whoredom and wine take away the understanding?
2. What is the spirit of whoredom?
3. Describe the worship of Baal. Where did it come from?
4. Does such gross immorality occur in the name of religion today?
5. How does verse 14 compare to Romans 1:18ff?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— JUDAH IS TO DEPART FROM HER

TEXT: 4:15-19

- 15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, As Jehovah liveth.
- 16 For Israel hath behaved himself stubbornly, like a stubborn heifer: now will Jehovah feed them as a lamb in a large place.
- 17 Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.
- 18 Their drink is become sour; they play the harlot continually; her rulers dearly love shame.
- 19 The wind hath wrapped her up in its wings; and they shall be put to shame because of their sacrifices.

QUERIES

- a. Why the exhortation to Judah at this time?
- b. What is the meaning of the phrase, "let him alone?"
- c. What does the figure "the wind hath wrapped her up in its wings" mean?

PARAPHRASE

But though Israel has prostituted herself to worship idols, I exhort Judah to keep from offending Me in this way. Stay far away from Israel's centers of pagan worship, Judah, having nothing to do with these places. Do not be guilty even of saying the name of Jehovah in connection with anything idolatrous. Israel is behaving like a stubborn heifer, resisting the leading and protection of the Lord. Now the Lord will have to leave her defenseless to become a prey for her enemies, because, like a stupid and stubborn lamb she has wandered astray. Yes, Israel is joined inseparably to her idols and is headed for inevitable ruin—**LEAVE HER ALONE!** When the men become so intoxicated they can't drink any more and their wine begins to turn sour, they all go off to find some whores with whom they consort. They actually love shame more than they love honor. The great storm of God's judgment has already encircled Israel and she is trapped. She will find that she has been deceived by placing confidence in her idols and pagan sacrifices.

SUMMARY

Israel has been completely given up by God to self-hardening. Let Judah keep away from her and not be seduced into her idolatry.

COMMENT

v. 15-17 **THOUGH THOU, ISRAEL, PLAY THE HARLOT, YET LET NOT JUDAH OFFEND; . . . EPHRAIM IS JOINED TO IDOLS; LET HIM ALONE . . .** Hosea strikes a note of imperativeness in his warning. There is extreme urgency in his cry to Judah to have nothing to do with Israel! Isaiah was in the southern kingdom preaching his heart out to Judah to make no alliances, neither political, military, economic or religious, with Judah. Hosea attempts to confirm the warnings of Isaiah by sending down to Judah the same word. Although there was some corruption even in Judah at this time, generally speaking the people of the southern kingdom had not become nearly so decadent or religiously corrupt as Israel. There were still a number of faithful people in Judah. This principle of non-union of believers with unbelievers runs all through the Bible. We find it in the New Testament in I Corinthians 6 . . . "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing. What concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever." We agree with a statement made by G. Campbell Morgan in his little book entitled, "Hosea, The Heart and Holiness of God." Mr. Morgan, "the prince of expositors," said:

"A man must be true to his own conscience. I have been asked if I would not go to some meeting at which representatives of other religions were to speak—Mohammedan and Jewish. No. I will respect the Mohammedan, and I will respect the Jewish rabbi, but I cannot stand on a religious platform with them. They are joined to false representations of God. If someone says he is not sure about that, I shall reply, then he is not sure about Jesus Christ, not sure about His finality. So long as we are prepared to compare Him, we are something less than Christian. So long as we put Him into comparison with others, it is because we have not risen to the height of intellectual comprehension concerning Him, to say nothing of volitional surrender to Him. Until we see Him alone as "the Image of the invisible God," filling all the horizon to the uttermost bound, we have not really seen Him at all, and our relation to Him lacks the uttermost of devotion. The hour is coming, nay, the

hour is here, when loyal souls ought at least to stand separate from all complicity with any form of the misrepresentation of God, even though the form be some new presentation of Jesus that denies the things of Revelation. There must be no compromise."

This call to separation did not mean God was at a loss to do something to help Israel, if she would be helped. God, mercifully and purposefully, allows Israel to be carried away into captivity because at the present time Israel will not listen to God. But God will deal mercifully with Israel by and by. Listen to the heart of God speak as the prophet reveals it . . . "How can I give you up, O Ephraim . . ." (Hos. 11:8) . . . "I will love them freely . . ." (14:4). If Israel will repent and learn her lesson from the captivity, God will love her freely. But so long as Israel gives God up, Judah is to have nothing to do with her. The principle is just as true today! Let all who name the Name of God stand clear of all complicity with any false representation of God (cf. II Jn. 9-11).

The people of Judah are especially warned not to frequent any of the religious centers of Israel—Gilgal, Beth-aven, etc. They are also warned not to even speak the name of Jehovah when they talk about such places lest people begin to associate Jehovah with pagan religion.

Every farmer knows how stubborn a heifer can be. When one does not wish to be led, no amount of pulling, persuasion or prodding can move one. A stubborn, balking heifer will often times lie down on the ground to keep from being led. It will absolutely defy its owner to herd it anywhere. This graphically describes the stiff-necked Israel. There is nothing left for God to do but let Israel have its wish like a stupid sheep which insists on straying out into an open, unprotected pasture by itself. God is going to turn Israel loose to go her own rebellious path. She will wander into a "large place." She will be dispersed among the nations. That is where she is headed!

v. 18-19 THEIR DRINK IS BECOME SOUR . . . THEY SHALL BE PUT TO SHAME BECAUSE OF THEIR SACRIFICES. The prophet pictures for us men drinking until they cannot drink any more and the wine which they leave in their glasses becoming sour because they cannot drink any more. Then, having poisoned their minds with drink and seared their moral consciences, they go out in search of a prostitute to gratify their sexual lust. They do not have to look long for there

are plenty of loose women. They play the harlot continually. The indictment of the prophet is terrible to contemplate . . . "The rulers *dearly love* shame." They are like those described by Paul in II Thessalonians 2:9-12 who "refused to love the truth . . . but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

God will have them in derision. They shall be put to shame—the word *shame* means they will be confounded, caused to stumble. Literally, they will suddenly realize that they have been deceived by placing confidence in impotent idols. They will learn that their idols are powerless and feelingless. How shameful, how pitiful, how utterly helpless they will be when they realize all this. They will be led away into abject slavery, shamed and mocked by their heathen neighbors.

QUIZ

1. Why was Judah warned to leave Israel alone?
2. Is this a principle for believers today?
3. Why does the prophet say Israel acted like a stubborn heifer?
4. What is the terrible indictment of the rulers by Hosea?
5. How will God put the people of Israel "to shame?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— REBELLION AND TRANSGRESSION

TEXT: 5:1-7

- 1 Hear this, O ye priests, and hearken, O house of Israel, and give ear, O house of the king; for unto you pertaineth the judgment; for ye have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.
- 2 And the revolvers are gone deep in making slaughter; but I am a rebuker of them all.
- 3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me; for now, O Ephraim, thou hast played the harlot, Israel is defiled.
- 4 Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God; for the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not Jehovah.
- 5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in their iniquity; Judah also shall stumble with them.
- 6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek Jehovah; but they shall not find him: he hath withdrawn himself from them.

- 7 They have dealt treacherously against Jehovah; for they have borne strange children: now shall the new moon devour them with their fields.

QUERIES

- a. Why did Hosea direct his prophecy to the priests and king?
- b. How did their "doings" keep them from turning to God?
- c. Why did God withdraw from them when they sought Him? v. 6

PARAPHRASE

Listen to this, you priests and members of the royal family who "dearly love shame;" you are doomed! You have enticed the whole nation, east and west of the Jordan, and they have been trapped like birds in your net of sin. These rebellious people are deeply sunken in excesses; but I, Jehovah, will punish them all because their idolatrous conduct is fully known to me. The demoniacal power of idolatry and its consequent immoral excesses has taken complete possession of their thoughts and actions, and stifled every vestige of knowledge of God. The spirit of promiscuity and anarchy is in their hearts and they refuse to know Jehovah. Israel's arrogance and pride will soon be shown to be vain when God brings her to shame. And because Judah has consorted with her, she too will be brought to shame. The offering of sacrifices will be no help to them. God has withdrawn Himself from hearing their prayers. Their sacrifices are not offered with penitent hearts. This is evident from the rebellion and idolatry of this generation of Israelites. Therefore their hypocritical sacrifices, instead of bringing salvation, will bring upon them ruin and destruction.

SUMMARY

The leaders have enmeshed the people in a net of moral excesses and rebellion. The people are pleased to have it so and refuse to have God in their knowledge. Pride and hypocritical worship testifies that their destruction by God is inevitable.

COMMENT

v. 1 HEAR THIS, O YE PRIESTS . . . AND . . . HOUSE OF THE KING . . . UNTO YOU PERTAINETH . . . JUDGMENT . . . When the light of truth begins to flicker and fade, invariably the social and religious leadership is at fault. Men who propose to lead others

face an awesome responsibility toward truth and morality. They are charged not only with proclaiming the dogmas of truth but with practicing them! (cf. James 3:1ff; Rom. 2:1ff). But not only this, both priest and king were charged with enforcing certain moral standards according to law. This, to certain degrees, is still the responsibility of civil government today. Since their responsibility is so great and their sin of trapping the populace in excess so heinous, the wrath of God is directed at these leaders first and foremost.

The king of Hosea's day was either Zechariah or Menahem; possibly both, since Hosea prophesied in both reigns. However, Hosea's reference to making a military alliance with Assyria (5:13) refers to Menahem (II Ki. 15:19-20). Both of these were wicked kings. Mizpah (Ramah-Mizpah of Gilead) and Tabor are both wooded mountains representing east and west of the Jordan, respectively, thus typifying the whole populace of the nation of Israel. The fact that they were wooded hills makes them noted as places peculiarly adapted for bird-trapping.

v. 2 AND THE REVOLTERS ARE GONE DEEP IN MAKING SLAUGHTER . . . Ephraim (Israel) is deeply sunken in excesses. Delitzsch translates the phrase literally, "they understand from the very foundation how to spread out transgressions." In other words, they have "studied" or "gone to great lengths" to learn how to become more indulgent, more lascivious, (cf. Isa. 31:6). God rebuked them time and time again, through His law, through the prophets, through natural catastrophes, but their revolt was deeply embeded in their hearts, and they were deeply sunken in the mire of their immoralities. There is nothing left now for God to do but to give them up to total destruction and ruin.

v. 3 I KNOW EPHRAIM . . . THOU HAST PLAYED THE HARLOT . . . God was all too well aware of the unfaithfulness of Israel. His heart was broken; their rottenness sickened Him. Be sure your sin will find you out (Num. 32:23)!

v. 4 THEIR DOINGS WILL NOT SUFFER THEM TO TURN UNTO THEIR GOD . . . What they were doing took possession of them. When a man yields the mind and the members of his body to sin, he becomes a slave to that to which he has yielded (cf. Rom. 6:12-23). When one allows himself to be enslaved to falsehood and immoral deeds he at the same time, permits himself to be blinded to truth and goodness. Men love darkness because their deeds are evil (Jn. 3:18-21) and they refuse to come to the light of truth lest their evil deeds be exposed for what they really are—vain, useless, degrading,

etc. It was the same spirit of harlotry that possessed them as is referred to in Hos. 4:12 (see our comments there).

v. 5 AND THE PRIDE OF ISRAEL DOTH TESTIFY TO HIS FACE . . . K & D interpret "the pride of Israel" as "the glory of Israel—Jehovah God." Thus they make God testify to the face of Israel. Lange and Pussey both interpret the phrase simply—Israel's arrogant pride. We prefer the last for it seems to suit the context better. Israel is like those of whom Paul wrote, "claiming to be wise, they became fools . . ." "they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened . . ." "haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil . . ." (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). "Pride goeth before a fall." Pride was the very snare of the devil (I Tim. 3:6-7). Amos 6:8 shows how "the excellency (pride) of Jacob" was the cause of her sin and how abhorrent such pride was to God. Remember that God told Edom "the pride of thine heart hath deceived thee," (Obadiah v. 3). So, Israel, will soon know how foolish her pride and haughtiness was. Soon Israel's insolence will be changed to shame and regret when God's wrath is poured out. Then will her pride testify to her face that all her arrogance was futile, vain and shameful.

Judah, too, will be brought to the same shame. Hosea warned Judah (4:15) not to take part in Ephraim's idolatry. Evidently Judah did not heed the warning and became a partaker in Israel's guilt (cf. Jer. 3:6-11).

The Russian communist Zinovieff boasted: "We shall grapple with the Lord God. In due time we shall vanquish him from the highest Heaven, and where he seeks refuge, we shall subdue him forever." What arrogance, what insolence! American theologians, however, have gone him one better! They have declared God is dead; they have held requiem chorales in honor of his death! This, if anything, is worse than insolence! How longsuffering the mercy of the Omnipotent God! It is a marvel of love and grace that He has not consumed such proud and boastful men with fire as He did of old.

v. 6 THEY SHALL GO WITH THEIR FLOCKS . . . TO SEEK JEHOVAH; BUT THEY SHALL NOT FIND HIM . . . These hypocrites, when disaster seems ready to strike, will bring thousands of lambs to the places of sacrifices, and gallons of oil (cf. Micah 6:6-8), but they will have left off the weightier matters of the law, mercy, righteousness and justice. Their sacrifices will not be offered with penitent hearts, or in faith. Their worship will be ritualistic, from hearts sunken

deep in sin, wishing only to be saved *in* their sins, not saved *from* their sins. God will not honor such worship for the simple reason such worship does not honor Him. He will not hear their prayers for the simple reason such prayers are not directed to Him. Isaiah had a great deal to say about such sham worship (cf. Isa. 1:10-20). It is not the "trampling of the courts" of God that counts with Him so much as "willingness and obedience" (Isa. 1:19). These were a people who honored God with their lips but their hearts were far from Him (cf. Isa. 29:13-16; Matt. 15:1-20).

v. 7 THEY HAVE DEALT TREACHEROUSLY AGAINST JEHOVAH . . . The word translated "treacherously" is *bagad* which means to act faithlessly and is frequently applied to the infidelity of a wife towards her husband. We are not surprised that Hosea would use such a word. Gomer acted treacherously toward Hosea when she deserted him for her paramours. Israel acted like that toward her husband, God, when she went off after her idols. Such idolatry, from the very beginning of the nation under Jeroboam, has produced generation after generation of "strange" children (idolators).

Israel should have produced generation after generation of children worshipping the Lord God in spirit and truth. Quite to the contrary, however, each generation became more idolatrous and immoral than the next. They retained just enough of the Mosaic forms of worship to ease their hypocritical hearts and salve their conscience. But, says God, your hypocritical worship is not going to save you—no, it is going to bring about your destruction. This is the meaning of the phrase, "now shall the new moon devour them . . ."

QUIZ

1. Why do those who propose to be leaders of God's people face an awesome task?
2. How deeply were the people involved in their sin?
3. Why were these Israelites not able to turn to God?
4. Why is pride dangerous? How does it bring men to shame?
5. Why would Israel's sacrifices not be noticed by God?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— REBELLION AND TRANSGRESSION

TEXT: 5:8-15

- 8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: sound an alarm at Beth-aven, behind thee, O Benjamin.

- 9 Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.
- 10 The princes of Judah are like them that remove the landmark: I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.
- 11 Ephraim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgment; because he was content to walk after man's command.
- 12 Therefore am I unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.
- 13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to Assyria, and sent to king Jareb: but he is not able to heal you, neither will he cure you of your wound.
- 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 carry off, and there shall be none to deliver.
- 15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly.

QUERIES

- a. Why is Benjamin to "sound an alarm" behind himself?
- b. How are the princes of Judah like those who remove landmarks?
- c. Who is king Jareb?

PARAPHRASE

Sound the invasion alarm on the far-sounding horn and let it ring from the lofty citadels of Gibeah and Ramah. Sound the warning, O Benjamin, that the judgment announced by God is knocking already on your rear door. The northern kingdom has been completely destroyed, and made desolate. The princes of Judah, by indulging in idolatry, have transgressed the spiritual boundaries God made, and have become like those who remove the land-marks of fields. Therefore, My wrath will be like a downpour, a cloudburst, and a deluge, upon these people. The northern kingdom is conquered and oppressed because it fulfilled its unholy desire to keep the commandment of Jeroboam to worship the idols he set up for it. On account of this the destruction prophesied in My word, which is intended to call Israel and Judah to repentance, is going to slowly, but surely, be fulfilled and these two nations will be destroyed because they have not repented but hardened their hearts against the purpose of this word. When these two nations became aware of their predicament, instead of taking heed to My word and trusting in Me, they attempted to get help from that Warrior the king of Assyria who is, in reality,

their enemy! But he will be of no help to either of you when I, Jehovah, act to carry out promises of judgment. I will be like the king of beasts, the lion, toward Israel and Judah. I will attack them and tear them asunder and there will be none to stop Me. I will come against them when it pleases Me and I will withdraw when it pleases Me; I will carry them away into captivity when it pleases Me and no one will stop Me! I am going to withdraw My protecting, sustaining Presence from them until they come with dependence once again seeking Me. I know that the affliction they suffer in captivity is the only thing that will move them to earnestly seek Me.

SUMMARY

First Israel, then Judah, because they have broken spiritual boundaries of God's law, must be afflicted in captivity in order that they will repent and seek God's face.

COMMENT

v. 8 BLOW YE THE CORNET IN GIBEAH . . . AT BETH-AVEN; BEHIND THEE . . . BENJAMIN, The "cornet" here is the *shophar*, "far-sounding horn" used to warn of war (cf. Joel 2:1; Amos 3:6). It signaled invasion by enemies or attack by foes. Gibeah and Ramah were cities, about 3 and 8 miles north of Jerusalem, situated on higher terrain than Jerusalem and thus well adapted for sounding such signals to the countryside. Furthermore, since they are near the southern borders of the northern kingdom, Israel, we may infer that the enemy (Assyria) has already conquered the northern kingdom or is at least pressing upon its border. The phrase, "behind thee, O Benjamin," means that Assyria is knocking on the rear doors of Benjamin (northern most territory of Judah). The judgment of God (to be administered through Assyria—cf. Isa. 10) has already broken out in the rear of Benjamin.

v. 9-10 EPHRAIM SHALL BECOME A DESOLATION . . . THE PRINCES OF JUDAH ARE LIKE THEM THAT REMOVE THE LANDMARK . . . The Hebrew word which is here translated "desolation" is the same word found in Deut. 28:59 where it is translated "afflictions severe and lasting . . ." Some commentators say the word means literally, "lasting, enduring." Others (Lange, esp.) say it means . . . true, what will surely be fulfilled, certain. God's judgment upon Israel is certain and complete. The kingdom of Israel will disappear forever. And this sentence of God has been abundantly advertised and preached by one prophet of God after another.

The cause for this severe and lasting judgment upon both Israel and Judah, is that Judah, like Israel before her, is ruled by princes and kings who are like "those who remove the landmark . . ." For the Mosaic legislation against removing landmarks see Deut. 27:17. God set the boundaries of the tribes in the land of promise—they were not to be moved. But the princes of Judah are *like* those who remove boundaries. Evidently the princes of Judah were violating the spiritual, moral boundaries of God's law. By going after idols (like Israel had) they transgressed, broke and set-aside the boundaries or marks of spiritual relationship to Jehovah-God. There is no saving relationship or covenant relationship when God's revealed boundaries are set aside. Those today who would set aside the boundaries of New Testament covenant relationship are as guilty as the princes of Judah. "There is salvation in none other . . ." (Acts 4:12); ". . . no one comes unto the Father except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6); ". . . whoever abides not in the doctrine of Christ but goes beyond it . . ." (II Jn. 9-10) is a boundry-breaker. Any attempt to syncretize Christianity with all the other "isms" of the world religions, or any attempt to built an ecumenical church by taking away the revealed and absolute boundaries of God is judged by God! God will empty the "bowls of His wrath" upon such boundary-breakers—He will pour out his wrath like a cloudburst and they will be drowned in the flood of His vengeance.

v. 11-12 EPHRAIM IS OPPRESSED . . . BECAUSE HE WAS CONTENT TO WALK AFTER MAN'S COMMAND . . . I AM TO EPHRAIM AS A MOTH . . . TO JUDAH . . . AS ROTTENNESS. Moth and rottenness are symbols of destroying influences. Those influences are, of course, the absolute Promises of God which pronounce either blessing or curse depending upon the free-willed response of His creatures. If man responds to the Word of God by obedience and faith, God becomes to man a blessing, a glory, a hope; but if man responds to the warnings of God by rebellion, God becomes to man a destroyer, avenger and judge. So, God directs the oppression and destruction of Israel and Judah because they were content to fulfill their desires and worship the idols Jeroboam and his successors commanded should be worshipped. The people "exchanged the truth of God for the commandment of lying kings and priests," and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. They taught for the commandments of God the traditions of men (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8-9). How shall peoples and nations today escape the judgment of God when their leaders lead them to

be content to walk after man's commandment and set aside the boundaries of God!?

v. 13 WHEN EPHRAIM SAW HIS SICKNESS . . . THEN WENT EPHRAIM TO ASSYRIA . . . Both Israel and Judah are denounced for making alliances with Assyria. It is not so much that alliances or agreements among nations, per se, are displeasing to God, but the motive which prompts them. In the case of Israel and Judah the alliances were an affront to God because they were motivated by an almost complete rejection of Him. Israel and Judah, having enjoyed special revelation, privilege, protection and sustenance from God, now spurned and haughtily disregarded any notion of dependence upon Jehovah. They persuaded themselves that protection, economic prosperity and cultural development could not be found by international cooperation in commerce, politics and, most ruinous of all, religion. See Special Study Five of this commentary for a history of the politics of the divided kingdoms.

When any nation exchanges trust in God for trust in man-made treaties, it only exhibits its ignorance and foolhardiness. In the first place, God's word condemns such misplaced trust (cf. Psalms 118:8-9; Hosea 7:11; Psalm 146:3; Proverbs 14:34, etc.). In the second place, history proves that international treaties are hardly worth the paper they are written upon—and they will always be that way because of the unregenerate hearts of world leaders! General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur, a spiritually-minded man, perhaps the greatest American (both soldier and statesman) who ever lived, said, in his address before joint session of Congress, April 19, 1951:

"Men since the beginning of time have sought peace. Various methods through the ages have been attempted to devise an international process to prevent or settle disputes between nations. From the very start, workable methods were found insofar as individual citizens were concerned; but the mechanics of an instrumentality of larger international scope have never been successful. *Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed*, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at the door. *The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character* that will synchronize with our almost

matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past 2,000 years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.

"But once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory—not prolonged indecision. *In war, indeed, there can be no substitute for victory.*" (emphasis our).

This same God-fearing man, who served for over half a century, through three major world conflicts and scores of minor ones, who displayed a statesmanship as great as any the world has ever known in rebuilding the nation of Japan, allowed himself to be guided by this philosophy: ". . . men may be destroyed by what they have, and what they know, but they may be saved by what they are . . ."

America, so fond of boasting of her "economic and military strength—the greatest, most powerful nation on earth," needs to heed the word of God and learn from MacArthur, a great student of history, that greatness comes, "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zech. 4:6).

The word "Jareb" means literally, *contender* and was probably an epithet devised by Hosea to denote the warrior-like nature of the king of Assyria (see our Paraphrase).

v. 14-15 . . . I WILL BE UNTO EPHRAIM AS A LION . . . I WILL GO AND RETURN TO MY PLACE, TILL THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR OFFENCE, AND SEEK MY FACE . . . The figure of God behaving like a lion toward Israel is to depict His ferocity and invincibility. God will be irresistible—like the king of beasts. God rules the universe with an invincible hand. He goes and comes as He pleases—and there are none to gainsay Him or stop Him! He is preparing to carry both Israel and Judah into captivity and all the alliances in the world will not stop Him, (cf. Deut. 32:39; Hosea 13:7-11, etc.).

God is withdrawing His Presence (Shekinah-glory), His protecting, sustaining Presence, from the covenant people. In so doing it is His purpose to discipline them into a humble, penitent, faithful dependence upon Himself. Such action by God always has as its end His perfect love and blessing, in restoring man to his proper relation to God—of sweet communion, fellowship, dominion and glory (cf. Heb. 2:1-18; 12:1-29; 10:32-39; II Cor. 1:3-11; 4:16—5:21, etc.).

The prophet Ezekiel pictured the Presence of God departing from Judah. In Ezekiel chapters 8-10 we see God preparing to forsake the Temple because of the abominations being practiced there. Then, in Ezekiel 11:22-25, God forsakes the Temple, not to return until the Messianic kingdom (the church) is depicted in Ezekiel, chapters 40-48. *Ichabod* means "the glory has departed from Israel" (cf. I Sam. 4:21) and this might be the name emblazoned over the gates of Samaria, Jerusalem and the Temple in the days of Hosea. The condition upon which God promises His return is "acknowledge your offence, and seek my face," and the method by which God plans to bring about this condition is "in their affliction they will seek me earnestly." So, Christian, "Count it all joy . . . when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him." (James 1:2, 12.)

QUIZ

1. What does the "far-sounding" horn signal? Why warn Judah?
2. How were the princes of Judah breaking God's boundaries?
3. In what way was Israel "content to walk after man's command?"
4. What warning did Hosea give Israel and Judah about international alliances?
5. What have great leaders of our own country said about alliances?
6. How is God like a lion in His actions toward Israel and Judah?
7. When did God withdraw from Israel? When did His Presence return?
8. What are the conditions and what is the method God uses to restore His Presence?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— HER INCONSTANCY

TEXT: 6:1-11

- 1 Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.
- 2 After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him.
- 3 And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.

- 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 dew that goeth early away.
- 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.
- 6 For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.
- 7 But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.
- 8 Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity; it is stained with blood.
- 9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way toward Shechem; yea, they have committed lewdness.
- 10 In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing: there whoredom is found in Ephraim, Israel is defiled.
- 11 Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for thee, when I bring back the captivity of my people.

QUERIES

- a. Why the sudden promise of Jehovah's healing?
- b. In what way did God "hew" the nation by the prophets?
- c. Does verse 6 mean the prophets preached abolition of animal sacrifices?

PARAPHRASE

In view of this illuminative word of imminent judgment, and of the fact that in uttering it God has indicated His willingness to leave a door open for our return, Come, let us return to the Lord; out of love our God has afflicted us and so He will heal us if we return to Him. In a very short time, a time certainly determined by God, He will revive and raise up His trusting children and we shall live in His sight. Let us then strive zealously to obtain a heartfelt knowledge of the Lord in keeping His commandments. His response to help us is as firmly established as the dawning of the day. His nurturing us is as certain as the nurturing latter rains which come just before the harvest. But what shall I do with you Ephraim and Judah? Your love is fickle—it is as transient and vaporous as the dewy mists which are dispersed every morning when the sun bears down. And because your love is so fickle, vanishing again and again, I have through the word of the prophets carved on this nation like on a piece of hard wood trying to shape it into a holy nation. Through the pronounce-

ments of the prophets, I have suspended judgment and death over their heads. My judgments were so obvious, so conspicuous, the whole nation should have heeded them and repented. I do not want your sacrifices without love; I do not want your burnt offerings without a heartfelt knowledge of Me. But this nation rebelled against Me, distrusted Me and transgressed My covenant with them just like Adam transgressed the covenant I made with Him. Let me cite an example; the region of Gilead is a rendezvous for all sorts of wicked men and it is full of blood-thirsty men. Gangs of priests rob and kill using Levitical cities as sanctuaries. Those hoodlums also commit lewd and sensual sins in the land. In the land of Israel I see abominations and crimes of every kind being committed. Whoredoms, both literal and spiritual (idolatry) are defiling the people I called to be a holy nation. When I come to punish, in order to root out ungodliness and bring My people back to their true destination, you also, Judah, will be judged and chastened by captivity.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 COME, AND LET US RETURN UNTO JEHOVAH . . . AFTER TWO DAYS . . . ON THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RAISE US UP . . . LET US FOLLOW ON TO KNOW JEHOVAH . . . These three verses should, if we can follow context at all, be a part of the preceding chapter. They should never have been put into another chapter, and thus separated contextually. God has spoken of His withdrawal from the nation of Israel; He is going to leave them to their choice which has been sin. But He leaves the door of repentance open. And Hosea appeals to the people, as one of them, to return to God through that door which God has left open. Hosea's words here are some of the most tender and beautiful words found in the Bible. God wounds in order that He may heal! God chastens in order that He may bless! K & D says, "As the endurance of punishment impels to seek the Lord (ch. v. 15), so the motive to return to the Lord is founded upon the knowledge of the fact that the Lord can, and will, heal the wounds which He inflicts." Every child of God "has need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised" (Heb. 10:36). We have discussed the matter of chastening earlier in this work so we will not go into it in detail here. Suffice it so say that one of the greatest lessons to be learned from the Old Testament prophets is that God chastens like a loving Father in order to bless the penitent and to punish the impenitent.

Two and three days are very short periods of time. The phrase used here in verse 2 expresses the certainty of what is to take place within a short period of time. It is a short time, a time known only to God, but a time definitely established and determined by the omniscience of God. Just as certainly as the Perfectly-Righteous and Perfectly-Just God punishes sin, so He will certainly save those who repent. This is Hosea's main intent in these words. Thus the primary audience is Israel, the northern kingdom. Whether "on the third day he will raise us up," refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Lk. 24:44-46) in either a symbolic or allegorical way, or not, we cannot say dogmatically. However, in the light of Hosea 11:1 (cf. Matt. 2:15) and other such passages, we take the position that this phrase is a prophecy of the Messiah's resurrection. At least it probably refers to the conversion of "spiritual Israel" (the church) to the Lord its God, through faith in the redemptive death and resurrection of the Messiah. This is one of those prophecies with *double emphasis* (see our notes on Interpreting the Prophets).

The knowledge of Jehovah which Hosea exhorts his fellow countrymen to zealously strive for is an experiential knowledge of the heart as well as the head. It is the knowledge of which John the apostles writes, "And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (I Jn. 2:3ff). If Israel knows her God practically, by keeping His commandments, then forgiveness and blessing is sure to follow such knowledge. Again this reminds us of the apostle John, ". . . if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I Jn. 1:9). God is faithful; let us be faithful. Indeed, the faithfulness of God, as demonstrated in His mighty miracles witnessed and recorded in history, is motive enough to inspire us to faithfulness. This is what Hosea is inferring when He says, "his going forth is sure as the morning, etc." This is the refrain running throughout all the prophets as they attempt to direct the attention of the people back in history to God's dealings with their forefathers—God is faithful; let us be faithful. This is the primary reason for the coming of Jesus Christ, to confirm once for all, the faithfulness of God (cf. II Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:17-18). The Lord will rise upon Israel like the morning dawn (cf. Mal. 4:2; Lk. 1:78; Eph. 5:14; II Pet. 1:19). As surely as the dawn follows the night (cf. Jer. 33:20, 25) according to divine government, so surely will blessing follow repentance. As surely as the rain, falling from heaven, nourishes the earth and produces fruitfulness, (Isa. 55:10-13), so will the "going forth" of the Lord

to bless a penitent people produce fruitfulness. The "latter rain" is the rain which usually comes in Palestine just before harvest-time.

v. 4 O EPHRAIM, WHAT SHALL I DO UNTO THEE? . . . FOR YOUR GOODNESS IS AS A MORNING CLOUD . . . Contrasted with the unchangeable character of God and the absolute certainty of His promises, is the fickleness of Israel. Anyone who has lived on the seacoast or in low-lying areas will appreciate the figure of speech in verse 4. The early morning mists and fallen dew are quickly "burned off" by the hot sun; the mists vaporize and vanish. This is like the righteousness and love of Israel. It comes and goes. It appears for a short time, sporadically, then vaporizes and vanishes when the sun of tribulation or materialism bears down (cf. Matt. 13:20-21). The same figurative use of the word "dew" is to be found in Hosea 13:3. While the same prophet uses "dew" (Hosea 14:5) as a simile to express the refreshing salvation of Jehovah. Usage such as this should make Bible scholars cautious about insisting that a word must always have the same interpretation throughout the Bible! So, Hosea, speaking for God, says, "O, Israel, what else can I do to you to bring you to repentance? I have tried all kinds of chastisement to bring you back to trust in Me. All that is left is obliteration."

v. 5 THEREFORE HAVE I HEWED THEM BY THE PROPHETS . . . Because of their fickleness God had sent prophet-preachers to the nation. Through them God had "hewed" or carved the nation; He had worked it like a piece of carving wood, trying to shape it into a holy nation according to its true calling. But because the people would not be "hewn" the messages of the prophets "slew" them. In other words, their messages pronounced salvation upon the penitent but inevitable judgment upon the impenitent. The nation, for the most part, chose the sentence of death pronounced by the prophetic message. God's call to repentance or judgment is always plain, forthright, unambiguous and bright as "light." There can be no excuses by any man that God's wrath is not revealed (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; John 3:16-21).

v. 6 FOR I DESIRE GOODNESS, AND NOT SACRIFICE . . . This verse does not mean, of course, that God wanted the Jews at this time to cease all Mosaic sacrifices and offerings. Indeed, to the last man of them the prophets insisted that the people return to the law of Moses (cf. our Special Study eight, pages 91-92). What God is protesting as to Israel's sacrificing is the faithless, heartless

manner in which they were being done. The people who were offering the sacrifices were not doing it because they had faith in Jehovah—there was no love in their hearts for God. Their offerings were abominable, revolting, sickening to the heart of God. What God wanted was faith and love to accompany the sacrifices; without this they were vain, useless—even worse than useless (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-17; Micah 6:8; Psalms 50:8ff; Psalm 51:15-17, etc.).

v. 7 BUT THEY LIKE ADAM HAVE TRANSGRESSED THE COVENANT . . . God's first covenant was with Adam, and, subsequently to all mankind as represented in Adam. The promise was life from God; the provision was perfect obedience; the penalty of failure was death. This covenant with Adam expressed its promises and threatenings in visible signs—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man (Adam) fell ("transgressed the covenant") and God, by His great mercy and love, provided a way of salvation apart from man's personal obligation to sinless obedience as the condition of life. God covered man's sin by grace; but man had to appropriate that grace by faith in God and faithful obedience to whatever covenant conditions or dispensation for this grace God imposed at whatever time in history man found himself to be living. Before Moses God administered His covenant of grace through patriarchal-sacrificial mediation. After Moses God dispensed His grace through the Levitical mediation. Both of these dispensations necessitated faith, without which they brought inevitable judgment. Each was a different dispensation (or administration) of the one, overall, covenant of grace begun by God in Gen. 3:15 when man fell from the covenant of perfect obedience. Each dispensation had conditions dictated by God to be kept according to the free moral choice of man. Each dispensation was but a foreshadow, figure, prophecy of that final full and complete dispensation of God's covenant of grace to be realized in the atoning work of Jesus Christ when God interposed Himself (cf. Heb. 6:17; II Cor. 5:17-21). In Christ God discharged all man's responsibility to sinlessness in His own Person. But, in order for man to appropriate this imputed righteousness so freely administered by the covenant of grace, man must respond to the covenant in faith, love and obedience. This Adam did not do; and this the nation of Israel did not do. The question of the moment, however, is, are we responding in faith and love and obedience to the covenant of grace which God so abundantly and certainly revealed in Christ Jesus which is now administered in the conditions recorded in the New Testament?!

v. 8 GILEAD IS A CITY OF THEM THAT WORK INIQUITY . . . Gilead, as a city, is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It is the name of a district standing for the whole territory of the land of the northern kingdom east of the Jordan river. This was probably the "bad lands" of Israel—a rendezvous for robbers and murders.

v. 9 . . . TROOPS OF ROBBERS WAIT FOR A MAN, SO THE COMPANY OF PRIESTS MURDER . . . Gangs of apostate priests were robbing and killing and fleeing to these "bad lands" and using Levitical cities as sanctuaries. These criminals were finding protection by using sacred cities of refuge in which to hide. This verse indicates they were guilty also of unnatural and perverted acts of sexuality ("lewdness"). All such behavior was a natural consequence of Israel's accommodation of the pagan, heathen idolatry of neighboring nations. Moral breakdown always follows rejection of God's eternal truth!

v. 10 . . . WHOREDOM IS FOUND IN EPHRAIM, ISRAEL IS DEFILED. Undoubtedly this is a reference to both physical whoredom (cf. Hosea (cf. Hosea 4:2; 4:13) and idolatry which is called spiritual whoredom (cf. Hosea 5:3-4; 14:8, etc.). To "defile" is to contaminate or pollute. This is what Israel had done. She was contaminated with moral rottenness. She had made herself unacceptable to the holy, righteous, loving God by refusing Him and doing everything within her power to despise Him.

v. 11 ALSO, O JUDAH, THERE IS A HARVEST APPOINTED FOR THEE . . . Judah has disregarded the exhortation of Hosea in chapter 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." The southern kingdom has allowed itself to become defiled by idolatry also. Therefore, when God comes to judge and punish the covenant people (beginning with the northern kingdom, Israel), in order to purge them of this defilement and bring them back to their true destiny, Judah also will be judged and chastened by captivity. This verse has nothing at all to say as to *when* God will "bring back the captivity" of His people; the *when* has to be determined from other passages, which announce the exile of both Israel and Judah, and the eventual restoration of those who are converted to Jehovah (and it includes "all the nations"). Thus we must conclude that the complete "bringing back the captivity" of God's covenant people finds its ultimate fulfillment in the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (the church on Pentecost) when all nations will "come up to Jerusalem." The captivities of both Israel and Judah was the START of God's plan of restoration! This is what is meant in this verse.

QUIZ

1. What do verses 1-3 of this chapter tell about the character of God?
2. What is the primary meaning of "after two . . . three days" in this context?
3. Could these "three" days have reference to Christ's resurrection? How?
4. What does Hosea mean by "knowing" the Lord?
5. How were the people "hewn" by the prophets?
6. Does this chapter teach that the prophets preached cessation of sacrifices?
7. How did Adam transgress God's covenant?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— LOVE OF SIN

TEXT: 7:1-7

- 1 When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood, and the thief entereth in, and the troop of robbers ravageth without.
- 2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness; now have their own doings beset them about; they are before my face.
- 3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.
- 4 They are all adulterers; they are as an oven heated by the baker; he ceaseth to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough, until it be leavened.
- 5 On the day of our king the princes made themselves sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with scoffers.
- 6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait; their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.
- 7 They are all hot as an oven and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.

QUERIES

- a. Why would the king "be glad" about the people's wickedness?
- b. Why the likening of the people to a baker's oven?
- c. How would the king "stretch out his hand with scoffers?"

PARAPHRASE

When I attempted to heal the nation of Israel of her wound, the full extent of her cancerous sinfulness was exposed. Especially is the malignancy resident in Samaria, her capital city. The land is full of liars, thieves and bandits. And what is most disastrous of all, the people are wilfully ignorant of both their own wickedness and of My Perfect Omniscience and Justice. The people have so deceived themselves, they have so encircled themselves with iniquity, they have become slaves to their sins. Their sinful deeds betray them on every side and I am fully aware of it all. Their king takes pleasure in their wicked deeds and the princes of the court are pleased with the lies told by the people. The whole nation is a nation of adulterers. Their burning passion to do evil resembles a furnace which a baker heats in the evening, and leaves burning all night while the dough is leavening, and then causes to burn with a still brighter flame in the morning, when the dough is ready for baking. On special royal holidays the noblemen of the government make themselves sick by drunkenness. The king gathers about himself such drunken fools and scoffers as advisers and confidants. Evil is allowed to smolder and simmer in their hearts like an oven whose fire has been banked for the night. Then, suddenly, the smoldering coals of evil imaginations are fanned into a roaring fire and the evil deeds are committed. These roaring fires of evil thoughts and deeds so consume the people they are oblivious to the fact that every vestige of justice, right, goodness and law and order has fallen as kings and judges are overthrown—they do not see that anarchy is ruling. And in the midst of it all, not one of them has the faith to call on Me!

SUMMARY

The moral depravity of Israel which is leading her inevitably in a headlong plunge into anarchy is pictured by the prophet. The hearts of the people are so passionate for evil they are insensible to it all!

COMMENT

v. 1 WHEN I WOULD HEAL ISRAEL . . . Like the surgeon who begins to dress a wound often exposes hidden contamination, so God as He began to heal Israel by sending the prophets to preach and by sending upon Israel certain providential, natural calamities, to call them to repentance, exposed the full content of the corruption of the nation. Especially was corruption rampant in Israel's capital city, Samaria. We are reminded of Micah's searing accusations against the capital cities.

of both Israel and Judah. Crime and corruption most often germinates in the urban societies. And, just as in the days of the prophets, so now, very often people blind themselves to their own condition.

v. 2 AND THEY CONSIDER NOT IN THEIR HEARTS . . . One cannot help but notice in this chapter how often the phrase "knoweth it not" recurs. Israel persistently ignored their own condition and persistently ignored God. It is dangerous for a nation to sin. But the most perilous condition possible is to sin and "know it not." We shall have more to say about this condition in the next section. But here the prophet depicts the people as blissfully ignorant of God. They refuse to accept the fact that God is aware of their wickedness and that He will judge them for it. Their sin is apparent to everyone but themselves. They have become so captivated, enslaved in evil ways, it is their way of life—they are beset about with it.

v. 3 THEY MAKE THE KING GLAD WITH THEIR WICKEDNESS . . . Pusey writes, "Wicked sovereigns and a wicked people are a curse to each other, each encouraging the other in sin." There are at least two reasons rulers are made happy by the sins of the people: (a) In most cases the rulers profit in a monetary way through the indulgence and excesses of the populace. For this reason evil rulers do all within their power to legalize crime and evil; (b) and furthermore good and serious people would be a reproach to the consciences of the rulers—if therefore the people condone and practice the evil the rulers practice, they are an encouragement to evil to one another. It goes without saying that this is true of every form of government devised by man, including democracy. The only nation where this is not so is the chosen nation of God, the kingdom ruled over by the Holy and Righteous King, Jesus Christ, the church of the living God! The citizens of this nation have been reborn and are being transformed into the image of their King—loving, righteous, holy, pure and just. Their King hates sin and is made to grieve when it occurs and so do His subjects, (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 35:5-10).

v. 4 . . . THEY ARE AS AN OVEN HEATED BY THE BAKER . . . The people allow their hearts to smolder and simmer with evil thoughts and imaginations and plans, like the smoldering fire built by the baker near which he places his kneaded dough ready to bake in the morning when he will fan the coals into a roaring fire. The people go to bed at night with their evil plans smoldering in their hearts to awake in the morning and fan the coals into roaring deeds of evil.

v. 5 ON THE DAY OF OUR KING . . . Just what this "day of our king" was we do not know. It was probably either the king's birthday or the anniversary of his coronation. It was a holiday of some significance devoted to much excess in feasting and drinking. The leaders of the nation spent the day in revelry and carousel over indulging themselves to the point of nausea. The king, drunken with wine, let down his royal dignity and joined the crude, boisterous, sacrilegious scoffers (or blasphemers). "Wine is a mocker (or scoffer)" (Prov. 20:1) and drunkenness removes all restraint revealing the evil which is in the man. The king, rather than stretching out his hand to protect the few in Israel who were being exploited and persecuted for their righteousness, stretched out his hand (or welcomed) to join with these profane, degraded men. How can any society survive when its leaders become examples of corruption and excess? How can any nation hope to be a master of its destiny when it enslaves itself to indulgence and excess? May God raise up prophets of righteous indignation and fearless courage to pronounce the judgments of God upon the leaders of nations today who enjoy wickedness and indulge in excesses because of the profit they make.

v. 6-7 . . . THEY HAVE MADE READY THEIR HEART LIKE AN OVEN . . . THEY . . . DEVOUR THEIR JUDGES; ALL THEIR KINGS ARE FALLEN . . . Now Hosea looks to the consequences of Israel's moral depravity. Perhaps such consequences are already beginning to take place. The leaders and the people are so saturated with sin they do not even let their hearts rest from devising new wickedness. The prophet is probably describing a scene of revelry, debauchery and scoffing which preceded the murder of Zechariah, king of Israel (became king in 753 B.C. upon the death of Jeroboam II). Zechariah was slain through conspiracy publicly in the open face of day, "before all the people" (II Kings 15:9), no one heeding, no one resisting, about 10 years after his coronation by Shallum. From then on it was almost complete anarchy with one king after another being slain in Israel. We quote from Pusey:

"The kingdom of Israel, having been set up in sin, was, throughout its whole course, unstable and unsettled. Jeroboam's house ended in his son; that of Baasha, who killed Jeroboam's son, Nadab, ended in his own son, Elah; Omri's ended in his son's son, God having delayed the punishment on Ahab's sins for one generation, on account of his partial repentance; then followed Jehu's to whose house God, for his obedience in some things, continued the kingdom to the fourth generation. With

these two exceptions, in the houses of Omri and Jehu, the kings of Israel either left no sons, or left them to be slain. Nadab, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Jehoram, Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, Pekah, were put to death by those who succeeded them. Of all the kings of Israel, Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Menahem, alone, in addition to Jehu and the three next of his house, died natural deaths. So was it written, by God's hand on the house of Israel, *all their kings have fallen*. The captivity was the tenth change after they had deserted the house of David. Yet such was the stupidity and obstinacy both of kinds and people, that, amid all these chastisements, none, either people or king, turned to God and prayed Him to deliver them. Not even distress, amid which almost all betake themselves to God, awakened any sense of religion in them. *There is none among them, that calleth unto Me.*"

QUIZ

1. Why was the iniquity of Israel uncovered when God set out to "heal" them?
2. Why was their wickedness so staggering or unnatural?
3. Why were the kings and princes glad at the wickedness of the people?
4. What is the "day of the king?" How did the king behave?
5. How did the people "devour" their judges and kings?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— LOVE OF SIN

TEXT: 7:8-16

- 8 Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned.
- 9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there (sprinkled) upon him, and he knoweth it not.
- 10 And the price of Israel doth testify to his face: yet they have not returned unto Jehovah their God, nor sought him, for all this.
- 11 And Ephraim is like a silly dove, without understanding: they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria.
- 12 When they shall go, I will spread my net among them; I will bring them down as the birds of the heavens; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.

- 13 Woe unto them! for they have wandered from me; destruction unto them! for they have trespassed against me; though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against me.
- 14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, but they howl upon their beds; they assemble themselves for grain and new wine; they rebel against me.
- 15 Though I have taught and strengthened their arms, yet do they devise mischief against me.
- 16 They return, but not to him that is on high; they are like a deceitful bow; their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

QUERIES

- a. What is the meaning of the figure, "Ephraim is a cake not turned?"
- b. What is the meaning of the figure, "gray hairs . . . sprinkled upon him?"
- c. What "shall be their derision" in the land of Egypt?

PARAPHRASE

Israel has so thoroughly absorbed the ways of the heathen he is like a cake not turned—scorched on one side and undone on the other; he is putrid and useless. This heathenish contamination has sapped Israel's intellectual and moral strength and he does not even recognize it! Yes, "gray hairs" or signs of decadence are everywhere apparent in Israel but the nation is unconscious of them! Jehovah is continually testifying to Israel through the prophets and judgments in nature but in spite of all this Israel has not returned to God. Israel, flitting back and forth from Egypt to Assyria for succor, is unaware of the trap they are about to fall into—he is like a silly dove when flying about in search of food, does not observe the net that is spread for it. The trap they are about to fall into will be My judgment. I will bring upon them the chastisement which has been announced by My prophets. Woe shall be upon them because they have flown away from Me. I would like to redeem them still; but they have lied to themselves and others about Me saying I cannot and will not redeem them. Oh, they cry to Me but their cries are not of faith and not from the heart. They howl upon their beds in unbelieving despair at the distress that has come upon them. They huddle together seeking through idolatry to get the corn and new wine I have withheld because their only desire is to fill their bellies. They have utterly rebelled against Me. I have, many times over, tried to deliver them, but whatever I did Israel

continued to scheme and plan to bring dishonor to My name. Oh, they return, but not to God on high. They are constantly changing and turning from one idol to another. They are like a crooked bow; no matter where it is aimed the arrow flies away from the target. Because their princes have lied about God and blasphemed His name they shall die violently. God will have them in derision because they have blasphemously placed their trust in Egypt and not in Him.

SUMMARY

The moral depravity of Israel is exposed by citing various examples of it and picturing the passion with which the people love their sin.

COMMENT

v. 8-9 . . . EPHRAIM IS A CAKE NOT TURNED . . . GRAY HAIRS ARE HERE AND THERE UPON HIM, AND HE KNOWETH IT NOT . . . In these two verses the prophet shows, by vivid figures of speech, the extent of the moral decadence in Israel. The "cake" here mentioned is in Hebrew, *uggah*, literally, "circular," was a thin pancake, to which a scorching heat was applied on one side. Israel had been separated from the nations by the Lord (Lev. 20:24-26), to be a people dwelling alone (Num. 23:9), in order that it might be a holy nation to serve Him. But Israel thought itself wiser than the Lord and mingled with the nations through intermarriage (Ahab and Jezebel), through cultural and economic exchanges, through political alliances, and most disastrous of all through adoption of heathen religions of idolatry. A cake not turned is burned to a crisp on one side and uncooked, putrid, on the other side—it is worse than useless, it is nauseating. This is the first figure to describe Israel's moral decadence. The second figure of speech used by Hosea pictures Israel as a man whose hair is beginning to show signs of physical decadence by the sprinkling of gray hairs appearing. The phrase, "and he knoweth it not" is interesting. As G. Campbell Morgan asks, "Now I ask you, if any of you were unconscious when gray hairs began to appear!" Such behavior is quite unnatural. Men discover gray in their hair and laugh at them, try to pull them out or dye them—but they do not ignore them for they are signs of declining strength. As tragic and stupid as this might be in the physical realm it is even more tragic and stupid in the spiritual and moral realm.

Yet it is continually true that signs of spiritual decadence, which are so patent to others, are undiscovered by ourselves. We go on, and on, and on, the victims of ebbing strength, spiritually and morally becoming degenerate, without recognizing it! We are too often blind to the signs which are self-evident to onlookers. And there is no condition more perilous to our highest well-being than being unaware of spiritual degeneration. Malachi writes of this attitude among the people even after they had suffered the captivities and been restored to the land by God. The refrain of the people in Malachi's day is "Where in . . ." They were spiritually blind to their spiritual decadence. How do men so blind themselves? By setting up false standards—by refusing to admit the validity of God's standards.

How may we overcome spiritual decay? First, of course, we must recognize it, admit it, confess it. But mere recognition and admission that "gray hairs" are present will not remove them. Dyeing the "gray hairs" of sin with a false veneer of respectability will not hide them. We must turn to God in faith and obedience—He will remove them. He will renew our spiritual life. He will give us new birth (cf. *Psa.* 103:1-5; *Isa.* 40:29-31); *Jn.* 3:1-6; *II Cor.* 4:16-18; 5:17, etc.). God alone is able to remove gray hairs from our spiritual and moral nature by taking away the destructive forces which are producing the moral degeneracy.

v. 10 . . . THE PRIDE OF ISRAEL DOTH TESTIFY TO HIS FACE . . .

How often the pride of Israel, had testified to the face of Israel. One prophet after another declared Israel's sin and God's judgment. One natural calamity after another (locust plagues, earthquakes, droughts, diseases, etc.) testified to the wrath of God upon Israel's sin. Yet for all of this they would not turn and seek the forgiveness of God (cf. 4:6ff).

v. 11-12 . . . EPHRAIM IS LIKE A SILLY DOVE . . . I WILL SPREAD MY NET UPON THEM . . . There is an Eastern proverb, according to Pusey, which says, "There is nothing more simple than a dove." Jesus used the dove as a symbol of simplicity (*Matt.* 10:16), in a good sense. Hosea's figure of speech refers to Israel as having a stupid or ignorant simplicity—silly, foolish. Israel is like a silly or dumb creature distressed not knowing where to turn for relief. Israel does not know enough to turn to its God (cf. *Isa.* 1:3). Israel has turned to its enemies for help! She is so silly that she turns for help to those whose sole purpose is to do her harm! Israel, flitting here and there for succor, is oblivious that she is flying right into the trap God has set

for a disobedient people. God has announced before hand that He will chasten Israel by the hand of Assyria (cf. Isa. 10:5 ff). The very nation Israel considers a source of strength will become her trap, (cf. Hosea 11:5).

v. 13 WOE TO THEM . . . THOUGH I WOULD REDEEM THEM . . . THEY HAVE SPOKEN LIES AGAINST ME . . . How often God would have redeemed them (cf. Isa. 49:16; Hosea 11:1-9)! How often He did redeem them! But they continually wandered (cf. Heb. 3:7-19). They continually lied to themselves and to one another about the nature of Jehovah. They lied to themselves by refusing to believe Jehovah would bless them in spite of their extremities. They refused to trust in the faithfulness of Jehovah toward His people, even in the face of past experience of history. So their turning to idols was living the lie that was in their heartts.

v. 14-15 . . . THEY HOWL UPON THEIR BEDS . . . THEY REBEL AGAINST ME . . . THEY DEVISE MISCHIEF AGAINST ME . . . Instead of turning to Jehovah who proved Himself true and faithful and willing to save and bless, time after time, they lied to themselves and in the midst of certain distressing periods they cried and howled upon their beds in unbelieving despair. They howled to their dumb idols which could neither speak nor hear (cf. Isa. 41:21-29; 44:1-22). They rebelled against Jehovah by devising human or pagan ways and means of supplying the corn and wine which God had withheld from them to bring them back to Him. What they were doing, in reality, turned out to be declaring war on God's ways. The writer of Hebrews (3:10) attributes the failures of their ancestors to "not knowing the ways" of God. These Israelites of Hosea's day refused to recognize that drought, famine, etc. were God's ways of calling them back to Him. They literally assembled themselves together to devise rebellious ways to fight against the judgments of God. How presumptuous! How useless! God was trying to teach them and strengthen them morally through chastening. This is the end of all righteous discipline—moral growth. But he who rebels against moral growth through discipline only destroys himself.

v. 16 . . . THEY ARE LIKE A DECEITFUL BOW . . . Israel was changing and turning constantly but not in the right direction! She was missing the mark. She was not headed toward the goal God had set for her. She turned here and there and everywhere but not to the King of the Universe. Like a crooked bow; no matter where it is aimed the arrow flies away from the target. No matter which way Israel turned she missed the target God had set for her, because she

always turned away from God's word. Because their princes have lied about God and blasphemed His name they shall die violently. God will have them in derision because they have blasphemously placed their trust in Egypt and not in Him. Any person or people who trusts in their own might or wisdom will be defeated, shamed and confused. "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision" (cf. *Psa.* 2:1-11).

QUIZ

1. How dangerous is moral decadence when we are unaware of it?
2. How can moral decadence be cured?
3. Why was Israel like a "silly dove?"
4. How did God trap Israel?
5. How did they devise mischief against God?
6. How was Israel like "a deceitful bow?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— THE LORD'S LAMENT

TEXT: 8:1-7

- 1 Set the trumpet to thy mouth. As an eagle he cometh against the house of Jehovah, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.
- 2 They shall cry unto me, My God, we Israel know thee.
- 3 Israel hath cast off that which is good: the enemy shall pursue him.
- 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 they have made them idols, that they may be cut off.
- 5 He hath cast off thy calf, O Samaria; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?
- 6 For from Israel is even this; the workman made it, and it is no God; yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.
- 7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind; he hath no standing grain; the blade shall yield no meal; if so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up.

QUERIES

- a. Who is coming "as an eagle" against the house of Jehovah?
- b. How did they set up kings but not by Jehovah?
- c. What does "sow the wind . . . reap the whirlwind" mean?

PARAPHRASE

The trumpet to thy mouth! Like an eagle upon the house of Jehovah! Judgment approaches because they have thrown off covenant relationship with Me and they have violated My laws. When these times of distress come, the people will hypocritically call upon Me to help them, professing that they know Me. But Israel does not know Me because He has abhorred and ignored the good way of God; and as a result a ruthless enemy shall overrun his land. They rebelled against My government and placed usurpers on the throne against My will. They have taken of the wealth I blessed them with and made idols in spite of My warning that I would judge them for such apostasy. Your calf-idol is loathsome and disbusting to Me, Samaria, and My anger burns toward you because of it. How long will it be until you divest yourself of this loathsome idolatry—how long can you go on living in such impurity? What makes it so abominable is Israel, the nation whom the living God chose to reveal the truth about idols, has engaged in the lies of idolatry. Israel, of all people, ought to know that idols made by the hands of men are no gods! They will know soon enough that their golden calf is no go for I will break it to pieces like I did the one at Sinai. They have sown the winds of folly and vanity, but they shall reap the whirlwinds of wrath and destruction. Israel's crops will fail; none of its grain crops will mature enough to produce any grain—there shall be great famine. Even if some were fortunate enough to produce a few heads of grain, the enemy that is about to come upon Israel would take it away from them and eat it themselves.

SUMMARY

In this chapter the prophet Hosea gives God's reasons for the imminent destruction of the northern kingdom; moral, religious and political rebellion against Jehovah God when she knew better.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . TRUMPET . . . AS AN EAGLE . . . AGAINST THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH . . . G Campbell Morgan says, "This chapter is dramatic in its method. It opens with two clarion cries; and our translators have just a little robbed the passage of its arresting character by the introduction of certain words, in order to euphony, and the making of smooth reading and sense." There is no such word as "Set" in the Hebrew text

here—that word has been supplied by the translators. Neither are the words, "he cometh," a part of the Hebrew text. Actually, the imperativeness of the call is more impressive with the supplied words omitted (as in our Paraphrase).

This "eagle" was undoubtedly a pictorialization of the successive kings of Assyria who swooped down upon Israel just a few short years after Hosea pronounced God's judgment upon her. One cannot help but remember the warning of Moses in Deut. 28:49 in the same words as these. Moses warned them if they should forget God and break the covenant and violate the revealed law of God, a nation from afar, swift as the eagle, would come upon them and destroy them. Transgressing God's covenant is much more personal than mere violation of some written statutes. To break covenant is to personally distrust and despise the One with whom you have the covenant. It is a matter of the heart and soul. This, of course, would manifest itself in scorn and disobedience to written laws of God.

v. 2 THEY SHALL CRY . . . MY GOD, WE ISRAEL KNOW THEE . . . When the ruthless, blood-thirsty, Assyrian hordes swoop down upon Israel, they shall instinctively call upon the God whom they have despised all these years for help. They will plead, "We know thee!" For centuries now they have "refused to have Jehovah in their knowledge . . . they have been exchanging the truth of God for lies." But they should have sought the Lord when He could be found and have called upon Him when He was near (cf. Isa. 55:6). Now it is too late, for although Israel spread forth its hands and make many prayers, God will hide His eyes and will not listen (cf. Isa. 1:15). They should have thought that a man cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God at the same time (cf. Jas. 4:1-10). We remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven . . ." (Mt. 7:21). It is with the heart that man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10), but he must believe with the heart as well as make confession with the mouth—this Israel did not do. In connection with this verse we remember the candid statement of the apostle John, "And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says I know him but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (I Jn. 2:3-4). Israel cried, My God, we Israel know thee, but Israel was a liar! What an affront to God even today for those self-willed, sensual-living people who flagrantly disregard the commandments of God, cry, in times of

distress, My God, we know thee. They are liars and the truth is not in them. *God is known only through keeping His commandments! There simply is no other way to know God!* It should be very obvious to any intelligent person that God's commandments are found only in the Bible and for this age in the New Testament. —

v. 3-4 ISRAEL HATH CAST OFF THAT WHICH IS GOOD . . . THEY HAVE SET UP KINGS, BUT NOT BY ME . . . THEY HAVE MADE THEM IDOLS . . . Israel "refused to have God in their knowledge . . ." she "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). Israel's deliberate rejection of the "good way" is exactly like that of Judah described by Jeremiah (Jer. 6:16-19)! Israel refused to "stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls." They said, "we will not walk in it." Israel has cast off the good way of God for the way of idolatry that is abominable. Very soon now the worthlessness of what she has chosen will be demonstrated. Refusing the way of God in religion they also rejected His counsel in politics. This is what is happening in America, the beautiful! Men in high places have cast off the good . . . they have "set up kings, but not by Jehovah." Men have tried to rule without the counsel of God and since they have ignored all His counsel, He will laugh at their calamity and mock when panic strikes (cf. Prov. 1:24ff). During 253 years, for which the kingdom of Israel lasted, 18 kings reigned over it, out of ten different families and every one of them came to a violent end. Not once was the will of God sought in the rule of any of these kings. Even Jehu conducted his reign contrary to the will of God. The nation of Israel, so abundantly blessed by Jehovah, took of this abundance and fashioned by their own hands, gods after the likeness of pagan idols. The "god of this world, Satan," blinded their eyes with deceit and pride, and Israel loved it to be so. We quote here from the ISBE, Vol. III, pg. 1448:

"The special enticements to idolatry as offered by these various cults were found in their deification of natural forces and their appeal to primitive human desires, esp. the sexual; also through associations produced by intermarriage and through the appeal to patriotism, when the help of some cruel deity was sought in time of war. Baal and Astarte worship, which was esp. attractive, was closely associated with fornication and drunkenness (Am. 2:7-8; I Kings 14:23ff), and also greatly to magic and soothsaying (e.g. Isa. 2:6; 3:2; 8:19).

"Sacrifices to the idols were offered by fire (Hos. 4:13); libations were poured out (Isa. 57:6; Jer. 7:18); the first-fruits of the earth and tithes were presented (Hos. 2:8); tables of food were set before them (Isa. 65:11); the worshippers kissed the idols or threw them kisses (I Kings 19:18; Hos. 13:2; Job 31:27); stretched out their hands in adoration (Isa. 44:20); knelt or prostrated themselves before them and sometimes danced about the altar, gashing themselves with knives (I Ki. 18:26:28)".

The consequences of Israel's idolatry are so certain it seems as if Israel had intended it to be so. She is in a head-long plunge into destruction and does not seem to want it otherwise!

v. 5 . . . HOW LONG WILL IT BE ERE THEY ATTAIN TO INNOCENCY?

The origin of calf-worship among the Semites probably goes back beyond Abraham. The origin of animal worship is hidden in obscurity, but reverence for the bull and the cow is widespread among the most ancient historic cults. The ancient Babylonian culture (from which Abraham's ancestors came) revered the bull as the symbol of their greatest gods, Anu and Sin and Marduk. Hadad-rimmon, an Amorite deity, is pictured standing on the back of a bull. In Phoenicia, northern Syria, Moab, and other places the goddess Ishtar has the cow for her symbol, and when this nude or half-nude goddess appears in Palestine she often stands on a bull or cow. With the Hebrews calf-worship began, of course, with Aaron (cf. Ex. 32). It was perpetuated by Jeroboam I in the northern kingdom for political and economic reasons (I Kings 12:26-33; II Chron. 10:14-15).

In the light of their deep involvements in unholy alliances and unspiritual procedure, a logical question is raised: "How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?" How long are they incapable of purity of walk before the Lord, instead of abominations of idolatry. That is to say, being bent upon backsliding, having invested so heavily of their gold and silver in idols, having defied the infinite God in their politics, having rejected the commands of the Lord, having hardened their hearts against the prophet's message, how long would it require for them to extricate themselves? How long before they would detach themselves from unrighteousness? Israel had become like the thing they loved? (Hos. 9:10). We shall deal with this principle later but here it is evident that Israel has so long loved and imitated its detestable gods it has thoroughly and irrevocably contaminated itself.

v. 6 . . . THE WORKMAN MADE IT, AND IT IS NO GOD; . . . What makes idolatry so abominable in Israel is that she, of all nations, should have known that an idol is no god. Israel had the special revelations of God in word and deed to demonstrate the nothingness of idols. What folly! What vanity! Isaiah satirically speaks of the same phenomena (Isa. 41:21-24; 44:6-22). The great apostle to the Gentiles had to deal with this as he preached to the heathen (cf. Acts 19:26; I Cor. 8:4ff, etc.). Men still deify images, philosophies and things in this twentieth century. What difference if it be a figurine or a philosophy—it is still idolatry. Any image, thing or idea that is worshipped becomes an idol. Even covetousness is idolatry!

v. 7 . . . THEY SOW THE WIND, . . . THEY SHALL REAP THE WHIRLDWIND . . . The Nation of Israel "sowed" their wild oats. They were sowing (putting their trust in) vain things, empty, useless things. This was their crop. Now they were about to reap the harvest of continued sowing of vanities—the harvest would be a whirlwind of destruction and disillusionment. Temporal things cannot satisfy (Eccl. 1:17; 2:12-17; 2:4-11; 6:2-9). Worldly things never bring rewarding harvest days of joy, peace, fulfillment, satisfaction, holiness. But more serious than that, God has so built His universe that when men sin and pervert even those things of the world, innocent enough in themselves, they will reap a whirlwind of destruction, unhappiness, disillusionment, strife and the judgment and eternal wrath of God. When God's physical laws are violated, trouble comes! When God's spiritual laws are violated, trouble comes! Israel was doing both!

God was going to bring some sort of calamity upon Israel to keep her from producing a wheat crop. If by chance a few grains of wheat should reach fruition, the enemy God was about to turn loose upon Israel would consume all that. All those material abundances in which Israel gloried and which she attributed to her false gods were about to be taken away. Perhaps then she would repent.

QUIZ

1. Where are the Hebrew people warned that if they should transgress God's law an enemy, swift as the eagle, would come upon them?
2. Why is "transgressing God's covenant" so serious?
3. How do we know Israel did not know God?
4. Describe calf-worship.
5. What is meant by the phrase "how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?"
6. Why should Israel know that an idol is no god?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— THE LORD'S LAMENT

TEXT: 8:8-14

- 8 Israel is swallowed up: now are they among the nations as a vessel wherein none delighteth.
- 9 For they are gone up to Assyria, like a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.
- 10 Yea, though they hire among the nations, now will I gather them; and they begin to be diminished by reason of the burden of the king of princes.
- 11 Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars for sinning, altars have been unto him for sinning.
- 12 I wrote for him the ten thousand things of my law; but they are counted as a strange thing.
- 13 As for the sacrifices of mine offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it; but Jehovah accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins; they shall return to Egypt.
- 14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and builded palaces; and Judah hath multiplied fortified cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the castles thereof.

QUERIES

- a. How is Israel like "a wild ass alone by himself?"
- b. Who is the "king of princes" of verse 10?
- c. When did Israel "return to Egypt?"

PARAPHRASE

Israel is about to be completely engulfed and conquered by its enemies. When her enemies have exploited her they will despise her as one despises a worn-out and useless pot. This is about to come to Israel because she behaved like a stubborn mule in heat. In spite of all God's warnings to the contrary, she went to Assyria like a prostitute, trying to buy love from Assyria. But all these attempts at conciliation with her enemies are in vain for I, saith Jehovah, will deliver her into captivity where she shall begin to lose her national identity by reason of the exile brought about by the great Assyrian king who boasts, Are not all my princes kings! And because Ephraim has built many altars so she has multiplied her sins. And even though

I revealed to Israel myriads of commandments, a full, complete and holy law, she acted as though they did not concern her at all. As for all the sacrifices they make, they only make them because they are interested in the part of the sacrifices they eat for themselves. Thus their sacrifices, although they are many, are meaningless to Jehovah. God is cognizant of the iniquity of Israel and He will visit them with judgment for their sins. They shall return to bondage and enslavement by their enemies. Israel has misplaced his Maker and sought satisfaction rather in building spacious buildings. Even Judah has done the same and seeks security in her well-fortified cities. But I, saith Jehovah, will bring My judgment upon these nations and all these material things in which they have trusted shall be utterly destroyed.

SUMMARY

Israel has forgotten its Maker. God is going to deliver them into the hand of their enemies for obliteration as a nation.

COMMENT

V. 8-9 ISRAEL IS SWALLOWED UP . . . GONE TO ASSYRIA . . . HATH HIRED LOVERS . . . As G. Campbell Morgan says, this is a chapter of judgment. Hosea gives the reasons for the judgment which he is declaring to be imminent in five blasts upon the trumpet. First, transgression and trespass; second, false kings and princes set up to rule without consulting God; third, idolatry, the calf of Samaria set up as a center of worship; fourth, the folly of seeking safety in alliance with Assyria; fifth, false altars, and sin as the result of them. We have dealt with the first three reasons for judgment in Hosea 8:1-7. In this section we deal with the last two reasons. One notices that the reasons are stated in a climactic manner or in a crescendo—the last one being the reason of which all the others are symptoms—Israel hath forgotten her Maker.

In verses 8-9 we deal with the fourth reason for judgment—foolish alliances with Assyria. As a result of such "mixing" of God's people with ambitious heathen politicians, Israel was, for all practical purposes, "swallowed up" as a nation, losing its identity, never again to enjoy political identity. It would be well to digress here into the history of the last few years of Israel's national identity during which Hosea declared so pointedly and forcefully the impending destruction. We gratefully acknowledge using at length the work of Dr. Charles Pfeiffer, "The Divided Kingdom," chapter 7, pages 66-74, pub. Baker Book House.

After the death of Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom entered a period of decline from which she could not save herself. Instability in Israel combined with the growing strength in Assyria spelled chaos and disaster for the people of the Northern Kingdom. Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam II, reigned but six months before he was assassinated by Shallum. After a reign of but one month, Shallum was murdered by Menahem (ca. 742 B.C.). Menahem reigned for ten years in Samaria, and is remembered for his atrocities (cf. II Kings 15:16).

During the reign of Menahem, a new threat came from the east in the person of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C. who adopted a new policy in dealing with conquered peoples. Earlier conquerors would strike, carry off slaves and booty, and return home, leaving the conquered territory to care for itself as long as the tribute was paid faithfully. Tiglath-pileser began the policy of incorporating conquered territory into his empire. Syria, Babylonia, and Anatolia were divided into provinces directly responsible to Nineveh.

Tiglath-pileser also inaugurated the policy of transporting rebellious peoples to parts of his empire where they would be powerless to unite against him. Peoples were exiled from their homelands and other exiles were brought in to the evacuated territory. In this way continuity between old and new settlers would be broken, and there would be no possibility of the older population returning to their homeland. As a result of this policy Israel, which was taken into exile by the Assyrians, lost its identity, whereas Judah, which survived until Babylonian times, could and did return to Jerusalem and thereby maintain its identity. The shifting of populations hastened the spread of Aramaic as a *lingua franca*, replacing the local tongues of the various peoples of the empire.

When Tiglath-pileser came to the throne he faced challenges to his power from Babylonia to the south, and Urartu (Armenia) to the north. He put down revolts in these areas, enforced Assyrian control, and even extended his rule as far as the region of Mt. Demavend, south of the Caspian Sea. Beginning in 743 B.C. Tiglath-pileser conducted campaigns in Syria where he was opposed by a coalition of states headed by "Azriau of Yaudi," a name which may be translated "Azariah of Judah." Scholars have debated whether this Azriau of Yaudi could be the Biblical Azariah, or Uzziah who ruled Judah from 783 to 742 B.C. If so, we would assume that Azariah/Uzziah

was the outstanding leader of the Syria-Palestine area following the death of Jeroboam II of Israel (*ca.* 746 B.C.). Azariah/Uzziah spent his last years as a leper, with his son Jotham functioning as king. If Azriau of Yaudi was Azariah/Uzziah, then he remained the power behind the throne during the period of his leprosy, and he became the center of opposition to the Assyrians in their campaign of 743-742 B.C. Presumably Azariah/Uzziah died soon after the campaign. No further mention is made of him in the Assyrian annals.

Cyrus Gordon argues that Azriau was not the Judean king, but a native north Syrian who ruled a city state in the area named Yaudi, or Samal. Eduard Meyer suggested that Azriau was an Israelite adventurer who had journeyed northward and established himself among the Aramean states of that region.

By Tiglath-pileser's time the Assyrians had developed siege warfare into an effective weapon. Battering rams and other devices for breaching strong city walls struck terror into the people of western Asia. By 738 B.C. Tiglath-pileser was collecting tribute from Asia Minor, Syria, the Phoenician cities, an Arab queen named Zabibe, Rezin of Damascus, and Menahem of Israel. Menahem gave Tiglath-pileser (Biblical Pul) "a thousand talents of silver that he might help him to confirm his royal power" (II Kings 15:19). While Menahem had little choice, the Biblical text implies that he felt that prompt payment of tribute might cause Assyrian king to look favorably on his kingdom over Israel.

Menahem's willingness to court Assyrian favor to strengthen his hold upon the throne was bitterly resented in Israel. When his son Pekahiah took the throne (738/737 B.C.), opposition flared into the open. One of his officers, Pekah ben Remaliah, assassinated Pekahiah and seized the throne. Pekah had the help of a company of Gileadites (II Kings 15:25) who shared his anti-Assyrian sympathies. He may also have had the tacit support of Rezin, king of Damascus, and certain of the Philistine leaders who resented the pro-Assyrian policies of Menahem and Pekahiah. In the event of trouble with Assyria, they doubtless hoped for Egyptian help.

As soon as Pekah was on the throne of Israel he revealed his anti-Assyrian bias. Judah, now ruled by Jotham, the son of Azariah/Uzziah, chose to follow an independent policy and refused to join Pekah and Rezin in their opposition to Assyria.

A showdown came under Jotham's son, Ahaz, when Rezin and Pekah attacked Jerusalem, determined to remove Ahaz from his throne and install a ruler of their choice, Ben Tabeel (Isa. 7:1-9). At the height of the crisis, Isaiah tried to encourage Ahaz with the assurance that God would not allow the Davidic line to be obliterated, and that the kingdoms ruled by Rezin and Pekah would quickly fall to Assyria (Isa. 7:10-17). Indeed, Assyria was the rod of God's anger (Isa. 10:5) to punish Israel because of her idolatry.

While Pekah and Rezin were besieging Jerusalem, other parts of Judah were exposed to the enemy. Uzziah had fortified the port of Elath (Ezion-geber) on the Gulf of Aqabah, but now the Edomites drove out the Israelites and occupied the port city. The traditional (Massoretic) text of II Kings 16:6 states that the Arameans (A.V. "Syria") took Elath, but many scholars, including the translators of the R.S.V., think that "Aram" was misread for "Edom" by copyists of ancient manuscripts. The two words are almost identical in Hebrew. It is clear, from II Chronicles 28:17, that Edomites invaded Judah during the reign of Ahaz. Philistines also took advantage of Judean weakness by invading Judah from the west (II Chron. 28:18). Thus Ahaz was confronted with invasions of Arameans and Israelites from the north, Philistines from the west, and Edomites from the south.

Although Isaiah had counseled faith in God, Ahaz chose a more mundane way of resolving his problems. He sent tribute to the Assyrian king, and asked Tiglath-pileser to come to his aid (II Kings 16:7, 8). While this appeared to be the solution to an immediate problem, it had disastrous results. Tiglath-pileser probably would have come without Ahaz' appeal, but the appeal gave the invasion a type of legitimacy it did not deserve.

Both the Bible and Tiglath-pileser's inscriptions report the events that followed. *The Assyrian Annals* state:

[As for Menahem I] overwhelmed him [like a snowstorm] and he . . . fled like a bird, alone, [and bowed to my feet (?)]. I returned him to his place [and imposed tribute upon him, to wit:] gold, silver, linen garments with multicolor trimmings, great . . . I received from him. Israel (lit. "Omri-land") . . . all its inhabitants [and] their possessions I led to Assyria. They overthrew their king, Pekah and I placed Hoshea as king over them. I received from them ten talents of gold, and thousand talents of silver as their tribute and brought them to Assyria.

Tiglath-pileser first moved down the seacoast (734 B.C.). He passed through Israelite territory and punished the Philistine cities, particularly Gaza, for their part in resisting Assyrian encroachments. Tiglath-pileser then moved southward and established a base at Wadi el- 'Arish ("The River of Egypt") the natural boundary between Egypt and Palestine. This was his means of isolating Egypt and keeping Egyptian arms out of the conflict in Palestine.

The next year (733 B.C.) the Assyrians were again in Israel. Galilee and Transjordan were overrun and large segments of their populations were deported (II Kings 15:29). Megiddo was destroyed and rebuilt as a provincial capital. G. Ernest Wright has described the palace-fort which served as the headquarters of the Assyrian commandant:

It was some 220 feet long and at least 157½ feet wide, though part of its eastern side may long since have tumbled down the side of the hill. The stone walls of the fort were very thick, varying from 6½ to 8¼ feet wide. The plan suggests a large interior courtyard, surrounded on at least three sides by rooms.

The Assyrians divided the occupied territory of Israel into three provinces. Transjordan comprised the province of Gilead. The province of Megiddo included Galilee, and Dor served as headquarters for Assyrian control of the coastal plain.

Doubtless at the instigation of the pro-Assyrian members of the court of Israel, or even of Tiglath-pileser himself, an Israelite named Hoshea ben Elah (II Kings 15:30) murdered Pekah. Hosea became a vassal of Tiglath-pileser.

In 732 B.C. Tiglath-pileser took Damascus and summoned Ahaz and other vassal princes to pay homage to him. It was on this occasion that an altar in Damascus so impressed Ahaz that he had a large model of it made and sent to Uriah, the High Priest in Jerusalem, with instructions to have a replica of it made and placed in the Temple court (II Kings 16:10-16).

Tiglath-pileser ravaged the city of Damascus. He executed Rezin and deported much of its population. The territory of the Aramaic kingdom of Damascus was divided into four Assyrian provinces.

Shortly after Shalmaneser V succeeded his father Tiglath-pileser as king of Assyria, Hoshea of Israel withheld tribute and sought an alliance with Egypt. Hoshea made an alliance

with So (II Kings 17:14), Egyptians Sib'e, known from Assyrian texts as a *hurrian* or commander-in-chief serving one of the rival rulers of Egypt. This was a fatal mistake for Hoshea, for Egypt was in no position to offer effective aid against Assyria. In 724 B.C. Hoshea appeared before Shalmaneser, still hoping to come to terms. The Assyrians were convinced that they could not trust Hoshea, so they took him prisoner and occupied the land of Israel except for the city of Samaria which withstood siege for two more years.

While the siege of Samaria was in progress, Shalmaneser died. His successor, Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) has left records of the fall of Samaria. Many of the Israelites were deported to Upper Mesopotamia and Media and lost their identity there. It is this fact that has given rise to the idea that there are "lost tribes" which either have turned up in the past or will turn up at some future day. As a matter of fact many of the people of Israel lost their national identity through assimilation during the centuries following their deportation. Others made their way southward to Judah, and remnants of them appear among the later Jews.

Samaria was organized into an Assyrian province under an Assyrian governor. Sargon's inscriptions tell us of revolts that broke out in Hamath, Gaza, and other provinces, including Damascus and Samaria, but the Assyrians were in firm control and insurrection was quickly put down. In succeeding years Samaria was repopulated in accord with Assyrian policy of transplanting peoples: "And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sephar-vaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities" (II Kings 17:24).

From the standpoint of orthodox Jewish thought these people had an eclectic faith: "So they feared the Lord but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away" (II Kings 17:33). They brought their local cults with them to Samaria, but when settled there they sought to learn "the law of the god of the land" (II Kings 17:27). The Assyrians permitted a priest to teach the Yahwistic faith of Israel, although Israel disowned them (II Kings 17:34-41). Jesus however, dared to

speak of "The Good Samaritan," and to identify himself as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman. A few hundred Samaritans survive to this day.

For additional information on the political and religious circumstances of the northern kingdom, Israel, at this time, see our Special Study five, pages 59 to 73.

Israel, "the apple of God's eye" (cf. Deut. 32:10; Psalms 17:8; Songs 2:3; Zechariah 2:8), will become a despised, worn out, cast off pot (vessel). Her pitiful condition would hardly arouse any envy or greed on the part of the nations surrounding her after God finishes His judgment upon her.

One of the main reasons for the impending downfall is her flirtation with Assyria. Instead of trusting in Jehovah, Israel felt more secure in making political and military alliances with Assyria. Although it involved her in virtual "satellite" relationship at first and eventually in total captivity and exile, she ran to Assyria and actually paid tribute to the heathen nation in order to obtain its favor. She was like a stubborn, wild ass in heat. She was like a prostitute who sells her favors for "love" or security. She hired Assyria to "love" her! But hired lovers soon grow cold in their affections. And it was only a short time until Assyria, Israel's hired lover, turned on her and became an unmerciful enemy.

v. 10 . . . AMONG THE NATIONS, NOW WILL I GATHER THEM . . . AND THEY BEGIN TO BE DIMINISHED . . . Appeasing one's enemies at the sacrifice of truth and righteousness has never worked and it never will because it violates eternal, moral principles of God which sustain and protect the destinies of men and nations. And though Israel should pay political "blackmail" she would still lose her national identity. Eventually, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom were scattered all over the face of the earth "among the nations" and remain so to this day! It all began when Assyria rose to world dominance, when the king of Assyria called himself "king of princes" (cf. Isaiah 10:5ff).

v. 11 . . . EPHRAIM . . . MULTIPLIED ALTARS FOR SINNING . . . God had decreed that there was to be only *one* altar and that was at Jerusalem. Only there would He accept sacrifices; only there were His priests to officiate. So then, as many altars as Israel reared (at Dan and Bethel and other centers also), so often did they repeat their sin. That God considered their altars and their renegade priesthood a sin, one need only refer to I Kings 12:30; 13:33-34. The only thing that could ever result from worshipping at these altars was sin against God!

v. 12-13 I WROTE FOR HIM THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS OF MY LAW . . . THEY SACRIFICE FLESH AND EAT IT . . . THEY SHALL RETURN TO EGYPT . . . Their sin could not be excused on the grounds of ignorance. God had revealed His truth to them over and over again, in divers portions and divers manners (Heb. 1:1). By Moses, by the priests, by the kings, by the prophets, day after day, year after year they were instructed in the law (ten thousand times). Furthermore the law was extensive enough to cover every behavior of life, every thought, deed and motive. But it was "counted as a strange thing." The law to Israel was foreign, strange, alien and of no concern. In just what way it was "strange we do not know. Perhaps Israel felt the true Mosaic law was anachronistic, that is, out of date—"old fashioned." Good enough for their forefathers who lived rather primitive lives, but outdated for contemporary Israel. This is as modern as the twentieth century! Perhaps Israel felt the Mosaic law politically inexpedient. After all, a change in worship and priesthood was Jeroboam's plan to instill national pride in the northern kingdom's citizens. Perhaps Israel just didn't want to keep the law because it was too binding and would not suit their materialistic greed. This is indicated by verse 13 of our text. The Israelites brought their sacrifices regularly to the places of worship but they did it selfishly, in a mood of indulgence, multiplying the sacrifices in order to multiply indulgences. But God is not dead, neither is He asleep, nor does He forget. God records their deeds of iniquity and they must receive His payment for their sins. God prepares to visit upon them the moral consequences of their rebellion against justice and truth and righteousness. They shall return to bondage (represented symbolically by Egypt) and slavery in the hands of an ungodly, cruel, pagan nation. There is an interesting allegory of the "foundling child" in Ezekiel 16 concerning God's rescue of Israel and Judah from Egypt in the days of Moses and His sustenance of them and their unfaithfulness to Him—read it!

v. 14 ISRAEL HATH FORGOTTEN HIS MAKER, AND BUILDED PALACES . . . This is the one sickness for which all the others are mere symptoms. But had these people really forgotten God in the usual sense of the word? By no means! Men cannot forget God. They can deny Him, but in so doing they are still remembering Him! Men do not forget God intellectually; morally, yes, but intellectually, no! How then had Israel forgotten God? The Hebrew word used for "forgotten" means literally, "mis-laid" and perhaps this will help us understand their moral predicament. Everyone knows what it is to mislay something.

You have not forgotten it, but you have mislaid it. This is the idea. The Hebrew word is *shakakh* and is used in Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:10; 8:11; 9:1, 4, 7. Taking all these passages together we learn that the word means "personal neglect, self-satisfaction that comes from such neglect and the self-righteousness which issues from remembering only self." It also stems from that independence which causes us to say that because of our righteousness and uprightness of heart God has blessed us, and has given us these things; and so God is put out of sight, *mislaid*.

How do men come to *mislay* God? First, they give an intellectual assent to the fact of His existence without seeing to it that their conduct corresponds with their assent. God forgotten in this sense, mislaid, lost as an active power, touching life, conditioning it, driving it, building it up! Second, after God is mislaid, man begins to substitute, to fill the vacuum thus created in his life by building. Hosea says Israel builded palaces—the word translated literally would be "spacious buildings." The passion of the nation came to be to build big things. How up-to-date the prophet is! Man fills the vacuum in his life today by just such action. The passion for bigness is a symptom of capacity for the eternal, for God; and when men have mislaid God, then they try and build big things without God. Today we are building big government, big military, big industry, bigger homes, bigger automobiles, bigger United Nations, bigger everything and it is all unconsciously symptomatic of a mental and spiritual vacuum created by "forgetting God!"

Judah's forgotten God was replaced by "fortified cities." Here was a quest for security, an attempt to secure safety. The passion for safety is a symptom of the sense of peril! What do we all want? Security. Security against what? The lack of God, and the hopelessness that results from it. Our hopeless hippies carry signs today bearing the statements of hopeless philosophers of a generation ago, like, "There is no cure for birth or death save to enjoy the interval—Santayana . . ." Hosea's message is as relevant as our contemporary scene. We have mislaid God, and now we are building skyscrapers ("spacious buildings") and enormous defense mechanisms ("fortified cities"). These things would not be so wrong in themselves if God were central in the picture. Humanity erases God from the picture and then gropes after the spacious and fights for the secure, and never makes anything so big but that the sky laughs at it; and never secures itself for one five minutes from a possible outbreak of devastation or anarchy.

We cannot get away from God. We have mislaid Him. He is at our elbow. We may be oblivious of Him, we may pretend to be doing without Him, but all the while we are living and moving and having our being in Him. In his hand our breath is. And according to our relationship to Him, He will bless or blast. If we mislay God, we can run up our sky-scrapers, we can multiply our battleships; but we cannot escape the slow but sure judgment of God.

QUIZ

1. Recite as completely as you can the history of Israel from Jeroboam I to the captivity of Israel.
2. What does Hosea mean, "Israel hath hired lovers?"
3. What is the meaning of "ten thousand things of my law?"
4. In what way does the prophet use "Egypt" to mean the captivities?
5. What does the word "forgotten" mean in verse 14?
6. How did Israel seek to fill the vacuum of a forgotten God? Judah?

LOVE REBUKING 9:1—13:16

REPROVING— ISRAEL FORSOOK GOD

TEXT: 9:1-9

- 1 Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, like the peoples; for thou hast played the harlot, departing from thy God; thou hast loved hire upon every grain-floor.
- 2 The threshing-floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail her.
- 3 They shall not dwell in Jehovah's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria.
- 4 They shall not pour out wine-offerings to Jehovah, 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 shall be for their appetite; it shall not come into the house of Jehovah.
- 5 What will ye do in the day of solemn assembly, and in the day of the feast of Jehovah?
- 6 For, lo, they are gone away from destruction; yet Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them; their pleasant things of silver, nettles shall possess them; thorns shall be in their tents.

- 7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it; the prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad, for the abundance of thine iniquity, and because the enmity is great.
- 8 Ephraim was a watchman with my God: as for the prophet, a fowler's snare is in all his ways, and enmity in the house of his God.
9. They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

QUERIES

- a. How will "Ephraim" be in Egypt and Assyria at the same time?
- b. What is the "bread of mourners?"
- c. What are "the days of visitation?"

PARAPHRASE

Do not think this is a time for rejoicing, Israel, just because you have had a few seasons of prosperity. You have been as unfaithful to your God as an adulterous woman is to her husband by attributing your prosperity to idols and worshipping them. The small harvests of grain, oil and wine you now enjoy are very temporary. They shall soon come to a complete end. You will be taken from God's land, Ephraim, into a land of bondage like Egypt was to your ancestors. Your land of bondage will be Assyria and you will be so subservient and poor you will have to eat food that is unlawful—unclean—because there will be no Temple there and no opportunity to sanctify yourselves and your harvests to the Lord as Moses required. Yea, you will not be able to present acceptable offerings to Jehovah because He can be worshipped only at the Temple. Even your daily food, because you are not able in Assyria to sanctify your harvests by the offering of the first fruits, will be like "bread of mourners" or unclean to you. And what will you do about observing your great feast days when you cannot go to the house of Jehovah? Behold, Israel is done for! She has fallen into destruction. Very soon now her people will be buried in a foreign land where they have been taken captive. Her own land will be so desolate weeds will grow up in its deserted houses. Israel is about to receive payment for her sin. Israel is about to learn that she was, in listening to false prophets, following fools and demon-spirit possessed men. Your multiplied iniquities and rebellious hearts led you to reject God's prophets and turn to false prophets—now God is going to give you the consequences of your evil desires. Israel fancies himself capable of knowing God's revelation without trusting God's appointed prophets. The false

prophets Israel did trust in became a trap to her in all her ways. Israel has declared war on God and His prophets in her renegade temples. Israel has become as grossly corrupt as the men of Gibeah who, in the days of the Judges, were sex perverts. God practically exterminated the tribe of Benjamin as a result of this and He will soon visit upon Israel's wantonness a like perfect wrath.

SUMMARY

Israel is warned not to feel so secure in a few seasons of material prosperity. Because Israel had been unfaithful to her God she would be carried away into bondage in Assyria where she would be unable to make acceptable approach to God.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 REJOICE NOT, O ISRAEL . . . THE NEW WINE SHALL FAIL . . . THEY SHALL EAT UNCLEAN FOOD IN ASSYRIA . . . It seems that Israel was enjoying certain periods of harvest blatantly supposing them to be signs that all was well and secure in spite of their iniquitous excesses. Israel also attributed its agricultural prosperity to the idols it had appropriated from its heathen neighbors. Israel had played the harlot in its unfaithfulness to Jehovah, "regarding the harvest-blessing upon its threshing-floors as gifts . . . from the Baals, for which it served them with still greater zeal." While the "harlotry" spoken of in verse 1 refers primarily to spiritual adultery (cf. ch. 2:5, 8; 4:12), it is still a fact that the harvest festivals were also occasions for boisterous festivities in honor of the fertility deities; and they committed at the threshing floors and wine presses the shameful immoralities against which Hosea and Amos so vehemently protest (cf. ch. 4:13-14).

Their good fortune with their crops was only temporary, however, for it would all soon be gone and God was about to withdraw His beneficence.

In addition to imminent crop failure, their exile was so near as to be spoken of by Hosea in the perfect tense (as if it had already happened). Israel has made itself an unwelcome guest in the land of Jehovah. Of course, Israel did not consider it Jehovah's land and herself a guest. Very few nations do! Yet it is still true that God owns the heavens and the earth and all the cattle on a thousand hills (cf. *Psa.* 24:1-2; 50:10-15; *Isa.* 66:1-2), and men and nations are merely stewards of His grace. They shall give an account! Israel would be plucked from this land given to her ancestors who came from Egyptian slavery, and cast into a bondage like those of old except that the new exile

would be in Assyria. Egypt is not to be taken literally here. Verse 3 is a perfect example of Hebrew poetic parallelism. Egypt becomes a figurative picture of what the Assyrian exile will be like. All food which was not sanctified to the Lord by the presentation of the first fruits, was unclean, unlawful food to Israel (Ex. 22:29; 23:19; 34:22, 26; Lev. 23:10-12, 15-17). In heathen lands it would be impossible for Israel to come to the Temple of Jehovah (which could lawfully be located only in Jerusalem) and sanctify her harvests. In addition to this they might be forced (cf. Dan. 1:5, 8ff) to partake of food that would be strictly prohibited by the Mosaic law. The context here seems to indicate the former as the primary consideration.

v. 4 . . . THEIR SACRIFICES SHALL BE UNTO THEM AS THE BREAD OF MOURNERS . . . The "bread of mourners" was bread that had been in a house where a dead body had lain. Because the dead defiled a house for seven days and all that was in the house—bread thus defiled was called "bread of mourners." Any sacrifice they might attempt to make in Assyria to Jehovah would be unclean or defiled (like mourner's bread) because there was no place to offer sacrifices acceptable to God but Jerusalem and the Temple. They would have to eat bread for the support of life—"for their appetite"—but since they could not sanctify the first fruits of the harvest, it too would be unclean. Hosea is trying to emphasize here the awesome, terrifying nature of Israel's spiritual destruction when God withdraws His gracious presence. Israel will be cut off from God. God will not hear her—she will be dead.

v. 5 WHAT WILL YE DO IN THE . . . DAY OF THE FEAST OF JEHOVAH? Israel will not be able to worship God, give thanks to Him and call upon Him for forgiveness and blessing in the great annual feast-days while in captivity. They would be deprived of all their ancestors had counted valuable, beautiful, holy and needful. All the religious, national, social, economic, cultural heritage of Judaism centered around its great feasts. Their extreme importance may be seen in the fact that the Jews have attempted to perpetuate these feasts in the centuries following the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. by the Romans. No Jew worships on any holy day today as God has directed for the simple reason there is no temple in Jerusalem to which they may go. To observe the Passover, or Day of Atonement, in New York City is contrary to the Torah (O.T. Law). And Israel, in captivity to Assyria, would be bereft of all opportunity to approach God in a way acceptable to Him.

v. 6 . . . EGYPT SHALL GATHER THEM UP, MEMPHIS SHALL BURY THEM . . . THORNS SHALL BE IN THEIR TENTS . . . Egypt will not be

the actual place of the captivity of Israel (cf. v. 3) nor will they literally die and be buried in Memphis. These are symbols of bondage, slavery and death. These are places where their ancestors had been in bondage centuries ago. The prophet is simply making his prediction of their future captivity in Assyria as vivid and real as he can by referring to a past experience of the nation. Many thousands of the people of Israel were buried in Assyria, never to see their homeland again. A few Israelites, of a generation or two later than Hosea's, returned from captivity, (cf. comments on 8:8-9).

Their land would be desolate. Their "spacious dwellings" (cf. 8:13-14), the objects of their affections, their precious treasures would all be looted by an enemy or left behind to be overgrown with weeds and thorns—deserted. Things for which they had devoted so much of their time and energy would be wrested from them (cf. Matt. 6:19-21; Lk. 12:15-21).

V. 7 THE DAYS OF VISITATION ARE COME . . . ISRAEL SHALL KNOW IT . . . THE PROPHET IS A FOOL . . . FOR THE ABUNDANCE OF THINE INIQUITY . . . "Visit" means to come with a special purpose, either of blessing or punishment. God "visits" men to bless (Gen. 50:24; Psa. 106:4; Zeph. 2:7; Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; Acts 15:14). God also "visits" men to judge and punish them (cf. Lev. 18:25; Psa. 59:5; Isa. 10:3; 23:17; Jer. 10:15; 51:18; Micah 7:4). Woe to that person or nation who does not recognize God's "visit" of blessing (cf. Lk. 19:44; I Pet. 2:12), for they shall soon receive His "visit" of punishment! Whenever a prophet, preacher or teacher of God's Word comes to a person or community or nation with a message from God's Word, he is God's ambassador, and God has visited that person or nation. Woe to those who are indifferent and pay no heed to God's "visitors"—woe to those who reject and persecute God's visitors!

Just which prophet is called a fool and who is doing the calling is a matter debated by the commentators. We prefer the interpretation that the "prophet" is the false prophet who prophesies lies. When God "visits" His judgment of justice and truth upon Israel then she will recognize and know that the prophets she had been following who were promising her peace when there was no peace, are fools (cf. Ezek. 13:10ff; Jer. 6:14; 8:11; Micah 3:5). The "man that hath the spirit" and "is mad" is the same demon possessed false prophet as is described in Micah 2:11 who "utters wind and lies." False prophets usually were under the influence of demoniacal power and were inspired by a "lying spirit" (cf. I Kings 22:22). It is also undoubtedly true that the wicked people of Israel were, at this time, calling God's true prophets,

"fool" (cf. Amos 7:10-17). The prophets were despised, slandered, called "mad," hunted, tortured, slain (cf. II Kings 9:11; Jer. 29:26; Heb. 11:32ff). But what men call "foolish" and what God calls "foolish" are usually exactly opposite (cf. I Cor. 1:18—2:16)!

Israel's punishment and judgment is about to come because of her "abundant" iniquity and great enmity. Israel's terrible sin was that she had "mis-laid" God (cf. 8:14). Israel's abundant iniquity was in being indifferent to the many "visits" of blessing Jehovah had made to her. Her great enmity against God was manifest in her enmity against God's ambassadors, the prophets. One is reminded of the great enmity of the Jews of a later generation as they expressed it in killing the Son of God (cf. Matt. 21:33-46; Mk. 12:1-12; Lk. 29:9-19). Israel demonstrated its *hate for God* by its hate for the prophets of God! What of those men and nations today who have hated and killed Christian preachers and missionaries—how great is their hate for God!

v. 8 EPHRAIM WAS A WATCHMAN WITH MY GOD: AS FOR THE PROPHET, A FOWLER'S SNARE IS IN ALL HIS WAYS, AND ENMITY IN THE HOUSE OF HIS GOD. Keil translates the first phrase of verse 8, "A spy is Ephraim with my God." The meaning Hosea intended, according to Keil and Lange, is that "Israel searches out divine revelations on her own along with the God of Hosea." In other words, Israel does not depend on Hosea to be declaring to her the revelation of God, but she trusts in her own so-called prophets (who were not commissioned by God). Ephraim (Israel) believed the revelations of her false prophets to be equal with, if not superior to, the revelations of Hosea. But, her prophets were leading her into the snare (trap) of the devil (pride). Israel's prophets were leading her into the devil's camp which was at war (enmity) with God. By insisting to the people that their message was right and that Israel should set up a temple of her own and worship a golden calf, they were leading the people to join with Satan and the hosts of wicked demons in war on God!

v. 9 THEY HAVE DEEPLY CORRUPTED THEMSELVES, AS IN THE DAYS OF GIBEAH . . . Israel has fallen to the depths of sin. Nothing is sacred to her anymore—God's Word, human life—nothing. They are as corrupt as those despicable, beastly men of Gibeah who, when they could not take the Levite man and molest him sexually, took the Levite's concubine, all of them, raped and ravaged her and left her for dead on the doorstep (cf. Judges chap. 19-20). As a result of the sins of the men of Gibeah, the tribe of Benjamin was almost completely exterminated. The Lord has laid the sins of Israel to their charge. What

they have sown, they will reap. The Lord will pay them "in full" for their evil works.

QUIZ

1. Why did Hosea tell Israel to cease her rejoicing?
2. Why was the land of Israel called "Jehovah's land?"
3. Did Israel go into captivity to Egypt? Why?
4. Why were the offerings and sacrifices of Israel not pleasing to Jehovah when they were in captivity?
5. How would Israel's daily food in Assyria become unclean?
6. What is Hosea trying to emphasize by showing their condition in captivity?
7. How does God "visit" men? Name two ways.

REPROVING— ISRAEL FOLLOWED BAAL

TEXT: 9:10-17

- 10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-figs in the fig-tree at its first season: but they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated unto the shameful thing, and become abominable like that which they loved.
- 11 As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird: there shall be no birth, and none with child, and no conception.
- 12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, so that not a man shall be left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!
- 13 Ephraim, like as I have seen Type, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring out his children to the slayer.
- 14 Give them, O Jehovah: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.
- 15 All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them: because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house; I will love them no more; all their princes are revolvers.
- 16 Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit; yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay the beloved fruit of their womb.
- 17 My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

QUERIES

- a. What does Hosea portray by the figure "grapes in the wilderness?"
- b. Does Hosea mean in v. 11 that not a single child would ever again be born to a woman of Israel?
- c. Why did Hosea say (v. 15) that "all their wickedness is in Gilgal?"

PARAPHRASE

Oh Israel, how well I remember those first delightful days when I found you so helpless and dependent upon Me. Your love was as refreshing to Me as juicy grapes would be to a thirsty desert traveler or as satisfying as the early fruit on the fig-tree. But then you deserted Me for Baal, the god of Peor, and so thoroughly devoted yourselves to this shameful thing you became as foul and abominable as it was. Ephraim, your glorious fruitfulness will fly away like a bird. Whereas you previously produced many bright and prosperous offspring, your licentious worship of luxury will be punished by childlessness and destruction of any youths who might be born through wars, famine and pestilence. I chose Ephraim to be like Tyre, planted in a fertile, pleasant place, to grow to become a strong, rich and powerful nation. But now, for Ephraim's apostasy, I will give it up to desolation and its sons to death by the sword. Yes, indeed, give them, Oh Lord—give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that cannot nourish. Gilgal is the major source of all their wickedness, and I hate what goes on there. Because of their wickedness I will expel them from the fellowship of covenant relationship with Me. My love and blessings I withdraw from them. All their governing-men are government-destroyers! Israel is doomed. Her roots are dried up and she can no longer furnish nourishment to the tree. She shall bear no more fruit. Even if they bear children, I will cause these beloved children to die. My God will destroy the people of Israel because they will not listen or obey. They will be homeless vagabonds wandering among the nations.

SUMMARY

Israel, so pleasing to God when He delivered her from Egypt, became as abominable as the licentious, pagan religions she adopted. God will dispossess her and make her to become a vagabond people.

COMMENT

V. 10 I FOUND ISRAEL LIKE GRAPES IN THE WILDERNESS . . . BUT THEY CAME TO BAAL-PEOR . . . AND BECAME ABOMINABLE LIKE THAT WHICH THEY LOVED . . . Israel's faith and obedience and love to Jehovah

when He first chose them while they were still in Egypt was refreshing to God. Their love to Him was as pleasing as juicy grapes or fresh figs would be to a tired, thirsty, hungry traveler in the desert. Other prophets speak of God's pleasure with early Israel (cf. Ex. 19:8; 24:3-7; Deut. 5:27-29; Jer. 2:2-3).

But, alas, what a change came over this people! They allowed themselves to be deceived by sin (Heb. 3:12-14). They had devoted themselves, heart and soul to Jehovah at Horeb; but the allurements of sensuality and materialism had led them to devote themselves heart and soul to Baalism (for a description of Baal worship see our comments on Hosea 2:8, 13, 17; and 4:12-13). The lasciviousness and abominable excesses that accompanied Baalism must have been great to deserve the extreme treatment sanctioned by God in Numbers 25:1-18. Israel kept flirting with Baalism from then on (cf. Judges 2:11; I Ki. 16:31; II Ki. 10:19; 21:3; Jer. 2:8; 19:5; 23:13, 27).

When people "consecrate" themselves to any person, thing or idea, it is a moral law that "they become like that which they love." One cannot love without imitating (cf. Eph. 5:1-2 in RSV; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 3:1-13; Heb. 12:1-8; I Pet. 2:21; I Jn. 3:1-24; II Cor. 3:18). When men worship idols and animals, they behave like dumb images and sensual animals (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). It is undeniably correct that Adolph Hitler's infatuation with and adoration of Friedrich Nietzsche's evolutionary philosophy transformed the "little corporal" into the insane, savage executioner of Europe. Karl Marx's religion of materialism and humanism has given the world the Kremlin criminals and the Peking pirates. As one ancient has put it, "The object which the will desires and loves, transfuses its own goodness or badness into it" (cf. Psa. 115:4-8). Man, without God, makes a god in his own image and likeness, the essence and concentration of his own bad passions, and then conforms himself to the likeness of what was most evil in himself. Thus the heathen made gods of lust, cruelty, thirst for war. Then, fooling themselves, they deliberately forgot that these gods were the work of their own hands, the conception of their own minds, and fearfully and passionately imitated and obeyed them; Augustine wrote, ". . . what a man's love is, that he is . . . Naught else maketh good or evil actions, save good affections." Love has a transforming power over the soul, which the intellect has not. Tell me what a man loves with all his heart and I will tell you about the man. There is a Jewish proverb which says, "He who serveth an abomination is himself an abomination." One of the early church fathers wrote, "The intellect brings home to the soul the knowledge on which it worketh, impresses it on itself, incorporates it with itself. Love is an impulse whereby he

who loves is borne forth towards that which he loves, is united with it, and is transformed into it."

v. 11 AS FOR EPHRAIM, THEIR GLORY SHALL FLY AWAY LIKE A BIRD . . . Israel had gloried in her continued existence when empire after empire, race after race, nation after nation had long since disappeared. God had protected, sustained and increased Israel's economy, her territory and, most important of all, her youth. Israel was proud of all this and boasted that all this was due to her progressive, liberal attitude. She probably attributed all her prosperity, like America today, to her own human goodness and intelligence in breaking away from all the old, out-dated, irrelevant morés of her ancestors. What an awakening Israel was soon to have! All that she gloried in would soon "fly away like a bird."

Hosea very evidently did not mean that God would bring about absolute execution of every single baby born to any Israelite mother, for in verse 17 he prophesies that they shall become wanderers among the nations. What he means is that since they took great pride in their numbers, they would be reduced in every stage from conception to ripened manhood, (cf. Deut. 28:58, 62).

v. 12 . . . YET WILL I BEREAVE THEM, SO THAT NOT A MAN SHALL BE LEFT . . . The populace of Israel shall be decimated in all stages, even those in the prime of manhood would be taken away by death, war, epidemic, etc.

v. 13 EPHRAIM, LIKE AS I HAVE SEEN TYRE . . . God blessed Israel and gave her a favored place in which to dwell and prospered her so that she became rich and powerful, like Tyre (cf. Ezek. 27:32—28:19). But, like Tyre, she also became self-sufficient, proud, boastful, and so God's justice must fall (cf. Isa. 28:1-4). How often those with the advantages and privileges graciously provided by God misuse and pervert those privileges! Israel was privileged for a purpose. She was "planted in a pleasant place" in order to be "salt" unto the nations, and "light" to the pagan darkness. But she turned her pleasant place into the abode of the selfish and sensual. So now God decrees that she shall "bring her children out to the slayer."

v. 14 GIVE THEM, O JEHOVAH: WHAT WILT THOU GIVE? . . . This is an expression of the agony in the soul of Hosea (like the "lamentations" of Jeremiah) over the impending doom of his countrymen. However, he surrenders, interrupting his wail of mourning with agreement to the pronouncement of God.

v. 15 ALL THEIR WICKEDNESS IS IN GILGAL . . . This may have been a different Gilgal than the one two miles from Jericho where Joshua's army first camped. Some think the Gilgal mentioned in this verse was near Shechem. Gilgal was certainly not the first place Israel sinned, therefore we cannot interpret this verse to mean that God began His hate for Israel's sin at this place. Gilgal simply became another source for His terrible hate because it was another place where Israel's sin was flagrantly and blatantly practiced. The phrase "I will drive them out of my house . . ." is simply another way of saying "I will cut them off from covenant relationship with Me." Israel is no longer an heir, a son in the house of God. The covenant-love of God is no longer their privilege for they have withdrawn themselves from His covenant by rejecting and disobeying it. They do not want God's love—they shall not have it! They can do without God's love—they shall have the opportunity to try! They are like the "prodigal son" (Luke 15). God never really stopped loving them—they stopped loving God and preferred that He stop loving them. They are left to the only other alternative in this morally-governed existence—self, sin, separation from good (cf. Jer. 16:5).

The phrase "all their princes are revolvers . . ." is a pun! The men who claimed to be governors and for government were really responsible for all the anarchy and injustice then prevalent! What irony!

v. 16 EPHRAIM . . . IS DRIED UP . . . THEY SHALL BEAR NO FRUIT . . . The very roots of Israel are dried up and since there is no nourishment being furnished the tree it is good for nothing but to be cut down (cf. Lk. 13:7). Even if Israel should bear fruit it would be as worthless as the tree and would be plucked off and thrown away. Only the people whose "roots" are drawing from the word of God will produce a tree "planted by the rivers of water . . ." "bringing forth his fruit in his season . . ." (Psalm 1:1-6).

v. 17 . . . THEY SHALL BE WANDERERS AMONG THE NATIONS . . . According to the warning God had given their ancestors centuries ago by Moses (Deut. 28:65), Israel would be cast into the midst of the nations, forever after to be a race of homeless vagabonds. And it is true to this day! There are more Jews in New York City than in all of Palestine! They have wandered all over the world. There are Jews in Russia, Germany, Italy, America, Canada, France and practically every other country under the sun today!

QUIZ

1. How and why do people become like the person or thing they love?
2. In what did Ephraim glory? and how did God take it away?
3. How was Israel like Tyre?
4. What happens when men reject the love of God?
5. Does the new nation of Israel established by the U.N. mean the "wanderings" of the Jews are over?

REPROVING— ISRAEL FELL INTO ANARCHY

TEXT: 10:1-11

- 1 Israel is a luxuriant vine, that putteth forth his fruit: according to the abundance of his fruit he hath multiplied his altars; according to the goodness of their land they have made goodly pillars.
- 2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found guilty: he will smite their altars, he will destroy their pillars.
- 3 Surely now shall they say, We have no king; for we fear not Jehovah; and the king, what can he do for us?
- 4 They speak vain words, swearing falsely in making covenants: therefore judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.
- 5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in terror for the calves of Bethaven; for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof, that rejoiced over it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.
- 6 It also shall be carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.
- 7 As for Samaria, her king is cut off, as foam upon the water.
- 8 The high places also of Aven, 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.
- 9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood; the battle against the children of iniquity doth not overtake them in Gibeah.
- 10 When it is my desire, I will chastise them; and the peoples shall be gathered against them, when they are bound to their two transgressions.
- 11 And Ephraim is a heifer that is taught, that loveth to tread out the grain; but I have passed over upon her fair neck: I will set a rider on Ephraim: Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods.

QUERIES

- a. How is the heart of Israel "divided"?
- b. Who is king "Jareb"?
- c. What were the "two transgressions" binding Israel?

PARAPHRASE

Israel is prospering like a luxuriant grape vine sagging under the weight of much fruit. But the more prosperous I make her, the more she devotes herself to heathen altars and pagan idols. Her heart is smooth and treacherous. She is guilty and must be punished. God will destroy all her altars and idols. Surely under the circumstances of the coming judgment they will cry out We do not fear Jehovah—now we have no king—but what is the difference? No king could help us now! Their talk is empty—they make promises they never intended to keep. On account of this they are sowing the poison of anarchy and destruction within their own land. The people of Israel will moan over the destruction of their national shrines and gods. The priests will perform a ritual dance, imploring their idols to save them. But this idol—this calf-god thing—will be carted off *helplessly* into captivity with Israel as a present to the great Warrior King of Assyria. Israel and her calf-god will be disgraced. The advice and programs Israel thought were so politically and religiously wise will appear to be so foolish to her then. The proud monarchy of Israel vanishes like a splinter upon the surface of this water which is carried away by the current without leaving a trace behind. Those majestic and expensive idol-altars of Aven at Bethel where Israel sinned will crumble. They will be so deserted thorns and thistles will grow up in their place. And the deluded people, forsaken by their helpless gods, cast off by the Lord, stand in awe and terror as they see God's judgment coming upon them—they cry for the mountains and the hills to cover them and hide them from the wrath of Jehovah. Ah, Israel, since the days of Gibeah you have persisted in the same sin as the Gibeahites; but whereas those sinners were punished and destroyed by the war, you still live on in the same sin without having been destroyed in a similar war. When it is according to my purpose, I will punish Israel. The Gentile nations will be arrayed against them. Their two transgressions, apostasy from Jehovah and separation from the royal house of David, will haunt them all during their punishment. Israel is accustomed to pleasant, productive, profitable labor, like the heifer that loves to tread out the grain because she is allowed to eat at her pleasure. But it will soon be different. I will seize her and

harness her by a heavy yoke to the plow and harrow. Yes, Judah too shall be put to hard labor in captivity, just like Israel.

SUMMARY

Israel's prosperity was only a veneer giving an outward appearance of well-being. Inside she was corrupt, lawless, idolatrous and in the throes of anarchy.

COMMENT

v. 1 ISRAEL IS A LUXURIANT VINE . . . The KJV has it, "Israel is an empty vine . . ." Practically all scholars of the Hebrew texts consider this "a palpable inaccuracy." Lange says, "a thriving vine." Keil says, "a running vine." The translators of both the ASV and the RSV translated "a luxuriant vine." Hosea was probably using satire or irony in so addressing Israel. Israel waxed prosperous, it is true, in spite of national calamities. But what kind of fruit was Israel producing? Fruit of its own choosing, of its own pleasure, instead of the fruit for which God looked. The figure of the vine is an old and familiar figure (cf. Psa. 80:8ff; Isa. 5:1-10; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15:1ff; 17:6ff; Jn. 15:1ff). In Jesus' day the great gate of the Temple, the outer gate, had emblazoned upon it a golden vine. It was the symbol of national life. Isaiah tells us (Isa. 5:1ff) what fruit God expected to find on His vine (the covenant people). God expected justice and righteousness but found instead oppression and iniquity. God was not judging them because they were prosperous—but because they misused their prosperity. They were selfish. They spent it on their own pleasure—on vain and ungodly practices. The more their wealth increased, the more they spent on idolatry and sensuality. More wealth, less dependence upon God and more self-worship. Hosea uses more irony in calling their pillars "goodly" pillars. They were probably obelisks erected to pagan deities. They were probably very artistic and expensive. According to their prosperity they had built themselves ornate idols; God was lost, mislaid, and instead of Him there were ornate pillars, obelisks, stones. This certainly strikes a familiar note. America has become a "luxuriant vine," but she produces fruit unto herself. She has forgotten God and built altars to "power," "reason," "progress," "humanism" and is no longer dependent upon the Creator.

v. 2 THEIR HEART IS DIVIDED . . . The Hebrew word *chalag* should be translated "smooth, treacherous," rather than "divided." Jeroboam was very solicitous for the care and convenience of his dear people (I Kings 12:27-28); all the while he was thinking of his own desires to set up

and secure an apostate nation. The people were happy to follow the same deceit—professing with their lips to belong to Jehovah but rejecting His law and worshipping idols. The "spirit of harlotry" was in Israel's heart (Hos. 5:4). If it were not so tragic it would be amusing to behold Israel trying to deceive Jehovah. Surely they would be aware of the many times in their past history when every man and woman who tried to deceive God was inevitably caught!

v. 3 SURELY NOW SHALL THEY SAY, WE HAVE NO KING . . . As Pusey points out, "These are the words of despair, not of repentance; of men terrified by the consciousness of guilt, but not coming forth out of its darkness; describing their condition, not confessing the iniquity which brought it on them." Israel had rebelled against the kingship of God and asked for a king of their own (cf. Hos. 8:3-4). God gave them Jeroboam. Now, after all the years of gradual political, moral and civil decay and degeneration—to the point of anarchy—surely they will be compelled to confess that they no longer have a king. Yes, they confess it! They also admit that they have no fear of Jehovah. But that is not such a problem as the present king they do have. If we had a king like the Jeroboams, they probably wail, we might hope for better times; but now? The king we have now; it's all his fault. Their hearts are not only deceitful, they are deceived! This is the oldest trick of sin and Satan—deceiving man into blaming others for the consequences of their own sins! When man blames others for his sins, he is in no mind to repent.

v. 4 THEY SPEAK VAIN WORDS . . . JUDGMENT SPRINGETH UP AS HEMLOCK . . . No man's word could be trusted (cf. Jer. 9:5-9; Micah 7:5-7). Their deceitful, smooth, treacherous hearts manifested themselves in their business dealings. What a man is down deep within his heart soon appears in his deeds (cf. Mark 7:21-23). These people of Israel were conducting their business like the Pharisees of Jesus' day (cf. Matt. 23:16-22). Honor, duty, justice, righteousness, truth have all long since ceased to be. Law and order ceases to be right. Might becomes right. Judges are bribed; debtors are sold into slavery; covenants are broken. Right has been made to be wrong and wrong has been made to be right, (cf. Isa. 5:20-23; Micah 3:2). Right has degenerated into bitter wrong—justice is so perverted it covers the land like the poisonous weed hemlock (cf. Amos 5:7). Hemlock, the reader will remember, was what Socrates was forced to drink to induce his death. There was plenty of so-called justice in the land—but what kind of justice? Judgments as bitter and fatal as hemlock, (cf. Hab. 1:4).

v. 5-6 . . . SAMARIA SHALL BE IN TERROR FOR THE CALVES OF BETH-AVEN; . . . IT ALSO SHALL BE CARRIED UNTO ASSYRIA . . . These two verses, although predicting the behavior of Israel at the time of her captivities in the future, are exact representations of how she reacted. First, Israel was concerned for the safety of her national temples, obelisks and calf-idols. What was to become of them. Then, as the reality of the captivity came immediately upon them they began to wail, perform ritual dances, imploring their idol to help them. But their gods were deaf and dumb. There were no answers; no actions. The Assyrians defeated Israel, plundered her spacious buildings from the smallest to the greatest, and the calf-god of Israel they carried off helpless and silent to be given to the Assyrian king as a present. The calf-god of Israel appears to have been included in the Assyrian pantheon of gods and placed in the temple of Marduk (cf. II Kings 18:33-35; 25:13-16; Ezra 1:7-11). Cyrus, king of Persia, restored all these gods to their original homes. Israel is disgraced! Shame and ridicule is now her lot. Why has all this happened? Because Israel trusted in her own pride—in her own vain counsel. She would not listen to the law of God nor to His prophets. She made kings after her own desires; she made gods according to the lust of her heart; she joined herself to pagan countries for protection and became their vassal. Now all this shameful self-counseling is paying its wages—shame!

v. 7 AS FOR SAMARIA, HER KING IS CUT OFF, AS FOAM UPON THE WATER . . . Not only is her calf-god useless to help her, Israel's king cannot help. The word translated "foam" would have been more literally translated, "splinter, or small stick." The king was like one of those little sticks or straws which float in countless numbers on the surface of the ocean or streams, give the image of lightness, emptiness, a thing too light to sink, but driven impetuously and unresistingly, hither and thither, at the impulse of the torrent which hurries it along. Hoshea, their last king, was just so easily swept by the flood which broke on Israel from Assyria.

v. 8 THE HIGH PLACES . . . OF AVEN . . . SHALL BE DESTROYED . . . "Aven" is a pun. "Aven" means, "worthless, vile, useless." Bethel, seat of their idolatrous worship, was called Beth-aven. Here, "Aven" probably also means Bethel. "High place" is from the Hebrew word *bamah* or *ramah* and means simply, "elevation." We quote here from *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, edited by Merrill C. Tenney, pg. 354:

"It seems to be inherent in human nature to think of God as dwelling in the heights. From earliest times men have tended to choose high places for their worship, whether of

God, or of the false gods which men have invented. In Canaan these high places had become the scenes of orgies and human sacrifice connected with the idolatrous worship of these imaginary gods; and so when Israel entered the Promised Land they were told to be iconoclasts as well as conquerors. . . . (Num. 33:52). These figured stones bore upon themselves crude carvings, sometimes more or less like geometrical figures, or else talismans, or other signs presumably understood by the priests and used to mystify or terrorize the worshippers. Israel partly obeyed but largely failed in this work . . . Later some godly kings like Hezekiah (II Chron. 31:1) destroyed the high places, while others like Manasseh relapsed and rebuilt them (II Chron. 33:3). After Manasseh had been punished and had repented, he was restored to his throne, and resumed the temple worship, but the people 'sacrificed still in the high places, but only unto Jehovah their God' (II Chron. 33:17). Through Manasseh's early influence, the people had gone so far into apostasy that they could not repent, but through the godliness of Josiah, especially after he had heard the law read (II Kings 22:8-20), the judgment was delayed till after the death of Josiah."

The "high places" came to be specifically noted for *idolatrous* worship. So the title was transferred from the elevation to the sanctuary on the elevation and so came to be used of any idolatrous shrine, whether constructed on an elevation or not (cf. II Kings 16:4; 17:9; II Chron. 21:11; 28:4; Isa. 36:7; Amos 7:9; Micah 1:5; 4:1; Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:32; Ezek. 6:3-6; 16:16; 20: 29; 43:7, etc.). All these places in Israel were utterly destroyed and made desolate and deserted when Israel was taken captive. Weeds and thorns grew up where thousands once performed heathen religious rites in the name of Jehovah. Their ruins are there today to be seen and pondered! The deluded, shamed people, forsaken by their helpless gods and impotent kings shake with terror as they see God's judgments coming upon them. Clothed in the filthy garments of sin, they are totally unprepared to meet God (cf. Amos 4:13). There is no place to hide when the Day of the Lord comes (cf. Amos 5:18-20; 9:2-4). They cry out for the mountains and the hills to fall upon them and cover them from His terrible wrath (cf. Rev. 6:16). Only those who have washed their robes white in the blood of The Lamb will not be ashamed on that final great and terrible Day of the Lord! Have you been washed, my brother? Prepare to meet thy God!

v. 9 . . . THOU HAST SINNED FROM THE DAYS OF GIBEAH . . . From the very days when the people of Gibeah sinned against the concubine of the Levite (cf. Hos. 9:9), Israel has continued in the same sin. But whereas those sinners were punished and destroyed by war, you still live on in the same sin without having similarly been destroyed.

v. 10 WHEN IT IS MY DESIRE, I WILL CHASTISE THEM . . . Yes, the wheels of God's justice grind slow, at times, but very fine! When the time comes within the omniscient plan and purpose of God for it to be, He will punish Israel for her sins just as surely and completely as He punished the Gibeahites! God never acts without intelligent, fore-planned purpose. Every event of history has a time and a place foreknown in the purpose of Almighty God and man can neither hinder it nor speed it. Furthermore, God uses whatever secondary agents He desires in carrying out His purposes. In Israel's case He chose to use "the peoples," or Gentile nations, to carry out His wrath upon this recalcitrant nation (cf. Isa. 10:5ff).

The "two transgressions" of Israel which will cling to them and bind them like seaweed strangles a drowning man are: (a) Their idolatry; (b) Their making kings according to their own desires. These two specific rebellions against the Holy God will haunt them and plague them all the rest of their days as they "wander" over all the face of the earth.

v. 11 AND EPHRAIM IS A HEIFER THAT . . . LOVETH TO TREAD OUT THE GRAIN . . . Having been trained and provided for by the Lord, growing fat and sleek, Ephraim (Israel) loved to "thresh." Like the young ox, walking leisurely over the corn, permitted to eat her fill (Deut. 25:4), Israel loved to do work which to him seemed pleasant, productive, profitable, neglecting and forgetting the training of his Master; resenting His instructions when they ran counter to his own desires; shirking the arduous duty of self-discipline (Deut. 32:15-18) demanded by Jehovah. "Passed over her fair neck," says Keil, means "rushing in upon a person." The actual idea is that of putting a heavy yoke upon the neck. No longer will Israel be treated like a privileged and petted heifer, but she will be yoked to a plow to do servile, exhausting labor (in captivity). So Judah, too, because of her sins will be taken captive. Israel (like Jacob) will be driven out of their homeland into exile, into hard labor of slavery.

QUIZ

1. What is the meaning of likening Israel to a "luxuriant vine?"
2. What are the "goodly pillars?"
3. Why did Israel cry, "We have no king . . . what can he do for us?"
4. Why is "judgment springing up like hemlock?"
5. How and why did the people "mourn over" their calves of Beth-aven?
6. What are the "high places" of Aven?
7. Whose "desire" is spoken of in verse 10?
8. How is Israel like a "heifer" that loves to tread out the grain?

REMONSTRATING— RENOVATE "FALLOW GROUND"

TEXT: 10:12-14

- 12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to kindness; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek Jehovah, till he comes and rains righteousness upon you.
- 13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies; for thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.
- 14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces with her children.
- 15 So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: at daybreak shall the king of Israel be utterly cut off.

QUERIES

- a. Why is it "time" to seek Jehovah?
- b. Who were Israel's "mighty men"?
- c. Who is "Beth-el"?

PARAPHRASE

Sow seeds of righteousness among your fellow men and you will reap loving kindness in turn. In order to do this, however, you will have to turn over the hard and weed-infested soil of your sinful hearts. And do not delay for the time to seek the Lord is now—it is ever present. He will come and shower you with blessings of mercy and grace. In the past you have sown wickedness and reaped the consequences

of your iniquity—falseness, shame, vanity. You trusted in your own rebellious ways and in the false security of your army. Because you still insist in doing this a war shall come to your people and all the fortresses which made you feel so secure will be destroyed. Shalmaneser destroyed Beth-arbel giving you an example of his cruelty against even women and children. And now, because you did not heed the warning but continued in your wickedness, Shalmaneser shall do the same to the whole land of Israel, even to Bethel, and your king will perish with unexpected suddenness!

SUMMARY

A last hour call to repentance and reformation of life is given. Unheeded, it calls forth inevitable destruction at the hands of Shalmaneser.

COMMENT

v. 12 SOW . . . RIGHTEOUSNESS, REAP . . . KINDNESS . . . BREAK UP YOUR FALLOW GROUND . . . Sowing and reaping are favorite Oriental and Semitic figures of speech to use in expressing spiritual and moral conduct (cf. Job 4:8; Psa. 126:5; Jer. 4:3; Matt. 13:3ff; Lk. 8:5ff; Prov. 6:14, 19; 11:18; 22:8; Hos. 8:7; Jn. 4:36-37; I Cor. 9:11; II Cor. 9:6, 10; James 3:18, etc.) Here, it is evident, the prophet is exhorting the people to "sow deeds of righteousness" toward one another, in order that they may "reap kindness" from one another. Some commentators, in their attempt to belittle the idea that man must do righteous deeds in order to be pleasing to God, have misinterpreted this text by saying, "It is not a man-made righteousness, but that righteousness which the Lord is ready to grant abundantly as a gift of His grace to all that seek Him and His righteousness . . . Hence, sow toward righteousness—seek the Lord and His righteousness, prepared for you without any merit on your part by the Lord and sent by Him as freely, graciously, and abundantly as the rain from heaven." Now we agree that man can never earn or attain, through his own meritorious deeds, the righteousness which God's Holy Law demands. Man *must*, however, respond to the revealed will of God by *doing* righteous deeds in order to come into covenant relationship and remain in covenant relationship with God through Christ. Faith in God can be efficacious *only* if it issues forth in an obedient life of righteous deeds. "My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (cf. I Jn. 3:1-24). There is only one way to be righteous. By the powerful motivation of faith in God through Christ to *do* the

righteous will of God as it is revealed in His word! There is only one way to reap kindness—that is to actively sow righteousness. To do this, the people of Israel must have a change of mind, a change of heart, a conversion—they must “break up the hard, weed-infested soil of their sinful hearts.”

How is this “fallow ground” to be broken up? By “seeking Jehovah” with the whole heart, (cf. our comments on Hosea 6:1-3). Jeremiah gives the same exhortation in Jeremiah 4:1-4. God will not “rain righteousness” down upon men until they have done something about their relationship to God’s commandments! God’s love, mercy, faithfulness, power, have all been demonstrated and revealed. God’s covenant terms have all been revealed. Now it is up to man to willingly, actively make the proper response.

The time for man to make such a response is always “Right Now” with God. It is always “Today” with God! For the man who chooses to live by faith in God it is also always “Today!” The man of God lives always in the present tense—yesterday is past and unreclaimable, tomorrow is future and only God knows tomorrow, and so Today is the day of salvation (cf. Heb. 3:7-19; II Cor. 6:2; Jas. 4:13, etc.). Men must seek the Lord while He may be found (cf. Isa. 55:6-9), and call upon Him while he is near by forsaking their wicked ways and returning to His commandments!

v. 13 YE HAVE PLOWED WICKEDNESS . . . REAPED INIQUITY . . . EATEN THE FRUIT OF LIES . . . Israel not only sowed wickedness, they cultivated it! They actually nurtured evil like a farmer would a crop of grain by cultivating and fertilizing it. But what was their harvest? Crime, anarchy, distrust, immorality, falsehood, all flourished in high places and low places. Their whole society was built on the crumbling foundation of lies. They deceived others, were deceived by others, but worse than all the rest, they deceived themselves and knew they were doing so all the time! You see, they trusted in their own counsel by which they deliberately deluded themselves; they trusted in their military and economic prowess which they knew from history was not equal to the power of God. How relevant the prophets are for twentieth century society!

v. 14 THEREFORE SHALL A TUMULT ARISE AMONG THY PEOPLE . . . Tumult is the word used to describe the noise and din of war. Right in the middle of their prosperous but decadent unconcern shall suddenly come war. They will suddenly be besieged and invaded by a foreign power. Their so-called impregnable fortress will be torn asunder.

Their cities and villages will be burned and plundered. There will be many thousands slain, thousands of others taken captive and deported to a far away land. Their invaders will be the cruel, blood-thirsty Assyrians who destroyed Beth-arbel (very likely the modern Kirbeth Irbid, about six miles southwest of Magdala in Galilee). Their king will be "Shalman" who is to be identified as the Shalmaneser II of Kings 17:3-6. Not even women and innocent children will be spared.

v. 15 SO SHALL BETH-EL DO UNTO YOU BECAUSE OF YOUR GREAT WICKEDNESS . . . And all this destruction and blood-letting is a consequence of Israel's stubborn rebellion against a merciful God. Their rebellion is manifested most openly at Bethel where the temple and altar to the golden-calf is located and where the nation made pilgrimage constantly to bow down before its idols. All this will bring sudden, swift ("at daybreak") destruction of the ruling monarch and of the nation. Israel will perish suddenly! She will be taken away quickly—there will be no long, extended expiration or wasting away. Her oblivion will come rapidly and completely!

QUIZ

1. How does Hosea intend Israel to "sow righteousness?"
2. How is "fallow ground" to be broken up?
3. To what extent did Israel "plow" wickedness?
4. What were the consequences of plowing wickedness?
5. Who is "Shalman" and what did he do to Israel?
6. Where is Beth-arbel?
7. How long did it take for Israel to disappear from history?

RECOGNIZING GOD'S COMPASSION REMONSTRATING—

TEXT: 11:1-9

- 1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.
- 2 The more the prophets called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.
- 3 Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

- 4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them.
- 5 They shall not return into the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be their king, because they refused to return to me.
- 6 And the sword shall fall upon their cities, and shall consume their bars, and devour them, because of their own counsels.
- 7 And my people are bent on backsliding from me: though they call them to him that is on high, none at all will exalt him.
- 8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zebolim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together.
- 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 come in wrath.

QUERIES

- a. Who is the "son" whom God called out of Egypt?
- b. Who is the prophet speaking of in v. 7, "him that is on high?"
- c. What does God's nature (v. 9) have to do with withholding wrath?

PARAPHRASE

When Israel was in its infancy as a nation I loved him and protected and delivered him from Egyptian bondage. And how did Israel repay Me? Time after time, as I sent My prophets with messages of My love and care, Israel rejected them. In fact, he hated the very sight of these well-meaning warners, preferring Baalim and carved images to their Creator and Redeemer. Yet, as a father patiently teaches his child to walk, takes him by his arms, carefully leads him until he has learned to walk safely; so I lovingly took Israel by his arms and taught him to walk in My ways; but they refused to acknowledge that I, Jehovah, was their "healer." I drew them to Me gently like men guiding and helping one another with ropes; I bound them to me only with bands of love; I eased all their burdens like a farmer pushes back the yoke upon his oxen so they may eat their food in comfort; I even fed them manna from heaven, food for which they did not work. No, they shall not return to Egypt—their destiny is far more terrible than that. The blood-thirsty Assyrians will be their taskmasters because they deliberately refused to return to My counsel. War and destruction will swirl through their cities; their enemies will crash through their gates, breaking the

cross-beams holding them shut, and trap them in their own fortresses. *They have chosen to follow their own counsel.* My people are so fastened to their backsliding ways they are, as it were, impaled upon apostasy, and they cannot get loose. Although the prophets continually call them upward to God, none of the people rise to the upward call and return to God's ways. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? shall I surrender thee, O Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? Shall I set thee as Zebaiim—as those blackened cities of the plain that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah? My heart is in turmoil; My heart is moved to its depths! You deserve, and I could justly execute, My fierce anger, but I am not going to utterly destroy you and completely withdraw My covenant promises. No, I am infinitely faithful, loving and patient. I am able to do what no man can do. I am going to ultimately execute justice and at the same time justify by My grace, those who believe and trust Me. I am going to punish sin and have mercy on penitent sinners when I fulfill My covenant.

SUMMARY

Hosea shows how the people of Israel repaid the Lord for all the proofs of His love—with ingratitude and unfaithfulness. Israel deserved total obliteration but God, because of His love and faithfulness, will perform a work that man cannot even imagine—He will both execute His justice and justify those who believe.

COMMENT

v. 1 WHEN ISRAEL WAS A CHILD, THEN I LOVED HIM, AND CALLED MY SON OUT OF EGYPT. This section of Hosea is one of the most beautiful sections of the entire Old Testament. When Hosea touches upon the love of God, he plunges us into an ocean whose depths have never been fathomed. God's love is all-embracing, all-inviting, all supporting, all-supplying. And, as Hosea so graphically indicates, God's matchless love underlies every one of His divine warnings. When such love is spurned it only makes more terrible the fearful storms of judgment when they break. Hosea had been brought into fellowship with such love through tragedy in his own home, through which tragedy, the tragedy of wounded love, there had come to him a sympathetic understanding of the Divine heart of God. The verse before us is quoted in Matthew 2:15. It is very evident that Hosea's primary reference is to Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt under the leadership of Moses (cf. Ex. 4:22-23). God, through the prophet, is appealing to Israel to remember its Heavenly Father's love demonstrated

in the past. The inspired apostle Matthew quotes Hosea and applies it to Christ's sojourn in Egypt when He was a babe in the arms of Mary. It is also possible that Hosea intended to predict the future deliverance of the covenant people from the clutches of heathen captivity (which Hosea has already typified by the use of the name of Egypt, 8:13). In any case, we have here one of the myriad-events of Israel's history which typically prophesies an event in the life of the true Israel, the true Son, the Messiah. We quote on this verse from Keil:

"The development and guidance of Israel as the people of God all pointed to Christ . . . the relation which the Lord of heaven and earth established and sustained with that nation, was a preparation for the union of God with humanity, and paved the way for the incarnation of His Son, by the fact that Israel was trained to be a vessel of divine grace. All essential factors in the history of Israel point to this as their end, and thereby become types and material prophecies of the life of Him in whom the reconciliation of man to God was to be realized, and the union of God with the human race to be developed into a personal unity."

One need only be familiar with the Epistle to the Hebrews and other New Testament references to the typical relation of Israel's history to the Messiah and His church to see that this is true!

God's relationship to Israel from her infancy through her maturity is vividly portrayed by Ezekiel (Ezek. 16:1ff).

v. 2 THE MORE THE PROPHETS CALLED THEM, THE MORE THEY WENT FROM THEM . . . A more obstinate people could not be found. Not even the pagan Ninevites in Jonah's day were this obdurate! Jesus found many of the Jews in His earthly ministry equally as unyielding (cf. Matt. 11:20-30; 12:38-42). A literal translation of this phrase might read, ". . . the more they went away from their (the prophet's) faces." In other words, the more the prophets preached to the people, the more the people hated the very sight of the prophets. The people could not stand righteousness and goodness because they loved evil (cf. John 3:18-21). Their "bent" for sinning is expressed in verse 7 below.

v. 3 YET I TAUGHT EPHRAIM TO WALK . . . The infinite kindness and patience of the Heavenly Father is likened to the tender love of an earthly parent teaching the babe to walk. Moses referred to the Father's care, ". . . in the wilderness the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son" (Deut. 1:31). The "everlasting

arms" of God support His covenant people in all ages and dispensations (cf. Deut. 33:27; Psalms 18:35-36; Isaiah 41:10; 46:4). He healed all their sorrows and wounds incurred in the bondage of Egypt by bringing them prosperity and peace. But they did not reciprocate.

v. 4 I DREW THEM WITH CORDS OF A MAN, WITH BANDS OF LOVE . . . God draws with love—He does not drive or force obedience. Even the "new commandment" of Jesus, the command to love one another, receives its prompting from Jesus' own example of love towards those whom He commands to love (John 13:34-35; 15:12-17). "Cords of a man" is evidently a phrase intended to convey much the same meaning as our modern "tied to her apron strings." Lange describes them: ". . . such as those with which men, especially children, would be led, opposed to ropes, with which beasts are tied." God not only draws with love—He also binds men to Himself by the force of love. It was "the love of Christ" which *constrained* the apostle Paul (cf. II Cor. 5:14). It is only through being bound by the "bond of peace" that we are able to maintain the unity of the Spirit. The "peace" referred to, of course, is the peace Christ accomplished between God and man through His loving sacrifice—so it is the love of Christ, after all, that binds us to Him. Time after time the saints of the Old Testament had the love of God demonstrated to them. God eased the yoke from off their jaws. As a merciful farmer would push the yoke back off the cheeks of his oxen in order that they might eat without discomfort, so God relieved one burden after another for the children of Israel. Not only that, He fed them with manna from heaven and caused them to prosper when they did not deserve it. When one thinks about it, this is the proto-type of the Prodigal Son immortalized in the parable told by Jesus (cf. Lk. 15:11ff). It is the same experience many an earthly father has had. A father woos his son by love; he seeks to bind his son to him by acts of love (even when disciplining); the father relieves every burden from the son it is humanly possible for him to relieve; the father gives to the son even when the son does not deserve it. And so often the son reciprocates with self-willed rebellion.

v. 5 THEY SHALL NOT RETURN . . . INTO EGYPT . . . BUT . . . ASSYRIAN SHALL BE THEIR KING . . . There is no contradiction between this verse and Hosea 8:13! In 8:13 Hosea is using the land of Egypt to typify the bondage which Israel was about to suffer in her imminent captivity. In 11:5 Hosea states unequivocally that that captivity will take place in Assyria. Thus the present verse must indicate that some of the people of Hosea's day had suggested a return to political

paternalism with Egypt. Some felt that they might woo Egypt into helping them against Assyria. And being a satellite of Egypt would be better than facing possible military confrontation with Assyria. But Hosea tells them plainly that they will be ruled by the terrifying Assyrians. And the reason is stated simply. Because they would not repent of their self-willed idolatry and return to worshipping and serving Jehovah. There are no humanistic, sociological, psychological, economic, cyclic-historical explanations offered by the preacher of God. It was simply that the people of God had broken their covenant relationship with Him—they did not obey His word.

v. 6 AND THE SWORD SHALL FALL UPON THEIR CITIES . . . The word translated "fall" means literally "to circulate." The swords of the Assyrian soldiers would make the round of the cities of Israel. "Bars" or the large crossbeam-bolts used to bolt their huge city gates would pose no problem to the Assyrians—they would use their war machines and break through the gates. All of this is to come upon Israel "because of their own counsels." They trusted in their own wisdom rather than give heed to the counsel of God (cf. *Psa.* 127:1; *Prov.* 29:8; *Eccl.* 9:13-18). No matter how rich or powerful a nation may become it does not afford security. Why? Because this universe is ruled and operated on a basis of moral law. God created and now sustains the universe and every event within it by principles of justice and righteousness. Any individual or nation that chooses to rebel against these principles must be prepared to suffer the inevitable consequences. It makes no difference how well educated, technologically advanced, economically solvent a people may be, when they trust in their own counsels to the exclusion of God's counsel (the Bible), they dash themselves to pieces upon the immutable sovereignty of God's moral laws.

v. 7 AND MY PEOPLE ARE BENT ON BACKSLIDING FROM ME . . . The word "bent" is literally "fastened upon," or "impaled" upon apostasy as something is impaled upon a stake, so that it cannot get loose. The people of Israel were "transfixed," or "hypnotized," as it were, by sin, and they could not seem to give a thought to anything else! They were fascinated by the thrill of it—by its deadliness. They were deceived by sin (cf. *Heb.* 3:13). How much this is like so many people today. There is not a person living that has not been fascinated or deceived by some form of sin or another at one time in his life! Sin is like that! Man, without the word of God in his heart, is like that! (cf. *Deut.* 6:1-6; *Psa.* 119:11). Although God sent His servants, the prophets, to call the people upward toward God, it seemed as if not one person in the whole nation listened to their preaching.

v. 8-9 HOW SHALL I GIVE THEE UP, EPHRAIM? . . . MY HEART IS TURNED WITHIN ME . . . I WILL NOT EXECUTE THE FIERCENESS OF MINE ANGER . . . Admah and Zeboiim were the cities of the plain that were destroyed when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. In light of Israel's deliberate choice to defy God's moral reign, there is only one thing to do. By all that is just and right, God may give them up, abandon them. This is what man would do. But God is not man (cf. I Sam. 15:29; Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6). There was something holding Jehovah back from executing His judgment to the uttermost. Three times God repeats, "I will not . . . I will not . . . I will not." He cannot utterly abandon them, although they deserve it. And what was staying the hand of God—what kept Him from destroying Israel completely? The answer comes, "My heart is turned within me . . . My compassions are kindled together." It was in the nature of God, not in anything that Israel had done. The omniscient God looked down the corridors of time and saw possibilities in a remnant of Israel that men would be unable to see. He saw what this remnant would be—this "son" whom He had called out of Egypt and nursed and patiently fed. Because of what God is, He sees every human being and their potentialities and possibilities, and in spite of their many backslidings, He is still longsuffering, not willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9). The secret of God's mercy is found in the words, "My heart is turned within Me." That is a very expressive word. Turned about, or turned over, literally; but in use it is the word that describes upheaval, turmoil. Listen. God says My heart is in turmoil; My heart is moved to its depths, My heart! Again, "My compassions are kindled together," and the word "compassion" there does not mean sorrow or pity, but *solace*. G. Campbell Morgan paraphrases thus: "My compassions are in spasm, deeply affected." We are in the presence here of the perfect love of God—a love that is not the mere sentimental outgoing of an emotional nature, evanescent and passing; but love that becomes an agony; love that becomes a tragedy.

How it is that the perfect, immutable, holy God could first pronounce judgment upon Israel and then say, "I will not?" We take the liberty of quoting from G. Campbell Morgan's book, "Hosea, The Heart and Holiness of God," published by Revell:

"Here, all mere intellectuality breaks down; here is something very strange . . . He says I will not give you up; what is the reason? Because of His heart and His compassions? Yes, but go on. 'I am God, and not man,' and I am 'the Holy One in the midst of thee.' There is no lowering of

the standard of moral requirement. The Holy One can be compassionate and remain holy because He is God, and not man. Things are possible to Him that are not possible to man.

"That is as far as we get in Hosea. It is a long way, but it leaves us asking questions; and filled with wonder, we do not understand it . . . A wonder and a mystery of righteousness and compassion are seen working together . . . When God, in spite of sin, says, How can I give you up? My heart is stirred, My compassions are stirred, but I am holy; how can I give you up? and yet says, I will not give you up, I will not, I will not, we are in the presence of some possibility wholly of God. It must have been a great word for trembling and troubled hearts even then.

"But our Bible does not end in Hosea. The name Hosea meant salvation . . . There came One in the fulness of time, whose Name was Jehovah and Hosea: Jesus . . . we find out at last in Jesus, how God can be just, and the Justifier of the sinning soul.

"This way of accomplishment Hosea did not see. In communion with God he had learned facts about the Divine Nature which seemed to be conflicting, and he delivered his message and uttered the words; but at last He came, Who is the Brightness of the Father's glory and the express Image of His Person, and in Him I see how righteousness and peace meet together, and God can be just and the Justifier.

"Through Him the claims of justice which are against my soul are all met. Through Him the glory of holiness is maintained; for His redemption of the human soul is not a pity that agrees to ignore sin; but a power that cancels it and sets free from its dominion. Through Him the loved one is regained, restored, renewed, and all the lights that flash and gleam upon the prophetic page, astonishing my soul, come into focused unity in Jesus. God says of you, of me, 'How can I give thee up? I will not . . . I will not . . . I will not.'

"But how? 'I am God and not man, I am the Holy One.' Through Christ He has made the way by which sinning souls can be conformed to His image, His likeness, His will. The Gospel is gleaming in Hosea. It is shining in full radiance in Christ."

This is the very essence of the gospel! The good news is that God is both just and the Justifier (Rom. 3:21-26). In other words, God

keeps His word to punish sin (this He did in His Son, Jesus Christ, and we participated in it vicariously) and He at the same time forgives the sinner who, by faith, acknowledges and accepts and acts upon Christ's death in his place. Christ became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (cf. II Cor. 5:14-21). Christ died for us all. He became our substitute, our ransom; therefore we all "died" in Him.

What God did in reality and spiritually in Christ, He did typically and temporally with Israel. The remnant of Israel, saved by the justifying mercy of God as it exercised its faith and responded to this mercy, typified all the covenant people of God (from all nations) in the Messianic age. Salvation is still by the grace and mercy of God to all who will respond by an exercise of faith. But that faith must be exercised in conformity to God's revealed plan found now, for all nations and races, in the New Testament.

QUIZ

1. Where is Hosea 11:1 repeated in the New Testament?
2. How is Hosea 11:1 a prophecy connected to the Messiah?
3. Why did the people of Israel hate the sight of the prophets?
4. What is the meaning of the phrase "cords of a man?"
5. Why is the behavior of the Israelites like the Prodigal Son?
6. What reasons are given by Hosea for the imminent judgment of impenitent Israel?
7. How deeply involved in sin and backsliding was this nation?
8. How could God say in one breath He was going to punish Israel and then say He would not give them up?
9. How is God able to be both just and the Justifier of the penitent?

REMONSTRATING— SEE JUDAH'S UNFAITHFULNESS

TEXT: 11:10-12

- 10 They shall walk after Jehovah, who will roar like a lion; for he will roar, and the children shall come trembling from the west.
- 11 They shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria; and I will make them to dwell in their houses, saith Jehovah.
- 12 Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the Holy One.

QUERIES

- a. When will Jehovah "roar" and why will the children then come?
- b. Did any of the children of Israel go into captivity to Egypt?
- c. Why does God point Israel to Judah for an example of faithfulness?

PARAPHRASE

When the Lord turns His pity towards the covenant people once more and utters His loud, far-reaching call, the covenant people will come from all quarters of the earth, swiftly, and God will fulfill His covenant and give them the Messianic blessings which He has promised. Ephraim has surrounded me with hypocrisy *and attacks Me on every side with deceit*, for while claiming to be My people, they are idolators. And Judah is also unbridled and unruly towards Me.

SUMMARY

God is going to fulfill His covenant and give a faithful remnant the Messianic blessings in spite of the fact that most of both Israel and Judah are unfaithful.

COMMENT

v. 10 THEY SHALL WALK AFTER JEHOVAH, WHO WILL ROAR LIKE A LION . . . The emphasis in this verse is on Jehovah's roaring! The phrase is repeated to indicate that Jehovah's call will be the cause of the people's coming to walk after Him. To "walk after Jehovah" means to be converted—to trust, obey and worship Jehovah (cf. Deut. 13:5; I Kings 14:8). The Lord will do His roaring from "Zion (cf. *our comments* on Joel 3:16-17; Amos 1:2), which is, of course a prophecy of the sending forth of the gospel from Jerusalem to all those who will hear and become sons of the covenant in the Messianic age. This verse, then, is Messianic in its fulfillment, as we shall see by its context.

v. 11 THEY SHALL COME . . . AND I WILL MAKE THEM TO DWELL . . . They will come from the east and the west (Egypt and Assyria). Keil says, "out of all quarters of the globe," (cf. Isa. 11:11). We wish to quote from Lange here:

"A return to Jehovah is then announced as the fruit of this compassion, and the removal of the state of subjection to punishment by a restoration to the inheritance they had trifled away is promised as its manifestation . . .

"As to the fulfillment of this promise, see the remarks on chapters 1 and 2. It may suffice to repeat here that we are not to hold to any fulfillment which would contradict the actual course of God's revelation. *Hence we must not think of a future return of the external Israel into their own land from Assyria*, if it were only from the consideration that Assyria exists no longer, and Israel is no longer in bondage to such a nation, and we cannot take the one (Israel, the Holy Land, the return) as literal, and the other (Assyria, captivity) as figurative. We must rather say, from the stand-point of the fulfillment of the Old Testament, i.e., from the stand-point of the New Testament, and in accordance with the actual course of events: *the compassionate mercy of God towards his faithless people*, which the Prophet sees win the victory over wrath, *has been revealed in Christ*—but still as being far greater he sees it; what is clear to him is only the *skia* (shadow) of that which in Christ has actually occurred, and what is still going on in the forgiveness of sin and deliverance from its curse through free grace." (Italics and parenthesis ours).

This is as definitely a Messianic passage from Hosea as is chapters 1 and 2. Keil says, "The fulfillment takes place in the last days, when Israel as a nation shall enter the kingdom of God."

v. 12 EPHRAIM COMPASSETH ME ABOUT WITH FALSEHOOD . . . BUT JUDAH YET RULETH . . . This verse, in the Hebrew Bible, is verse 1 of the 12th chapter of Hosea. It was made to be verse 12 of the 11th chapter only in the English versions. The emphasis of the verse is the unfaithfulness of both northern and southern kingdoms contrasted with God's faithfulness. Israel was full of hypocrisy. She claimed to belong to Jehovah, pretended to worship Jehovah, but turned right into wrong and worshipped idols. Calvin wrote, "The Israelites had acted unfaithfully towards God, and resorted to deceits . . . just as a man might surround his enemy with a great army, so had they gathered together innumerable frauds, with which they attacked God on every side." Like an unfaithful wife Israel still demands the Lord's protection and support, while her every profession of love is a lie! Judah is no better! The word *hiphil* as it is in the Hebrew text here means "to cause to ramble about . . . to be unbridled or unruly, to rove unrestrained." Judah runs loose, unbridled, following the dictates of her own unrestrained wantonness. Both seem

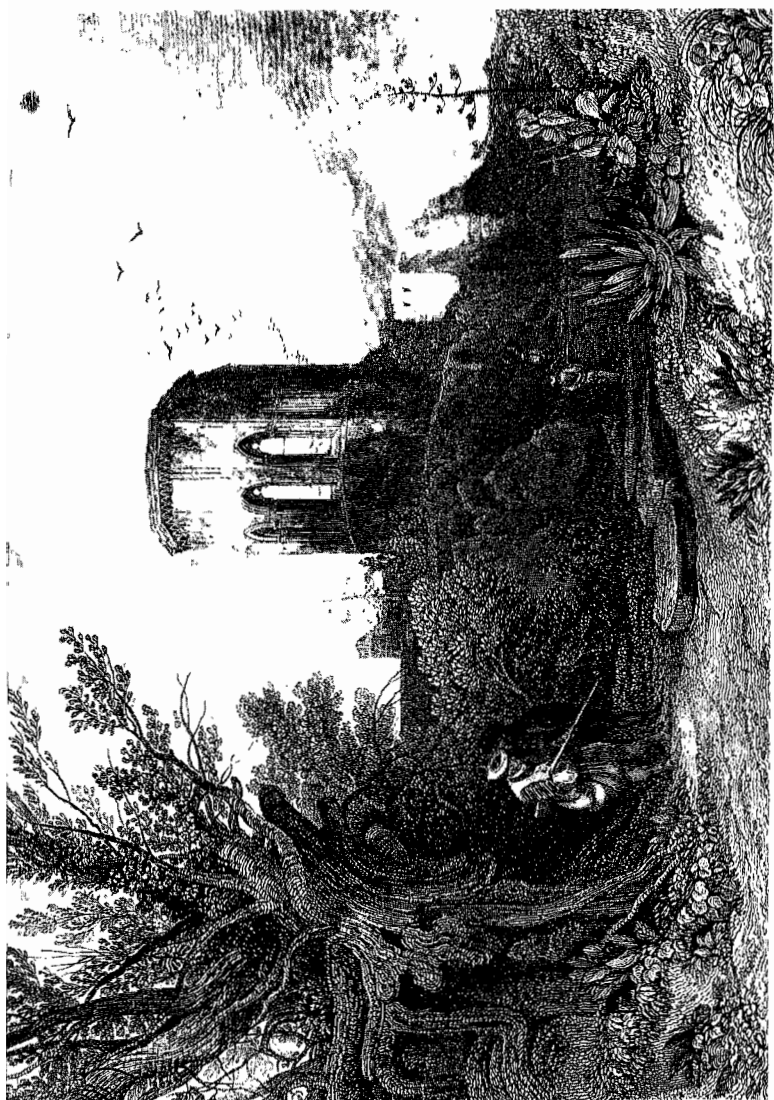
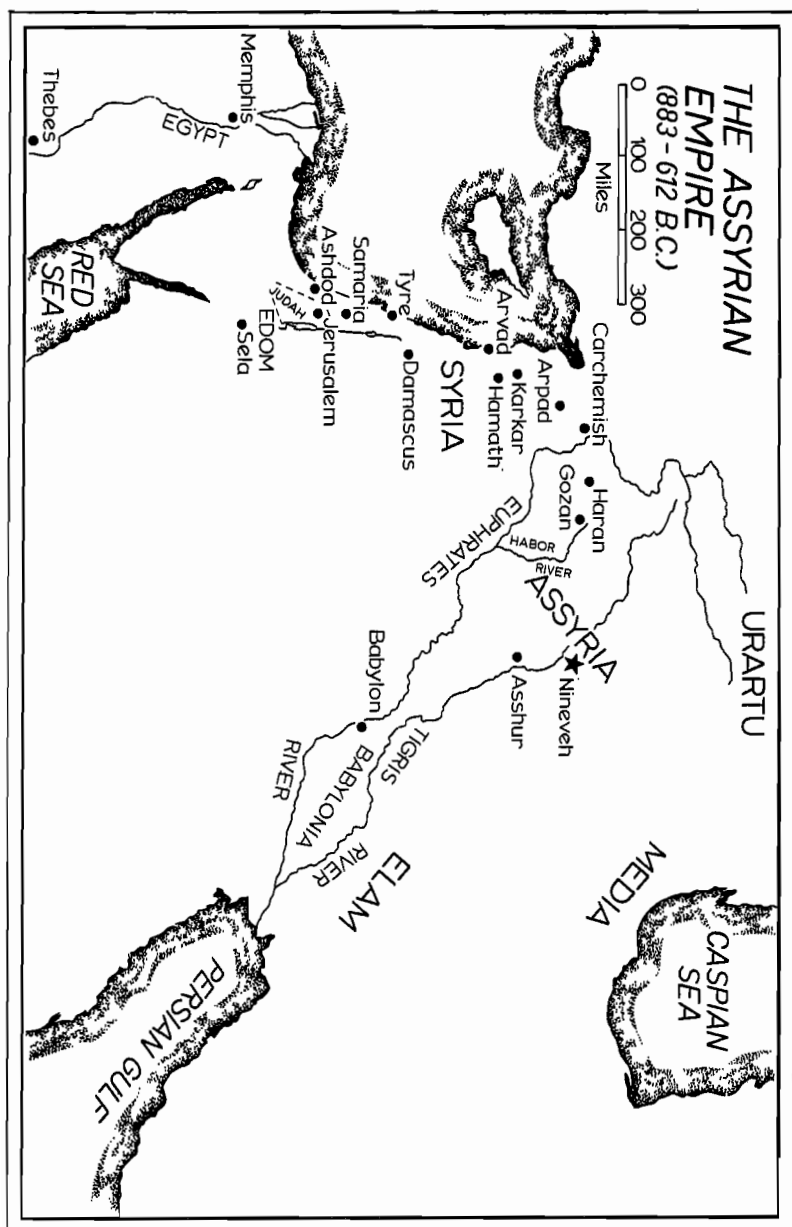


Illustration by J. Roberts. Engraved by E. Hughes.

Engraved by E. Hughes.

SAMARIA.



unconcerned that it is the covenant of the ever Holy, Faithful One they are breaking (cf. Lev. 19:2; 21:8; Isa. 6:3; Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29). Jehovah does not change. He will keep His word—His threats as well as His promises!

QUIZ

1. What does "walking after Jehovah" mean?
2. Why do we say this passage is a Messianic passage?
3. What is wrong with the English version of verse 12? Two things!

LOVE REBUKING

REQUITTING— EPHRAIM HAS PROVOKED

TEXT: 12:1-6

- 1 Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he continually multiplieth lies and desolation; and they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt.
- 2 Jehovah hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.
- 3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel; and in his manhood he had power with God:
- 4 yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him at Beth-el, and there he spake with us,
- 5 even Jehovah, the God of hosts; Jehovah is his memorial name.
- 6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep kindness and justice, and wait for thy God continually.

QUERIES

- a. When did Israel make a covenant with Assyria?
- b. Why refer to Jacob's birth and manhood?
- c. What is Jehovah's memorial name?

PARAPHRASE

Israel is fattening itself for the slaughter by vainly seeking to sustain itself on deceitful military alliances with Assyria and Egypt. Judah, too, will reap the destruction it has sown by sinning against

Jehovah—Jehovah will render justice. If this covenant people had only followed the example of their forefather, Jacob! Jacob was so zealous to appropriate God's promised blessing that while he was still in the womb of his mother he struggled in order to obtain the spiritual birthright by grasping the heel of the first-born, Esau. Then, when Jacob was full-grown, he struggled with all his might, wrestling with God and, through intense prayer and supplication, he conquered and won the blessing of Jehovah. And so it was that Jacob found favor in the heart of God at Bethel. Jacob's exemplary faith and God's covenant blessing there at Bethel applies to us, for we are the children of Jacob, if we follow in the steps of Jacob's faith. We may have confidence that God will bless our faithfulness as He did Jacob's, because He is the God who commands all the forces of heaven, both visible and invisible and rules the universe with unrestricted omnipotence. He is the Great, I AM! He is the Rock of our salvation, and besides Him there is no god! Therefore, O Israel, repent! Return, by faith, to a vital, meaningful fellowship with God. Let this fellowship be expressed in your every-day living through kindness, justice and longsuffering, by faith in the faithfulness of God!

SUMMARY

Israel and Judah's sin brings the just punishment of the faithful God upon this generation of covenant people. The example of their forefather, Jacob, should have led them to lives of faith and righteousness.

COMMENT

V. 1 EPHRAIM FEEDETH ON WIND . . . MULTIPLIETH LIES . . . MAKE A COVENANT WITH ASSYRIA The double indictment of God continues from the last verse of the preceding chapter (11:12). The prophet continues his pronouncement of judgment upon both Israel and Judah.

The word "feedeth" is literally, "*pastures*" or "shepherds." Israel strives eagerly after, or pursues, what is empty or vain. The east wind in Palestine is a fierce, hot wind blowing in off the Arabian desert which dries up everything in its path and makes desolate. Israel pursues that which will bring about its own destruction. Israel is fattening itself for slaughter by living on deceit and lies. During the reign of Hoshea (731-722 B.C.) Israel attempted to liberate itself from the oppression of Assyria by means of a treaty with Egypt (II Kings 17:4). Hoshea sent splendid presents (perhaps olive oil)

to the king of Egypt, to bring him over to his side, and induce him to send him assistance against the king of Assyria, although Hoshea had bound himself by a sacred treaty to submit to the sovereignty of the latter. Undoubtedly there were lies and deceitful arrangements made on both sides, for in order to keep up appearances of alliance with both sides (each bitter rivals for world supremacy), Israel would have to resort to deception, falsehood and intrigue. Such a policy could only end in self destruction and desolation. Such duplicity not only aroused the wrath of their allies, but it was also open rebellion toward God who had demonstrated over and over again His faithfulness in giving them victory, protecting and sustaining them. Furthermore God had commanded that they make no such alliances.

V. 2 JEHOVAH HATH ALSO A CONTROVERSY WITH JUDAH . . .

Judah too is condemned. Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah and during both their lives the good king Uzziah king of Judah, had died to be succeeded by Jotham and then Ahaz, both faithless and unrighteous men who led the people of Judah into the same kind of sin as Israel had been led into. Judah will know God's holy justice. She will get what she deserves. Whatever Judah has sown, so shall she reap.

V. 3-5 IN THE WOMB HE TOOK HIS BROTHER BY THE HEEL . . .

HAD POWER . . . PREVAILED . . . FOUND HIM AT BETH-EL . . . THERE HE SPAKE WITH US, EVEN JEHOVAH . . . "Jacob," evidently referring to all the covenant people (both Israel and Judah), deserves God's *justice*. But, "Jacob" (both nations of covenant people) may have God's *mercy* if they would exercise the same zealous faith to obtain it that their progenitor, Jacob, exercised in obtaining the birthright and the subsequent covenant blessings from Jehovah. Jacob's conduct in obtaining the birthright is definitely held up here as a lesson of earnest striving for the spiritual treasures God has to offer the faithful and diligent. Not only his diligence in obtaining the birthright (whereas Esau, to whom it could have belonged, despised it and preferred physical food), but his persistence and endurance when he was tested by God obtained for him a covenant blessing from God. The test mentioned is apparently the "wrestling with God" (Gen. 32:22ff). It was here Jacob made supplication with loud crying and tears and was heard for his godly fear (cf. Heb. 5:7-8 where the true Jacob wrestled and prevailed). Thus humbly, but persistently, Jacob "wrestled" with God in prayer (probably wrestling more with "self" than with God) and won the victory. As proof of Jacob's victory, Hosea cites Jacob's experience recorded in Genesis 35:9ff where, in Bethel, Jacob not only had his own

name Israel confirmed, but the promise made to his forefather, Abraham, was given to him and he was declared to be the chosen of God.

What God said to Jacob there at Bethel, God meant to be applied to all of Jacob's posterity, the spiritual seed of Abraham. This means, of course, all Jews descended from Jacob until the time of Christ and all Christians afterward who would walk in the same steps of faith as Jacob (and Abraham) walked (cf. Rom. 4:11-17, etc.). All such faithful are members of the kingdom of God and recipients of the covenant promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (which promises find their reality, full-blossomed perfection, in Christ and His church).

The phrase "... God of hosts" is intended to portray the God of Israel as sovereign of the universe. He commands the forces of the whole universe, whether visible or invisible. He is omnipotent! This is the God with whom Israel has to do! (cf. I Sam. 1:3; 17:45; II Kings 6:16; II Chron. 32:7; Rom. 8:31-39). We take this opportunity to quote at length from *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, by Merrill C. Tenney, on the article entitled "JEHOVAH:"

"JEHOVAH . . . the English rendering of the Hebrew tetragram YHWH, one of the names of God (Exod. 17:15). Its original pronunciation is unknown. The Jews took seriously the third commandment . . . (Exod. 20:7) and so, to keep from speaking the holy name carelessly, around 300 B.C. they decided not to pronounce it at all; but whenever in reading they came to it they spoke the word *adonai* which means 'Lord.' This usage was carried into the LXX where the sacred name is rendered 'Kurios,' i.e. Lord. Consequently in the KJV, Lord occurs instead of Jehovah, whereas ASV renders the name 'Jehovah.' When the vowel points were added to the Hebrew consonantal text, the Massoretes (Jewish scribes) inserted into the Hebrew consonantal text the vowels for *adonia*. The sacred name is derived from the verb 'to be,' and so implies that God is eternal ('Before Abraham was, I AM) and that he is the Absolute, i.e. the Uncaused One. The name 'Jehovah' belongs especially to Him when He is dealing with His own, while 'God' is used more when dealing with Gentiles. See for instance II Chronicles 18:31 . . .

"There are ten combinations of the word 'Jehovah' in the O.T. . . . *Jehovah-ropheka*, 'Jehovah that healeth thee' (Exod. 15:26); *Jehovah-meqaddeshkem*, 'Jehovah who sanctifieth you' (Exod. 31:13); *Jehovah-tsabaot*, 'Jehovah of hosts' (I Sam. 1:3); *Jehovah-elyon*, 'Jehovah Most High' (Ps. 7:17); *Jehovah-*

roi, 'Jehovah, my Shepherd' (Ps. 23:1); *Jehovah-jireh*, 'Jehovah will provide' (Gen. 22:14); *Jehovah-nissi*, 'Jehovah is my banner' (Exod. 17:15); *Jehovah-shalom*, 'Jehovah is peace' (Judg. 6:24); *Jehovah-shammah*, 'Jehovah is there' (Ezek. 48:35m); and *Jehovah-tsidkenu*, 'Jehovah is our righteousness' (Jer. 33:6,16)."

Jehovah gave His name as a memorial (cf. Ex. 3:15; Ps. 102:12; 135:13). This means, of course, that Jehovah was the name by which Israel was to remember God. The name, "I AM THAT I AM," was to cause Israel to recognize and remember that their God was Self-existent, Eternal, Unchangeable and Immutable. He is from "everlasting to everlasting" (cf. Gen. 21:33; Deut. 33:27; Isa. 9:6; 26:4; 40:28; 63:16; Jer. 10:10; Ps. 90:2; 93:2; Micah 5:2). Such a God would never let one of His promises go unfulfilled! His word is inviolate! His name memorialized in the minds of the faithful all the past historical demonstrations of His unchangeableness and fulfilled promises.

V. 6 THEREFORE TURN THOU TO THY GOD: KEEP KINDNESS AND JUSTICE . . . The "therefore" refers back to the immediately preceding verses. These six verses form a very concise homily in logical sequence. First, the sins of the covenant people and the warning of judgment; second, the example of Jacob's faithfulness and God's blessing of Jacob; third, the nature of God; finally, the conclusion, an exhortation to repent based on the three reasons above. The main reason for repentance is to be found in God's nature, for each of the above points have their bases in the nature of God's unchangeableness. This is the leading idea of all the prophetic literature, indeed of the entire Bible—THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN KEEPING HIS WORD!! On the basis of that faithfulness man may respond toward the will of such a God in full trust and faith and enjoy complete peace and harmony in fellowship with the Unchangeable God! In a world of dissolution, disappointment, inconstancy, temporalness, what a blessed peace comes to the soul who trusts in a God who has historically demonstrated His Immutability, His eternal love! The fruits of such trust are kindness and justice.

QUIZ

1. How did Ephraim "feed" on wind?
2. What connection did Israel's alliances with Assyria and Egypt have with the "multiplication of lies and desolation?"
3. Why was Judah to be punished?

4. How does Jacob's diligence to obtain the birthright become an example to Israel?
5. What does the name "Jehovah" mean?
6. Upon what basis does Hosea call for the covenant people to turn to God?
7. What should be the fruits of their turning?

REQUITING— EPHRAIM HAS PROVOKED

TEXT: 12:7-14

- 7 He is a trafficker, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.
- 8 And Ephraim said, Surely I am become rich, I have found me wealth: in all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that were sin.
- 9 But I am Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt; I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents, as in the days of the solemn feast.
- 10 I have also spoken unto the prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and by the ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes.
- 11 Is Gilead iniquity? they are altogether false; in Gilgal they sacrifice bullocks; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field.
- 12 And Jacob fled into the field of Aram, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.
- 13 And by a prophet Jehovah brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.
- 14 Ephraim hath provoked to anger most bitterly; therefore shall his blood be left upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

QUERIES

- a. How is Israel a "trafficker?"
- b. When did Israel "again . . . dwell in tents?"
- c. Why mention Jacob's servitude for a wife?

PARAPHRASE

Israel has become Canaan, seeking its advantage in deceit and wrong because, like a fraudulent Canaanite merchant, it has attempted to become great by cheating. Israel is even proud of its unrighteousness, rationalizing that the wealth they have acquired justifies the means taken

to obtain it. Let Me remind you, I am the God who led you from Egypt and to this moment I have been the source of all your prosperity. It appears that the only way you will recognize My sovereignty is for Me once again lead you through a wilderness experience where you are totally dependent upon Me. I proved to you over and over that I am the source of your strength by sending prophets to make known My gracious will and exhort you to repentance. I have sent the prophets to preach and teach in every way possible to lead you back to My will. The whole land, from Gilead on the east, to Gilgal on the west, is rotten. Its spiritual worthlessness and wickedness will result in physical destruction and oblivion. I did not even make Jacob's lot as easy as I have made yours. Jacob became a fugitive, served virtually in slavery many years to obtain a wife, and worked at the menial task of tending cattle. Contrast Jacob's lonely flight with your being led by a prophet; contrast Jacob's guarding of the cattle with your being guarded by Me through the prophet Moses. Israel, your failure to remember this and your rebellion against My loving kindnesses has provoked Me to righteous anger against you. You stand guilty and condemned for all your violent, evil, bloody crimes. You will not repent. Therefore justice will be done. Your sentence will be hastily executed.

SUMMARY

Israel's pride has caused her to delude herself. She has forgotten, deliberately, that Jehovah is the source of her very being and of her present wealth. God prepares to teach her again to trust in Him.

COMMENT

v. 7-8 HE IS A TRAFFICKER . . . AND . . . SAID, SURELY I AM BECOME RICH . . . FIND IN ME NO . . . SIN . . . The ASV has in the margin of verse 7, "As for Canaan . . ." and also in the margin, "a Canaanite . . ." The word translated *trafficker* is literally, *merchant*, which is the common, or appellative signification of the Hebrew word in the text here. Israel, far from being like the spiritually-minded Jacob, is like the crafty, cheating Canaanite (Phoenician) merchant or trader. The picture we get of Israel here and throughout the history of the northern kingdom is that her driving ambition was to become wealthy and powerful and she was not concerned with the ethics she used in attaining her goal. In fact, verse 8 represents Israel as an ethical relativist. She believes that the end justifies the means. She thinks she is rich and powerful, and this, after all, is what counts. So who would believe she has committed any wrong that could be called a sin. All's

fair in love and war and making money—according to Israel; but not according to God's commandments given to Israel. Cheating and robbery were strictly forbidden (cf. Lev. 19:36; Deut. 25:13-16; Lev. 6:2-4; Deut. 24:14).

Ethical relativism (sometimes known as "Pragmatism") is the philosophy which says, "Whatever works is true and right." Since one thing or one action may work profitably one day and not the next, truth and right can never be absolute. Truth may change at any moment. It becomes relative to every situation. Of course, if there is no absolute standard of right and wrong then each individual becomes the arbitrary judge of what is right and wrong for what may work for one person does not necessarily work for another. Furthermore, who makes the decision as to what "works?" In other words, is material prosperity the highest "what works" to aim for? This is what Israel had decided. What else can man conclude when he will not accept the divine revelation from God that there are spiritual things much more important? Actually, as Paul says in I Corinthians 15, if Christ is not raised—if the apostolic message is not divinely authoritative, therefore false—man is silly to practice any religion or any code of ethics except hedonism (self-indulgence, self-interest). But, on the other hand, if the apostolic message (and we should include the entire Bible) is an authoritatively revealed will of an Omnipotent God, there are values much higher than "things."

Israel's problem is well summed up in the problem the church of Laodicea. Cf. Revelation 3:14ff: ". . . Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see."

v. 9-10 . . . I WILL YET AGAIN MAKE THEE TO DWELL IN TENTS . . . The people have deluded themselves into believing they are responsible for their own prosperity. God reminds them, in the first phrase of this verse, that He has been Israel's source of origin (when He formed them into a nation and rescued them from Egyptian slavery) and He has been the source of all their successes since that time until the present. Since they will not listen to mere words spoken by a prophet, God will cause them to experience once again a period of dislocation, wandering and testing through the captivity. This experience has as its goal calling Israel to penitent trust in Jehovah as they had in

the wilderness under Moses. All their riches, power and even their land will be taken away. Perhaps then they will repent and turn to God in full trust—since they will have found there is no security in wealth or power. The "dwelling in tents" refers to the ceremonies connected with the Feast of Tabernacles (Num. 14:33) which was to call to their remembrance the shielding and sheltering care and protection of God in their wandering through the great and terrible wilderness (cf. Lev. 23:42-43).

In verse 10 God reminds them of all the intermediaries He sent to lead them, admonish them, teach them and care for them like shepherds tenderly caring for a flock of helpless sheep. The prophets, from Moses to Malachi, were given and used every means at God's command to turn the people of Israel in God's direction. Visions, miracles, predictions of the future and expositions of the Law were multiplied. Vividly arresting figures of speech, symbols, parables, metaphors, allegories, types, object-lessons were all used. These people could never claim lack of quantity or quality of communication as an excuse before God's judgment bar. And, as the writer of the Hebrew epistle puts it, ". . . if the message declared by angles was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will."

v. 11 IS GILEAD INIQUITY? . . . IN GILGAL THEY SACRIFICE BULLOCKS . . . Gilead and Gilgal represent the two halves of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Gilead represents the land to the east of the Jordan which belongs to Israel and Gilgal represents the land to the west of the Jordan. The word translated "iniquity" is literally *worthlessness*. The moral decay of the whole nation, brought on by idolatry, will lead to physical disruption and destruction. The predictive present is used in this verse. The prophet looks into the future and sees it as present—"their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field." This is what is to happen to their altars to idolatry.

v. 12 JACOB FLED INTO THE FIELD OF ARAM . . . Earlier Jacob was used as an example of the diligence for spiritual things which God expected Israel to imitate. Now Jacob's long years as a fugitive, slaving away at such menial tasks as herding cattle, all the distress and affliction he suffered in those years, in made to contrast with the many years of prosperity, peace and security the nation of Israel has enjoyed under the protection of God. Jacob had endured his affliction and served the

Lord faithfully and in gratitude. Israel, the nation, instead of thanking the Lord for their comfort and prosperity by love and faithful devotedness to Him, spurned His love, and went after other gods.

v. 13 . . . AND BY A PROPHET WAS HE PRESERVED . . . No such helpers were given to Jacob. God sent prophets to light the paths of Israel, the nation, by the proclamation of His Word. God demonstrated visibly, many times over, by miracles and predictions through the prophets, His power and His purposes. But it was not given to Jacob, to such an extent, to have the power and purpose of God demonstrated visibly. The nation had privileges and possibilities far beyond those of their "father" Jacob. God had every right to expect of the nation at least as much faithfulness as Jacob had manifested—even more. "To whom soever much is given, of him shall much be required."

v. 14 EPHRAIM HATH PROVOKED TO ANGER MOST BITTERLY . . . Israel's indifference to God's love gave provocation to God's righteous indignation. Unrequited love justly deserves anger. The perfect love of God, when spurned and mocked, merits perfect justice and righteous retribution. If men are moral, if God is moral, if the universe is governed by moral principles, then to repudiate the loving, protecting, sustaining will of the omnipotent God is to morally and justly deserve and deliberately choose the only reasonable and logical alternative—the indignation and wrath of the One spurned. A deliberate, moral choice of wrong can only result in deliberate, moral rejection of good. The crucial question is: Has it been sufficiently demonstrated, historically and pragmatically, or empirically, that God exists, that the Bible is His inerrantly recorded Will for man, that Jesus Christ is His Son, and does the Bible claim to be the exclusive and ultimate "Good?" The answer is now, and was then, unequivocally, YES! Therefore, man, the moral creature, must make his own decision. He is "master of his fate." If man decides against the empirically demonstrated and exclusively ultimate Good, "his blood shall be left upon him." If man will not, by faith and obedience toward God, allow God to forgive his sins, then man must pay the penalty for his own sins. If man chooses evil and rebellion against God (which makes man to be in disharmony with his created purpose) then this is what God will permit man to have—for all eternity.

QUIZ

1. Why use the word "trafficker" in place of "Canaanite?" in verse 7.
2. What was Israel's ethical philosophy?
3. What is "ethical relativism?" Do people practice this today?

4. Why is ethical relativism impractical?
5. How and why did God intend to "make them to dwell in tents" again?
6. How extensive were the opportunities for Israel to know the will of God?
7. Does the person who deliberately chooses evil deserve the wrath of God? Why?

REQUITING— GOD WILL PUNISH

TEXT: 13:1-8

- 1 When Ephraim spake, there was trembling; he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.
- 2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them the work of craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.
- 3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the dew that passeth early away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing-floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.
- 4 Yet I am Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no god but me, and besides me there is no savior.
- 5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.
- 6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me.
- 7 Therefore am I unto them as a lion; as a leopard will I watch by the way;
- 8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart; and there will I devour them like a lioness; the wild beast shall tear them.

QUERIES

- a. Why did they "kiss the calves?"
- b. How is Israel to be "like the dew that passeth early away?"
- c. What is the "caul of their heart?"

PARAPHRASE

It used to be when Israel spoke, her neighbor-nations trembled because Israel was powerful and influential. But Israel let his pride destroy him. He spurned Jehovah God and rebelled against Him, wor-

shipping pagan Baalism instead, and as a result, Israel began to die both spiritually and physically. And now the people disobey more and more. They melt their silver so that unprincipled silversmiths may mold it into pagan idols according to the desires of the people. Then the people say, Bring sacrifices to these gods—how utterly stupid and wicked—men worshipping and kissing calves! Because of such wickedness Israel will perish and vanish from national existence as quickly as the morning clouds, or the dew, or the chaff, or the smoke that rises from the cooking fires. In contrast to the impotency and stupidity of your idol-gods, I AM THE ETERNAL JEHOVAH-GOD. You have every reason to know Me for I delivered you by signs and wonders from the land of Egypt. You have been given all the evidence you need to know that I am the only God—I am the only One who can save you. I saved, protected and led you in the wilderness; I delivered you time after time from plagues, droughts and famines. But when I brought you into the land flowing with milk and honey and prospered you—when you had eaten and were filled, you allowed your heart to be lifted up in pride and you forgot Me, and I specifically warned you, through Moses, not to let this happen. Therefore I am going to come upon this people like wild beasts come upon flocks of sheep. I will tear this nation to pieces and tear its very heart out, and this nation will be swallowed up in My wrath.

SUMMARY

Israel could not stand prosperity. She let pride cause her to forget her prosperity came from Jehovah. Turning, in pride, to idols she persists in idolatry and incurs the terrible wrath of a jealous God.

COMMENT

v. 1 WHEN EPHRAIM SPAKE . . . THERE WAS TREMBLING . . . The struggles of the proud tribe of Ephraim to get the rule among the tribes of the covenant people led eventually to the secession of the ten tribes and the divided kingdoms and the establishment of the kingdom of Israel. Israel, the northern kingdom, then became powerful and rich, and when Israel "spoke" her neighbor-nations (esp. Judah) listened! When Israel became rich and powerful her kings (esp. Ahab, see I Kings 16:29-33) made alliances with heathen nations and brought in the worship of Baal. This offended the righteous and jealous love of Jehovah. From that time onward Israel began slowly but certainly to die—both spiritually, and as a consequence, physically.

v. 2 AND NOW THEY SIN MORE AND MORE . . . THEY SAY . . . LET THE MEN THAT SACRIFICE KISS THE CALVES . . . The farther one goes away from the light, the darker the darkness! The more Israel sinned, the more she wanted to sin. They became stupid and shameless in their sin and melted their silver and fashioned it with their own hands into gods and then bowed down before them and even kissed them. Pusey says, "Kissing was an act of homage in the East, done upon the hand or the foot, the knees or shoulder. It was a token of Divine honor, whether to an idol or to God (cf. I Kings 19:18; Psa. 2:12). It was performed, either by actually kissing the image, or when the object could not be approached, (as the moon) kissing the hand, and so sending, as it were, the kiss to it (cf. Job. 31:26-27). The apostle Paul reasoned logically with the philosophers of Athens that living men should never think that the Deity is like gold or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man (cf. Acts 17:22-31). Men, rational beings, professing to worship Jehovah, kiss, adore, worship, and expect help from calves made of silver. What foolish, stupid wickedness! There is even enough of the revelation of a personal God in nature that men ought not to worship idols or creatures (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). And Israel had in addition to this, a direct, miraculously confirmed, revelation of God!

v. 3 THEREFORE THEY SHALL BE AS THE . . . DEW THAT PASSETH EARLY AWAY . . . Hosea uses four common experiences of men to figuratively express the rapid demise of Israel. As suddenly as the morning clouds vanish, as quickly as the dew is dried up, as violently as the chaff is driven through the air by a whirlwind, and as completely as the smoke rising from a cooking fire vanishes—so will Israel suddenly, quickly, violently and completely vanish from the land. Hosea uses "dew" in other places as a figure of other experiences (cf. our comments on 6:4 and 14:5).

v. 4-5 . . . I AM JEHOVAH THY GOD FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT . . . I DID KNOW THEE IN THE WILDERNESS . . . Again the prophet sets forth the contrast between the true God and the false gods. The enormity of their sin is evident once the comparison is recognized. Their God, Jehovah, delivered them from the power of Egypt and Egypt's "gods" by demonstrating, through Moses and Aaron, the impotency of Egypt's idols and His own omnipotence. Jehovah delivered them, sustained them in the wilderness and revealed His will to them by mighty miraculous signs and wonders which their forefathers had

seen with their own eyes (cf. Deut. 32:1-43). How utterly stupid of this generation then, not to recognize that there is only One True God, Jehovah, and that He alone can save them.

v. 6 . . . THEY WERE FILLED AND THEIR HEART WAS EXALTED . . .

How could a later generation of Israelites be so mentally and spiritually depraved as to forget the facts of history? The answer is here in the sixth verse. Pride! They did exactly what Moses warned them not to do in Deuteronomy 8:11-20! When Israel became affluent, they did like so many other nations have done, and like America is doing today, they lifted up their hearts in pride and said, "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth." Pride—whether it is military pride, political pride, affluent pride or intellectual pride—causes men to "wilfully ignore the facts of history" as Peter points out in II Pet. 3:3-7. Pseudo-scientists, proud of their intellectualism, proud of their erudition, holding to evolutionary, uniformitarian views, will deliberately ignore the historical, empirical facts which testify to creation and catastrophism. Theologians, proud of their erudition or their religious heritages, will deliberately ignore the historical, textual integrity of the Bible and substitute theology and philosophy for the Word of God. Pride is the trap that snared the devil, snared Eve and then Adam and snares many millions today (cf. I Tim. 3:6-7).

v. 7-8 THEREFORE I AM UNTO THEM AS A LION . . . AND WILL REND THE CAUL OF THEIR HEART . . . God's flock had been caused to lie down in green pastures and drink beside the still waters. But now God will come upon this flock of helpless sheep (Israel) like all of the wild beasts and tear this nation to pieces. *Caul* is the pericardium or membranous sac surrounding the heart. God is going to tear the very heart out of this nation. He will cause it to be devoured and swallowed up in Assyrian captivity, like a lioness devours its prey.

QUIZ

1. Who "trembled" when Ephraim spoke?
2. When did Israel begin her downward plunge into moral decadence?
3. Did men actually "kiss" calves? Why?
4. How did Paul, the apostle, argue against idolatry to philosophers?
5. Why should Israel have known the difference between Jehovah and idols?
6. Why did Israel refuse to acknowledge the difference between God and idols?
7. How extensive will the judgment of God be upon Israel?

REQUITING— ISRAEL WILL PERISH

TEXT: 13:9-16

- 9 It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against me, against thy help.
- 10 Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?
- 11 I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath.
- 12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is laid up in store.
- 13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for it is time he should not tarry in the place of the breaking forth of children.
- 14 I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from mine eyes..
- 15 Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the breath of Jehovah coming up from the wilderness; and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall make spoil of the treasure of all goodly vessels.
- 16 Samaria shall bear her guilt; 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..

QUERIES

- a. Why does God bring up the subject of Israel's king?
- b. Why the reference to "death" and "Sheol?"
- c. Were pregnant women really to be "ripped up?"

PARAPHRASE

It is to your own self-destruction, O Israel, that you have resisted Me, your only source of help. What good is your king now? Is it not evident that he is unable to save you? Where are all the royal counselors and ministers of state whom you chose when you broke away from the rule of the house of David and formed your own kingdom? You asked for them, now let them save you. In My anger over your separation from the throne of David I have repeatedly given you your desired kings and in wrath I have overthrown them because they are

all wicked. Ephraim's sins are all carefully bound together and preserved for the day when they will be punished. Pain and agony like that of a woman at childbirth will come upon Ephraim. Yes, God is going to chasten Israel in order to bring about a new birth—a conversion; but Israel behaves foolishly. Like a child, who at the time of the labor-pains will not enter the opening of the womb, Israel will not let himself be new-born. Yet out of the hand of hell will I redeem them; from death will I set them free! Where are your plagues, O death, now that I have annihilated you? Where is your destruction, O Sheol, now that I have conquered you? My purpose of salvation will be irrevocably accomplished and I will not change! For the remnant of Ephraim which remains faithful will bear fruit among brethren. On the other hand, upon the Ephraim that has turned into Canaan, an east wind will come, a judgment of Jehovah, which will destroy this Ephraim. This judgment of Jehovah, the Assyrian empire, will plunder the treasures and valuables of Ephraim. Samaria will pay for its sins because it has rebelled against its God. Her people will be killed by the invading armies, her babies dashed to death against the ground, her pregnant women ripped open with a sword.

SUMMARY

The prophet once more discloses to the people the reason for their corruption. Then, after pointing to the saving power of the Lord, he holds up before them utter destruction as the just punishment for their guilt.

COMMENT

v. 9 IT IS THY DESTRUCTION, O ISRAEL, THAT THOU ART AGAINST ME . . . *What a statement this is*—pregnant with meaning! Man's sin, judgment, sentence and destruction are not, in themselves, from God, but from man's moral choice to rebell against God. Whoever casts himself against the Rock of Ages will destroy himself (cf. Matt. 21:42-44), for God's justice, mercy, righteousness is immutable. An ancient church father wrote, "Rightly is God called, not the Father of judgments or of vengeance, but the *Father of mercies*, because from Himself is the cause and origin of His mercy, from us the cause of His judging or avenging." Hosea is here speaking of the ten tribes in their rebellion against Jehovah when they withdrew from the rule of the house of David under Rehoboam and made Jeroboam their king. The ten tribes showed their contempt for Jehovah when they renounced allegiance to and portion in the throne of David (cf. I Kings 12:16). Of course, this

spirit of desiring to be rid of the rule of Jehovah began in the days of Samuel (cf. I Sam. 8:5) when all the people desired to imitate the nations about them and be ruled over by a visible, physical king.

v. 10-11 WHERE NOW IS THY KING, THAT HE MAY SAVE THEE . . . I HAVE GIVEN THEE A KING IN MINE ANGER . . . The challenge of verse 10 does not presuppose that Israel had no king at all at that time, but simply challenges the people to put forth any of their kings that could save them. None could. We are reminded of Isaiah's challenge to idols and false prophets (Isa. 42:21-24; 44:6-20), to prove their omniscience—they could not. Israel had put all her trust in her kings to save her from economic and political ruin, but "all the king's horses and all the king's men, couldn't put Israel together again."

Verse 11 does not refer simply to the dethronement of one king by another, but to the kingdom generally, which God would overthrow in His anger. The anger of God stands at the beginning and at the end; giving kings and taking them away, are both an evidence of His displeasure. Lange says:

"The whole (temporal) kingdom was a divine system of punishment and chastening. At the request of the people, He granted them a king, but with the expression of His displeasure at their desire because it proceeded from unbelief and vanity, and with the declaration that they would lose their freedom by its realization. But, at the same time, this kingdom of Israel might become a blessing if it with its king would obey God. Nay, God, by establishing the throne of David in Zion, even connected the most precious promises with this kingdom, if the king were entirely one with God and should gather about him a nation obedient to God. But the people with their king followed more and more decidedly a course opposed to God by separating (in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes) from the house with which God had connected his promises, and so forsaking the king which God had given them, they must therefore be punished by having this self-erected kingdom taken away, and the punishment is all the greater that they shall never return to a state of freedom, but must lie under the much viler bondage of foreign rulers until they return to the king whom God had promised to raise up from the House of David."

God gave the tribes who were discontented with the rule of the House of David, a king of their own that He might punish them for their resistance to His divinely appointed government. God held the

rebellious ten tribes responsible for separation from the royal house to which the promise of covenant fulfillment had been given. So when Israel separated itself from the theocracy, it separated itself from the divinely appointed worship and altar, and formed an apostate worship, priesthood and an idol-god. God, after a long period of grace in which He sent many prophets to turn the people back to His will, finally took away Israel's government and gave the nation into the hands of the Assyrians to serve as slaves.

v. 12 THE INIQUITY OF EPHRAIM IS BOUND UP . . . The word *tsarur* means, 'bound up in a bundle to store away or preserve with certainty, so as not to be lost. So, the idea here is the certainty of the punishment of Israel. Israel thought, as do all sinners, that because God does not punish sin at once, He never will. They think that God will bear with them always, because He bore with them so long; or that He does not see, does not regard it, is not so precise about His laws being broken (cf. Ecc. 8:11). But unrepented sin is increasingly stored up, piled one upon another, stored up until the patience of God reaches the divine day of appointment.

v. 13 THE SORROWS OF A TRAVAILING WOMAN SHALL COME UPON HIM . . . FOR IT IS TIME HE SHOULD NOT TARRY IN THE PLACE OF THE BREAKING FORTH OF CHILDREN. Here is an example of the prophet slipping from one figure to another with application to the same object. It is a very graphic use of figures of speech to portray the obstinacy of Israel. First Hosea describes the punishment Israel will endure by the figure of alluding to the pains of childbirth. Yet, though there is pain in child-birth, it brings forth new life. So, Israel, if she allows her sorrow and travail to turn her to God will be bring forth new life (cf. Micah 4:9-10; Isa. 26:17-18). But death comes if the foetal child does not enter the vagina during labor. So, now, Hosea turns to this tragic picture to represent the stubborn resistance of Israel to the divine purpose in its travail. Israel is an unwise son because, while under the chastening judgment, he resists conversion and new birth. The "place of the breaking forth of children," is in Hebrew, *Mishbar banim*, which means literally, "the breach; the place of bringing forth."

v. 14 . . . O DEATH WHERE ARE THY PLAGUES? O SHEOL, WHERE IS THY DESTRUCTION? . . . This verse contains a promise, not a threat, as some commentators have mistakenly understood. The primary intent of the statement is for a faithful remnant of Israel (the Ten Tribes). God's promise here is that He has the power even to redeem Israel

from the premature death mentioned in verse 13, by raising them from the dead (so to speak) even as Ezekiel predicted in his figure of the "dry bones" in Ezekiel 37! Some of the Ten Tribes did eventually return with Judah and form the Messianic people. But the ultimate fulfillment of this promise was fulfilled when Christ, the true Israel, conquered death and hell, when He died and rose from the grave (cf. I Cor. 15:55). The Israel restored from the captivity became a type of the Messiah and the Messianic people (cf. Isa. 25:8ff).

The phrase "repentance shall be hid from mine eyes," simply signifies that what God has promised to do will be certainly and absolutely accomplished, conditioned upon the response of Israel to His promise. God does not repent! He does not change! His will is immutable! (cf. Ps. 89:34-36; 110:4). Israel, if she will, can put her trust completely in God's promise to redeem her from the "death" of captivity and restore her to her intended destiny as a part of the Messianic people—if she will! It is not God's will that has changed—He does not repent—it is Israel's choice that has changed.

v. 15 **THOUGH HE BE FRUITFUL AMONG HIS BRETHREN . . .** We prefer K & D translation of the conjunction in verse 15 which makes it read "For he will bear fruit among brethren," rather than the "Though he be fruitful . . ." of the text. The opening phrase of verse 15 then becomes a play upon the name "Ephraim" which means "double-fruitfulness." The prophet is saying, in essence, "Yes, even your name signifies the promise of God that some of Ephraim will be redeemed and bear fruit." Of course, all the promises of God are fulfilled to those who adhere to the conditions under which they are given. Of the whole nation of Israel in Hosea's day, only that small remnant who walked in faith in the promises of God and were obedient to His commandments, would be fruitful among their brethren. On the other hand, upon the majority of the people of Israel that has turned itself into Canaan (cf. 12:8), an "east wind" will come. A storm from the "east" will come upon them. This storm from the east (Assyrian soldiers) will consume the fruitful land of the northern kingdom, and all the impenitent sons of Ephraim with it. Their treasures shall be plundered. They become paupers.

v. 16 **SAMARIA SHALL BEAR HER GUILT . . .** Samaria (Israel represented by her capital city) must atone for her sins. She must pay! She has sown the wind—now she shall reap the whirlwind! One word summarizes the past and present history of the Northern Kingdom: **REBELLION** (cf. I Kings 12:19; II Kings 17:14-17). There is a grue-

some description of the cold-blooded cruelty of the Assyrian conquest here. Children will be dashed to death upon the pavements of village streets; women, pregnant with child, will be ripped open with the swords of the soldiers. For a record of the actual fulfillment of this see II Kings 8:12; 15:16.

QUIZ

1. Why is rebellion against God a prelude to self-destruction?
2. How did God give them a king in anger and take away a king in wrath?
3. Why does the prophet liken Israel's situation to child-birth?
4. What is the promise concerning victory over hell and death to Israel?
5. Where is this promise quoted in the New Testament and what is its meaning?
6. What is the "east wind" that will come and destroy impenitent Israel?
7. Where is the record of the fulfillment of verse 16?

LOVE RECONCILING

PEACE REMAINS—LURED

TEXT: 14:1-3

- 1 O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
- 2 Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.
- 3 Assyria 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.

QUERIES

- a. Why is Israel directed to "take . . . words" unto Jehovah?
- b. Why does Israel pledge not to "ride upon horses?"

PARAPHRASE

Return, O Israel, by taking the right steps toward God. You have stumbled in taking the wrong steps of sin and rebellion. It is still possible for you to return, but if your return is to be in the right way, it must begin with a prayer for the forgiveness of your sin. So take

with you words of repentance asking the Lord to forgive all your guilt and accept the only good thing that you are able to bring, the sacrifice of penitent lips. Taking the right steps toward God also includes, O Israel, renunciation of trust in world power such as the alliances you have made with Assyria, renunciation of your own military forces, renunciation of idolatry, and trusting completely in the Lord because you have no other One in whom you may trust.

SUMMARY

Israel is given directions for a proper response to the salvation God has offered earlier (13:13-15) and will offer (14:4-8). The proper response is penitent prayer and complete faith in God as their Father.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . RETURN UNTO JEHOVAH . . . FOR THOU HAST FALLEN . . . Few books in the Bible close on a higher note, with a more climactic appeal, than Hosea. Some, like Genesis, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, II Samuel, II Kings, Jeremiah, and others end on ominous, tragic notes. Other books, of course, close with a joyful note, but none is more dramatically impressive in this regard than Hosea. One gets the feeling from verse 1, here, that Hosea has just offered Israel its last call to repentance before the awful judgment falls. The Hebrew word for "fallen" here is *kashalta* which means literally, "stumbled; made a false step." Israel is exhorted then, to "return" which is equivalent to taking the "right steps" toward God. Jeremiah says it thusly: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16), (cf. also Psa. 16:11; 23:3; 25:10; 119:35; Prov. 2:8-9; 4:11; Isa. 2:3).

v. 2 TAKE WITH YOU WORDS . . . TAKE AWAY ALL INIQUITY . . . SO WILL WE RENDER . . . THE OFFERING OF OUR LIPS . . . One of the first, and most necessary, steps to be taken is that of confession of sin. If we are honest with ourselves and honest with God and confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). However, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (I John 1:8). The work of the Holy Spirit today is to "convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" (see comments on John 16:8-9 in *Gospel of John*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press). God cannot bless until man realizes and acknow-

ledges he is estranged from God and takes the necessary steps to return to the grace of God. The very word "confess" in Greek is *homologeō* which means literally "to say the same as." When we confess that we are sinners we simply "say the same as" God says in His word. And until we do we are rebelling against His word. So with Israel—she must "say the same as" God has been saying to her through the prophet Hosea. She has stumbled through her false stepping and must now confess it.

The phrase "accept that which is good" refers to Israel's plea to God to accept the only good thing they are able to offer Him—that is the sacrifice of penitent lips. They had no merit of their own to offer. He must love them freely (cf. 14:4). God is pleased with the sacrifices of penitent, worshipping lips (cf. Heb. 13:15-16; Psalms 107:22; 116:17; Jer. 17:26; 33:11; Jonah 2:9). And this is what Israel is directed to offer, penitent praise from their lips which would be better than the sacrifice of bullocks (cf. Isa. 1:10-20; Micah 6:6-8).

V. 3 ASSYRIA SHALL NOT SAVE US . . . After prayer for pardon and for acceptance of themselves, and thanksgiving for acceptance, comes the promise not to fall back into their former sins. Trust in man, in their own strength, in their idols, had been their besetting sins. Now, one by one, they disavow them. First, they disclaim trust in man. No longer are they to put their trust for security in political alliances with godless, heathen nations, forgetting that God can protect them from any enemy, regardless of how powerful that enemy might be. The sin involved in making such alliances is, first of all, a manifest lack of trust in God, and second, certain compromises with paganism is necessary in any such alliance.

Second, they disclaim trust in their own strength. War was almost the only end for which the horse was used among the Jews. They measured their own military strength by the number of horses their king could command (cf. Deut. 17:16; I Kings 10:28; II Kings 18:23; Psalms 33:17; Prov. 21:31). Civil defense is not necessarily spiritual defense. National security is not necessarily spiritual protection. Without spiritual health there can be no national strength. Men today may boast of man-made satellites and of intercontinental ballistic missiles with the terrifying potential of nuclear energy, but what can any people do without God? "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us" (Psalms 124:2-3). This will ever be true in spite of our military might.

Third, they must renounce all idolatry. We have dealt at length with the nature and causes of Israel's idolatry. It would be superfluous to add to our former comments, only to remark how foolish indeed to trust in gods made with their own hands.

The phrase "in thee the fatherless findeth mercy" must be another step Israel must take in its way to humbleness. Israel must recognize that it is an orphan and since it is homeless, fatherless and helpless, must throw itself completely upon the mercy of Jehovah who will give mercy to those who so trust in Him.

The words of the Chronicler come to mind as we contemplate Hosea's closing admonition. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (II Chron. 7:14). The three-stage program offered by Hosea to Israel for her salvation would fit the situation of America today: (1) Repent, change the mind in relation to God's word and will; (2) Confess its sins; (3) Renounce its vain hope in political alliances and treaties with godless, tyrannical governments whose avowed goals are enslavement of the world (instead of "building bridges to our enemies" we ought to be repairing bridges made by our pioneer ancestors of trust and praise to God); renounce its pride in its military and economic prowess; renounce all the idols it worships (sex, affluence, sports, sophistication, intellectualism). But, since America is not necessarily "God's people" any more than any other nation, the primary application of Hosea's admonition must be made to the Church (God's chosen nation ever since the Day of Pentecost), see the sermon on Hosea at the end of this book for this application.

QUIZ

1. How had Israel "fallen" by its iniquity?
2. Why is Israel exhorted to confess its sin?
3. What is the only good thing Israel has to offer to God?
4. Name the three-fold renunciation Israel is directed to make?

PEACE REMAINS—LAVED

TEXT: 14:4-6

- 4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him.
- 5 I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

- 6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

QUERIES

- a. How will God "heal" their backsliding?
- b. What do the figurative pictures of Israel as certain trees represent?

PARAPHRASE

I will cure you of your faithlessness and fickleness and I will love you freely and in spite of what you have been for when you have repented, confessed and renounced your sins, My wrath will have been turned away from you. I will nourish you and give you fruitfulness, stability, beauty, and purity like the refreshing dew nourishes and gives all these things to the lilies, the cedars of Lebanon and the olive trees.

SUMMARY

When God's people shall have humbled themselves and turned to Him in penitent thanksgiving, He will shower them with His love and blessings.

COMMENT

v. 4 I WILL HEAL THEIR BACKSLIDING, I WILL LOVE THEM FREELY . . . The Hebrew word translated "freely" here would be more literally, *impelled*. G. Campbell Morgan puts it, "Freely means of My own will and My own heart, quite independently of them or of their deserts. I will not love them in response to their love. I will love them in spite of their rebellion . . . I will love them because I cannot help loving them. That is God. And it is because of that deep thing in the nature of God that He first said, 'I will heal their backsliding,' I will cure the malady of their apostasy."

It is this free love of God (which can only be appropriated by them when they have put themselves in a position to receive it by repenting) which will cure their backsliding. He does not mean that He will merely heal the wounds they have received in judgment for their apostasy. He is going to cure them of the very root cause of apostasy—faithlessness, fickleness and unbelief. And how is He going to do this? We are told in the next verses.

v. 5-6 I WILL BE AS THE DEW . . . HE . . . AS THE LILY . . . CAST FORTH HIS ROOTS . . . BRANCHES . . . SPREAD . . . BEAUTY . . . AS THE OLIVE-TREE . . . Earlier the prophet has used "dew" to

describe the fickleness of Israel's love toward God, "as the morning dew that goeth early away," (6:4). There "dew" represented the evanescent nature of their love toward God. Now "dew" represents the nourishment the everlasting God is able to provide. Because God is as the dew to Israel, he shall blossom as the lily. The lily stands for beauty and purity. God's covenant people, under the dew-like nourishment of God shall be characterized by their beauty and purity. Not only beauty, not only purity, but stability—"cast forth his roots" is synonymous with the stability of the majestic cedars of Lebanon. The branches spreading symbolize magnificence or greatness. The ever-green olive tree symbolizes perpetuity or eternity. Notice the symbolism of it all. Beauty, purity, strength, steadfastness (faithfulness), eternity; and then look at the nation as it was, ugly, impure, deformed, weak and vacillating—withered with the east wind of God's judgment and bearing no fruit.

This, of course, cannot be applied in any ultimate sense to the restoration of the Jews in the days of Ezra and Zerubbabel, for the subsequent history of the Jews does not bear this description out. It is very evidently Hosea's way of expressing God's promise to fulfill the covenant He made with Abraham and Abraham's spiritual posterity (Christians). It is evident that Hosea 14 is entirely Messianic in its terminus *ad quem* (end). It is a prophecy describing the spiritual inheritance that is to come to the Church and this may be clearly seen by comparing the glorious future of Zion (the Church) as Isaiah describes it in Isaiah chapters 60-66. Read especially Isaiah 60:13, 21; 61:1-4; 62:1-5; 65:17-25, as Isaiah also uses the figures of beautifully fruitful trees to depict the future of God's covenant people. There can be no doubt that Isaiah is speaking of Christ and His Church for Jesus applies at least one of these sections to Himself in Luke 4:16ff! God, through Christ, has purified a people unto Himself. God, through Christ, has given beauty, strength, faith, steadfastness and eternal life to His covenant people! God, through Christ, has healed His people!

QUIZ

1. How will God heal the backsliding of His people?
2. What does "freely" mean when speaking of God's love?
3. How is God to be "as the dew unto Israel?"
4. Explain what the different figures of flowers and trees mean.
5. Is this a Messianic prophecy and is it fulfilled in the Church today? Why?

PEACE REMAINS—LOVED

TEXT: 14:7-8

- 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the grain, and blossom as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.
- 8 Ephriam shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found.

QUERIES

- a. Who's shadow are they to dwell under?
- b. Who is "like a green fir-tree?"

PARAPHRASE

All the faithful people who dwell in the shady peaceful and restful influence of this new Israel shall prosper in the presence of the Lord. They will produce and bear fruit because Israel is abiding in the Lord. Israel will say, I will have nothing more to do with idols. And the Lord will have answered out of His concern and care, I have become your everlasting source of joy and satisfaction; in Me you have found life and fruitfulness.

SUMMARY

The idyllic portrait of the Messianic age now comes to a climax from the artist Hosea. God's gracious invitation is responded to by new Israel who finds God able to do exceeding abundantly above all that can be imagined.

COMMENT

v. 7 THEY THAT DWELL UNDER HIS SHADOW SHALL RETURN . . . "They" undoubtedly includes all the nations who shall "dwell under the shadow" of the new-Israel. It is "they" now, not "he"—not Israel, but they that dwell under his shadow. It is certainly confirmed from other prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc., that the promises to new-Israel belong to the "nations" (Gentiles) in the coming Messianic age (the Church). Furthermore, as we have noted in our

comments on Hosea 1:6—2:23, the promises to new-Israel belong to the Gentiles also since the apostle Paul applied Hosea 1:6ff to them in Romans 9-11. G. Campbell Morgan says, "The fulfillment of all this is coming through Christ. This nation as an earthly people was rejected when Jesus said in the Temple courts, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' Almost immediately after, the Lord was alone with His own disciples, and He said, 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches.' Everything of beauty and of glory and of strength and of fruitfulness, is to be produced through Him, and those associated with Him as branches in the Vine." And this new-Israel, as a result of the free love of God shown through His Son, will be "drawn" to Him (cf. Jn. 12:32) forever. Israel's response will be, "What have I to do any more with idols?"—Ephraim has broken with idols. What has brought this break with idols? What is it that sweeps idolatry out of the soul of a man, or of a nation? It is the loving care God expresses for men (once they have known and experienced it). Or, as our text puts it, "I have answered and will regard him (new-Israel)." The love of God, as it has been revealed through Jesus Christ our Lord, is the power that drives sin, anxiety, and fear out of the hearts of men (cf. I Jn. 3-4). We love Him because He first loved us and if we have this hope in us we are able to purify ourselves by it (cf. also II Pet. 1:3-4).

v. 8 . . . I AM LIKE A GREEN FIR-TREE; FROM ME IS THY FRUIT FOUND. This is from God's mouth. God compares Himself to a cypress becoming green, not only to denote the shelter which He will afford the new-Israel, but as the true tree of life, on which the new-Israel finds its fruits—a fruit which invigorates the spiritual life of the new-Israel. We add here the comments of Keil: "The salvation which this promise sets before the people when they shall return to the Lord, is indeed depicted, according to the circumstances and peculiar views prevailing under the Old Testament, as earthly growth and prosperity; but its real nature is such, that it will receive a spiritual fulfillment in those Israelites alone who are brought to belief in Jesus Christ."

QUIZ

1. Who are the "they" of verse 7? How do you know?
2. What motivates Israel to renounce idolatry?
3. When was all this fulfilled? To whom?

EPILOGUE OR POSTSCRIPT

TEXT: 14:9

9 Who is wise, that he may understand these things? prudent, that he may know them? for the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

QUERIES

- a. Why did Hosea add this Epilogue or Postscript?
- b. What does it mean?

PARAPHRASE

Whoever is intelligent will understand what I have written. Whoever acts wisely will be convinced that what I say is true. That is, the ways of Jehovah are the only correct, true and right ways. Furthermore, those who are righteous and just will walk in these ways. The wicked, however, will stumble and fall in them just because they are right and true.

SUMMARY

God's ways are straight and true, and we walk, or fall, according to our relationship with those ways.

COMMENT

v. 9 WHO IS WISE, THAT HE MAY UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS? . . . The RSV puts this verse in the form of a declaration and we prefer it that way. Moses declared long before Hosea that keeping and doing the commandments of the Lord was wisdom and understanding (cf. Deut. 4:3-9). Compare also Psa. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 30:3-5. Hosea's challenge is that whoever was wise and prudent in Israel in his day would comprehend that what he was preaching was right! "Prudent" means acting according to intelligence; squaring conduct with conviction.

We may summarize the teachings of Hosea and make them applicable for today: (1) Sin separates from God, and blinds us, so that we lose the vision of Him; (2) Idolatry follows inevitably a loss of the vision of Him. (3) Hosea then reveals the heart and the holiness of

God—His love is freely given and eternal, but it is never divorced from moral requirement on the part of man.

We, today, are living in fuller light than Hosea had. We see God as Hosea never saw Him. We see Him in Jesus Christ. There seeing Him, we know, as never before, that He can make no terms with sin; but we know that he stops at no sacrifice in order that He may heal our backsliding.

If we are guilty of idolatry, what will cure us? The vision of God the Supreme Lover, as He is seen in Jesus Christ.

"Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him?

Is not thine a captured heart?

Chief among ten thousand own Him,

Joyful choose the better part.

Idols once they won thee, charmed thee,

Lovely things of time and sense;

Gilded thus does sin disarm thee,

Honeyed lest thou turn thee thence.

What has stript the seeming beauty

From the idols of the earth?

Not a sense of right or duty,

But the sight of peerless worth.

Not the crushing of those idols,

With its bitter void and smart;

But the beaming of His beauty,

The unveiling of His heart.

Who extinguishes their taper

Till they hail the rising sun?

Who discards the garb of winter

Till the summer has begun?

"Tis that look that melted Peter,

"Tis that face that Stephen saw,

"Tis that heart that wept with Mary,

Can alone from idols draw.

Draw and win and fill completely,

Till the cup o'erflows the brim;

What have we to do with idols

Who have companied with Him?"

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

by Francis Thompson.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
 I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
 I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
 Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
 I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
 Up vistaed hopes I sped;
 And shot, precipitated,
 Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
 From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
 But with unhurrying chase,
 And unperturbed pace,
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
 They beat—and a Voice beat
 More instant than the Feet—
 "All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
 By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
 Trellised with intertwinning charities;
 (For, though I knew His love Who followed,
 Yet was I ere adread
 Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.)
 But, if one little casement parted wide,
 The gust of His approach would clash it to:
 Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
 Across the margent of the world I fled,
 And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
 Smiting for shelter on their clanged bars;
 Fretted to dulcet jars
 And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
 I said to Dawn: Be sudden—to Eve: Be soon;
 With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
 From this tremendous Lover—
 Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
 I tempted all His servitors, but to find
 My own betrayal in their constancy,
 In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
 Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deciet.

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven,
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.
Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."
I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies,
They at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
"Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured dais,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."
So it was done:
I in their delicate fellowship was one—
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
I knew all the swift importings
On the wilful face of skies;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumed of the wild sea-snortings;

HOSEA

All that's born or dies
 Rose and drooped with; made them shapers
 Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine;
 With them joyed and was bereaven.
 I was heavy with the even,
 When she lit her glimmering tapers
 Round the day's dead sanctities.
 I laughed in the morning's eyes.
 I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
 Heaven and I wept together,
 And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
 Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
 I laid my own to beat,
 And share commingling heat;
 But not by that, was eased by my human smart.
 In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
 For ah! we know not what each other says,
 These things and I; in sound I speak—
 Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
 Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
 Let her, if she would own me,
 Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
 The breasts o' her tenderness:
 Never did any milk of hers once bless
 My thirsting mouth.
 Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
 With unperturbed pace,
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
 And past those noised Feet
 A voice comes yet more fleet—
 "Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."
 Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
 My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
 And smitten me to my knee;
 I am defenseless utterly.
 I slept, methinks, and woke,
 And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
 In the rash lustihood of my young powers,
 I stood the pillaring hours
 And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.

Yea, faileth now each dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.

Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?

Ah! must—

Designer Infinite!—

Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
My freshness spent its wavering showed i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down over
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.

Such is; what is to be?

The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.

But not ever him who summoneth

I first have seen, unwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields

Thee harvest, must Thy harvest-fields
Be dinged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit

Comes on at hand the bruit;

That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:

"And is thy earth so marred,

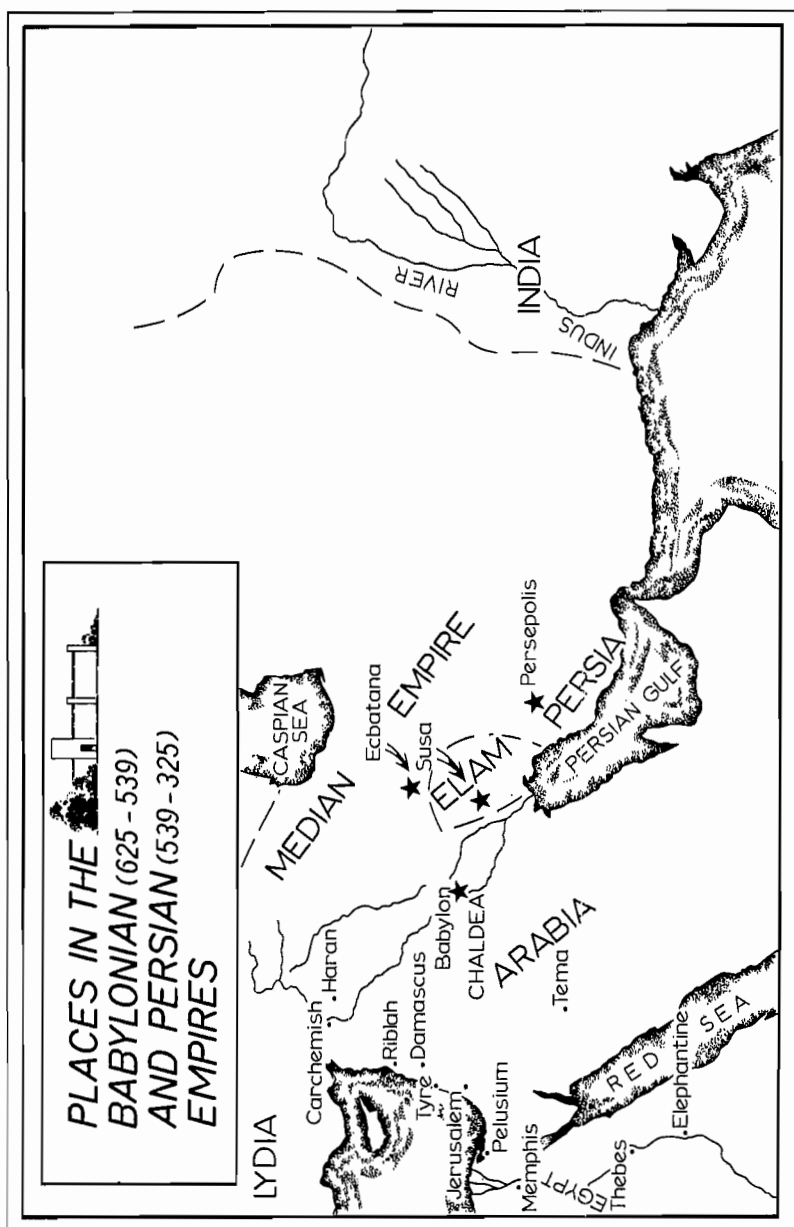
Shattered in shard on shard?

Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!

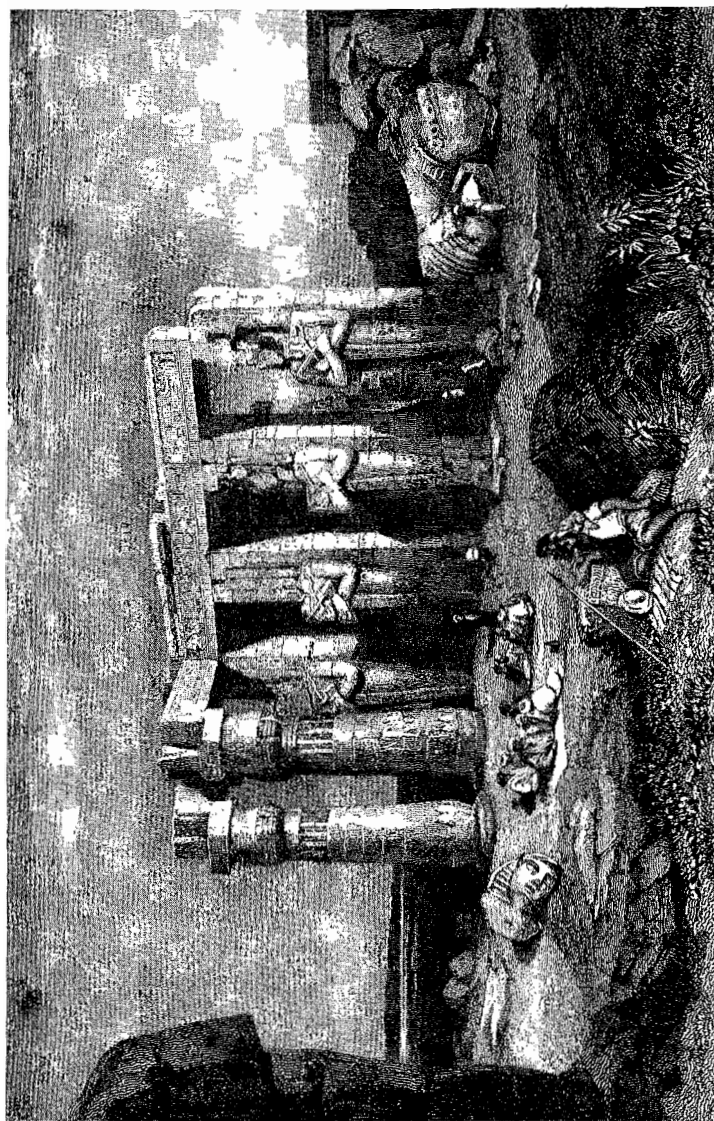
Strange, piteous, futile thing!

H O S E A

Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught" (He said).
"And human love needs human meriting:
 How hast thou merited—
O! all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
 Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
 Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
 Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
 All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
 Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"
 Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
 "As, fondest, blindest, weakest,
 I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."



MINOR PROPHETS



Engraved by W. Pindar

EGYPT.
The Temple and broken Statue of Memnon, Thebes.

Drawn by C. Smithfield, R.A. from a sketch by T. Cuthbertson

EXAMINATION ON HOSEA

EXAMINATION

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Was Hosea's marriage actual or symbolic?
2. Did God command Hosea to do something immoral in marrying a "woman of harlotry?"
3. Why did God command Hosea to marry and live with such a woman?

ASSOCIATIONS

Associate the persons or events of column one with the correct person or event of column two.

1	2
Jezreel	capital of Israel
Achor	Egypt
Ephraim	house of vanity
Gibeah	Israel's captors
Admah	near Jericho
Zeboiim	city of plain of Sodom
Lebanon	Hosea's wife
Gomer	Hosea's mother-in-law
Baal	hope
Diblaim	another name for Israel
Lo-ruhamah	city of plain of Sodom
Lo-ammi	city where great sin was done
Gilgal	name of idol
Beth-aven	Hosea's daughter
Assyria	Hosea's son
Memphis	Hosea's son
Samaria	famous for cedar trees

MEMORIZATIONS

"... and I will have ... upon her that had not obtained ...; and I will say to them that were ... my people, Thou ... my people; and they shall say, ... art my God."

"Their ... will not suffer them to turn unto their God; for the ... of whoredom is with them, and they ... not Jehovah."

"My people are ... for lack of knowledge; because thou hast ... knowledge, I will also ... thee ..."

HOSEA

"Sow to yourselves in _____, reap according to kindness; break up your _____ ground; for it is time to _____ Jehovah, till he come and rain _____ upon you."

"When Israel was a _____, then I loved him, and called my son out of _____."

"I will heal their _____, I will love them _____; for mine anger is turned away from him."

CONTEMPLATIONS

1. What is the symbolic or typical significance of the names of Hosea's children?
2. Where, in the New Testament, are these names used as fulfillments of Messianic prophecies?
3. What did Hosea's rescue of Gomer from the slave market symbolize in God's relationship to Israel?
4. What was the religious condition of the nation in Hosea's day?
5. How is Ephraim like "a caked not turned?"
6. To what point had the people fallen in their living in Hosea's day? Describe it using Hosea's terms.
7. Why is Hosea compared to the apostle John of the N.T.?
8. Where is the phrase "O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction?" quoted or paraphrased in the N.T.?
9. Name 5 characterizations of Israel listed in Hosea's book (such as, "silly dove").
10. How near the end of Israel's existence did Hosea prophesy? What other prophets were his contemporaries?

THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

Text: Entire book of Hosea

esp., Hosea 4:12; 5:4

INTRODUCTION

I. HOSEA'S BACKGROUND

- A. The entire people of God, except for a very small remnant, was decadent and utterly corrupt
 - 1. Israel was morally falling apart at the seams
 - 2. The evil which Amos had condemned earlier had grown rapidly worse
 - 3. This led to political anarchy and chaos
- B. Religious apostasy and refusal to know God led to
 - 1. kings and princes finding their entertainment in the people's sinning (7:2ff)
 - 2. a degenerate priesthood wringing its hands in greedy glee over the sons of the people because their coffers were enriched through sacrifices (4:6-8)
 - 3. killing, stealing and bloody violence (4:1-2; 6:8; 7:1; 10:4; 11:12)
 - 4. sin is rampant 8:1; the people will not tolerate rebuke (4:4)
- C. Kirkpatrick says, ". . . The picture is drawn with a force and feeling which attests an eyewitness . . . who is keenly and bitterly alive to the sense that his own country is being dragged headlong down to ruin by the sins and crimes which he rebukes but cannot reform . . ."

II. HOSEA'S MARRIAGE ACTUAL BUT SYMBOLIC OF ISRAEL'S RELATION TO GOD

- A. Hosea is commanded to marry a "whorish" woman which symbolizes the attitude of the people of Israel toward God
- B. He is further commanded to give his children symbolical names depicting God's attitude toward the idolatrous people.
- C. Hosea means: Salvation, or, the Lord saveth, which is appropriate for the mission and message of Hosea
- D. It was out of Hosea's actual experience that he was able to know and feel more acutely what God felt about Israel. He was able to preach with a broken heart about the broken heart of God.

III. SO THE REAL THEME OF HOSEA'S MESSAGE IS "SPIRIT OF HARLOTTRY."

- A. The primary condemnation is for the spiritual harlotry of the people . . . their unfaithfulness to God . . . which led to the specific sins
- B. Hosea's message is for the *people of God*
APPLICATION TODAY: ALL WHO CLAIM TO BE PEOPLE OF GOD
- C. We shall analyze the book of Hosea as we study and make application of this admonition against the "spirit of harlotry."
 - 1. Condition (just what is the "spirit of harlotry")
 - 2. Cause (how does one become infected with it)
 - 3. Cure (how does one overcome it)

DISCUSSION

- I. CONDITION (what attitudes or attractions betray possession of "the spirit of harlotry?")
 - A. Promiscuousness (permissiveness; indiscriminateness; looseness)
 - 1. The promiscuous person is one who has few convictions—wants to try everything; accept every idea;
 - 2. 4:1-2 ". . . There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; THEY BREAK ALL BOUNDS and murder follows murder . . ."
 - 3. The promiscuous person is fickle . . . 6:4 . . . "Your love is like a mourning cloud, like the dew that goes early away . . ."
 - 4. The promiscuous person is actually an insecure, selfish person. This is true in one's relation to God and in one's relation to the opposite sex.

Marion Hilliard, M.D., Toronto, Canada, Reader's Digest, says, "Adolescent boys need to know that promiscuity is habit forming and can make a shambles of their adult lives. Promiscuity is, in fact a mass of contradictions. It is not the indulgence of confident, capable men, but of men who have been defeated. It doesn't attract men of achievement, but only men looking for achievement. Promiscuity destroys a person, much as a narcotic does. It has the identical effect of blacking out disappointments and making a man feel 9 ft. tall—and it has the same hangover the next day, with the disappointments still unsolved and the man even less able to cope with them. The promiscuous man is not oversexed at all; he's undersexed. He's not looking to give some-

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thing, but to get it. This desolate pattern can be set in adolescence. A boy must not indulge himself in his youth if he wants to be a coherent, secure adult. He might keep in mind that gluttons don't enjoy the taste of food. An adolescent boy can check on his own incipient gluttony by means of a bit of introspection. When he contemplates his date for the evening, is he considering the reward he will get for his investment? Does he choose her with his mind on getting the most return? This is downright immoral. No boy should expect a girl to pay for her evening's entertainment by permitting petting."

SEXUAL PROMISCUITY AND RELIGIOUS PROMISCUITY BOTH BETRAY "THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY," PERMISSIVENESS—LOOSENESS—FICKLENESS IN RELIGION IS SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY, LOOSENESS TOWARD GOD'S COMMANDS AND STANDARDS IS SPIRITUAL PROMISCUITY AND THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY.

B. Prostitution (abasing oneself, degrading oneself for gain)

1. The harlot or prostitute is one who allows herself to be violated for money . . . she gets no real sense of love or satisfaction out of sex (which is what God intended it to be) for she has abased and degraded it.

A book entitled, "The Call Girl," by Greenwald, case studies by an eminent psychologist of about 18 women successful beyond words in their profession, states: "The average income for each call girl was \$35,000 a year. For that kind of money they must have been beautiful and reasonably intelligent; and with that kind of money they could afford good clothes, leisure, and "some of the good things of life." With them there was no fear of "conception, infection, or detection." They knew how to handle themselves and their careers. Yet they all turned to liquor and dope; and finally went down the drain."

2. Israel PROSTITUTED its relationship to God and the purpose for which God chose her. 4:17-18—"Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. A band of drunkards, they give themselves to harlotry; they love shame more than their glory (Jehovah)."

8:4—"They made kings, but not through me, they set up princes, but without my knowledge. With their silver and gold they made idols."

ISRAEL PROSTITUTED HERSELF TO THE DEVIL . . . ALLOWED THE EVIL ONE TO VIOLATE HER IN ORDER TO GET MATERIAL GAIN . . . ISRAEL BECAME AN ADULTERESS AND LEFT HER HUSBAND GOD, AND WENT AFTER OTHER LOVERS (WORSHIPPED PAGAN IDOLS, MADE ALLIANCES WITH PAGAN EMPIRES)

HOSEA

THE CHURCH (AT LEAST THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE THE CHURCH)
HAS PROSTITUTED ITSELF IN MANY REALMS TODAY

ALLOWED ITS PURPOSE OF SALVATION TO BE VIOLATED IN
ORDER TO GAIN FAVOR WITH THE WORLD . . .

ALLOWED ITS PURPOSE OF SERVING MANKIND TO BE PROSTITUTED
TO GAIN WORLDLY WEALTH

The National Council of Churches General Board met recently and voted to (1) stop the bombing of North Vietnam (2) quit threatening Red China (3) press for Red China's admission to the UN (4) create conditions for cooperation between the U.S. and Communist countries (5) recognize the government of Cuba (6) acknowledge the rights of East Germany (7) remove restrictions on imports from Communist countries (8) condemn the idea that the world is divided into two camps—Free and Communist. THE MEETING HAD LITTLE OR NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST AND THE SALVATION OF MEN ACCORDING TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE N.T.

YES, WHEN THE CHURCH PROSTITUTES ITS RELATIONSHIP AND PURPOSE, IT IS EVIDENCE OF "THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY."

C. Putridness (rottenness, decadence, foulness) such a state is not only useless, but dangerous

1. Israel had become putrid, rotten, foul, useless 7:8-9
". . . Ephraim is a cake not turned . . . gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not." "Israel is defiled . . . Ephraim is sick . . . Ephraim is corrupt . . . a vulture is over the house of the Lord . . . Israel is a useless vessel . . . They have deeply corrupted themselves . . . They have become detestable like the thing they love . . . Ephraim is destined for a prey"

2. It is not necessary to remind you that in many segments of so-called Christendom, today, the church has become putrid. . .
IN SOME PARTS IT IS LIKE THE PUTRID, SICKENING CHURCH OF LAODICEA WHICH THE LORD SAID WOULD BE SPEWED OUT OF HIS MOUTH!

- a. Some churches are dead in ritualism
- b. Some are rotten with immorality
- c. Some are so stingy they are sickening
- d. Some are so concerned with things of the world they are corrupt and perverted

INSTEAD OF BEING SALT OF THE EARTH THEY CONTRIBUTE
TO THE DECAY OF SOCIETY

WHEN THE CHURCH IS PUTRID THE WHOLE SOCIETY IS PUTRID—
SOCIETY IS REAPING A HARVEST OF IMMORALITY, CRIME, VIOLENCE,

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BROKEN HOMES, HOPELESSNESS AND FRUSTRATION . . . BECAUSE THE CHURCH'S WITNESS IS ROTTEN.

In Washington D.C. recently, 3 Lt. of USMC were dining in a Washington restaurant with 3 girl friends. A group of 3 or 4 Negroes walked in, opened fire, killing two Marine officers and wounding the other officer and one of the girls. The crime was hushed up, kept almost off newscasts and out of newspapers, lest the arrest of the Negroes if reported, be falsely labeled "police brutality" and start a riot . . .

In another city, a PTA meeting was being held in a schoolhouse. A gang of teenagers broke into the school, and before the eyes of these parents and teachers, proceeded to smash up and wreck the furniture.

In many high schools even men teachers must walk down halls two or more together for their own protection . . .

YES, THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY IS EVIDENT . . . BUT WHAT ARE THE CAUSES . . . WHY IS THERE A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY IN THE CHURCH????

II. CAUSES

A. Pride; the proud do not trust in God . . . they trust in themselves . . . they are unfaithful . . . in their pride they cultivate the spirit of harlotry

1. Pride was the door by which the spirit of harlotry entered the heart of Eve then Adam
2. "The pride of Israel testifies to his face" Hosea 5:5 "The pride of Israel witnesses against him" Hosea 7:10
3. Israel was proud of its material progress; proud of its international deals; proud of its religiosity; proud of its past . . . etc.

ALL THIS PRIDE OPENED THE DOOR TO SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY
"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate."
Prov. 8:13

Obadiah said to Edom, "The pride of your heart has deceived you . . ."

BISHOP OXENAM, ONCE HEAD OF W.C.C., said, "The doctrine of substitutionary atonement to me is immoral. They are my sins . . . I will atone for my own sins . . ."

GREAT SECTIONS OF CHRISTENDOM BOAST OF THEIR MATERIAL WEALTH . . . HOARD IT . . . BOAST OF THEIR POLITICAL POWER AND SPEND THEIR ENERGIES CULTIVATING IT . . . BOAST OF ITS PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INTELLECTUALISM . . . Pride in all this creates the tendency to be unfaithful to God . . . this opens the door to the spirit of harlotry.

HOSEA

OTHER SEGMENTS OF THE CHURCH BOAST OF THEIR NUMBERS, OF THEIR RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES, OF THEIR RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND THEIR PRIDE IN THESE THINGS HAS INFECTED THEM WITH A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

B. Parrotism (imitating, longing to be like another)

1. The church has imitated and copied the world and has prostituted itself away from God
2. Robert Sinsheimer, prof. of biophysics at Cal Tech, declares that the scientist has now in effect become both Nature with a capital N and God with a capital G. GOD IS NO LONGER NEEDED
3. The church has aped that claim . . . GOD IS DEAD. A survey of some 3000 clergymen (Prot.) by McCalls, Feb. 1968, reveals a considerable number rejecting altogether the idea of a personal God; a majority not believing in the virgin birth; and disbelief in the deity of Jesus; salvation is not the major task of the church.
4. Theologians advocate and many church members are only too happy to practice SITUATION ETHICS . . . "NEW MORALITY" . . . WHICH IS ONLY THE OLD IMMORALITY DRESSED UP IN NEW TERMINOLOGY . . . IMITATING WHAT THE WORLD HAS BEEN ADVOCATING AND PRACTICING FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME!
5. This was the cause behind Israel's spirit of harlotry in Hosea's day, WANTING TO BE LIKE THE WORLDLY NATIONS ABOUT THEM!!!

THE CHURCH IS A BODY OF INDIVIDUALISTS . . . MY FRIEND IF YOUR SECRET DESIRE IS TO IMITATE THE MORALS OF WORLDLY FRIENDS . . . IF YOUR SECRET DESIRE IS TO POSSESS THE THINGS OF THE WORLD . . . IF YOUR WISH IS TO REALIZE THE GOALS AND AMBITIONS OF THE WORLD . . . THEN YOU ARE HARBORING IN YOUR HEART THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY.

MINISTERS, ELDERS, CONGREGATIONS . . . NEVER ENVY THE POWER, WEALTH, PRESTIGE OF WORLDLY INSTITUTIONS, FOR SUCH ARE THE SEEDS OF THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY!

C. Perversity is also a cause of this spirit—this might also be called stubbornness, obstinancy

1. "they rejected knowledge . . ." 4:6
"Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn . . ." 4:16
"they love shame more than their glory" 4:18
"When Ephraim saw his sickness . . . he went to Assyria . . ." 5:13

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"like an oven their hearts burn with intrigue; all night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire . . . all of them are hot as an oven . . ." 7:6-7

"They made kings, but not through me . . . they set up princes but without my knowledge . . ." 8:4

"They turn to Baal, they are like a treacherous bow . . . because of the insolence of their tongue . . ." 7:16

"The more I called them, the more they went from me . . ." 11:2

"Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit . . . the more his fruit increased the more altars he built . . ." 10:1-2

"MY PEOPLE ARE BENT ON TURNING AWAY FROM ME . . ." 11:7

Like those whom Jeremiah exposed in Jer. 6 . . . "we will not" STUBBORNNNESS WILL CAUSE THE HEART TO HARBOR A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

THE CHURCH AND INDIVIDUALS MUST LEARN TO REPENT . . . MUST LEARN HUMILITY

THE CHURCH MUST LEARN TO GIVE IN TO THE WILL OF GOD BECAUSE HAUGHTINESS LEADS INTO A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

III. THE CURE

A. Perception: We need to see or recognize our condition

1. Israel could not see itself as God saw it "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"

2. "I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress they seek me" 5:15

SO IT IS SOMETIMES THAT AFFLICTION AND DISTRESS IS NEEDED TO MAKE US SEE

3. God sent them prophet after prophet . . . "Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth . . ." 6:5

THANK GOD THERE ARE STILL SOME PREACHERS, CHRISTIANS AND CHURCHES CUTTING THROUGH THE FACADE AND VENEER OF SOPHISTICATION AND AFFULENCE WHICH IS HIDING THE CANCEROUS SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY . . . BY DECLARING THE CONVINCING, CONVICTING WORD OF GOD!

The writer of writer of Hebrews says, "Ye have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised." 10:36

Christian Reader, June-July 1968, article "WHY, GOD?" A mother tells of bringing baby home with polio . . . working five

years exercising, praying, hoping, doctoring that the boy would recover . . . through years of caring for him and having eventually to give him reasonable answers for his condition, the mother learned why?

One night while putting him to bed, he asked her, "Mother, why did God give me polio?" She used Bible passages to explain, Heb. 12, II Cor. 1 . . . then she heard Elliot begin to pray, "Lord thank you for my polio. I know you have a purpose for me—something special you want me to do. Help me to watch for your leading so I won't miss it . . ."

MY FRIEND, THANK GOD WHEN YOU ARE TESTED AND TRIED . . .
THANK GOD YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO KNOW GOD'S WORD AND
LET HIM SPEAK TO YOUR HEART . . . THIS WILL GUARD YOU FROM
A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY!

B. Penitence; when we have perceived ourselves and our condition as God has . . . then we must repent . . . WE MUST ALLOW HIS WORD TO CHANGE OUR MIND . . . TO CONQUER OUR OWN WILFULL DESIRES AND AMBITIONS

1. "Come, let us return to the Lord, for he has torn that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up . . ." 6:1-3
2. "Return, O Israel to the Lord your God . . . Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to him, Take away all iniquity; accept that which is good and we will render the fruit of our lips." Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, and we will say not any more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands . . ." 14:1-3

GOD CANNOT CURE ANYONE OF A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY UNTIL THEY HAVE CHANGED THEIR MINDS AND RETURNED TO HIM . . . ALL MEN ARE CREATED MORAL BEINGS . . . THE MORAL CHOICE IS UP TO THEM . . . GOD WILL NOT FORCE HIS LOVE ON ANYONE . . . BUT HE WILL LOVE FREELY ALL WHO WILL ACCEPT IT (14:4-7)

C. Practice; seeing our condition and changing our mind as to our need; WE MUST THEN PRACTICE THE WILL OF GOD AS HE HAS REVEALED IT

1. "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, that He may come and rain salvation upon you." 10:12
DO WHAT THE LORD COMMANDS FOR THIS IS RIGHTEOUSNESS (cf. I Jn. 3:7) . . . PUT YOUR UNUSED EFFORTS AND TALENTS TO USE IN THE LORD'S WORK (break up fallow ground)

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2. "Whoever is wise, let him understand these things, whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right and the unrighteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them." 14:9

CONCLUSION

- I. IT IS NO MISTAKE THAT THE BIBLE LIKENS THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITHFUL PEOPLE TO GOD UNTO THE RELATIONSHIP OF WIFE TO HUSBAND
- A. Hosea's own relation to his wife was typical of the way Israel had acted toward God and how God had acted toward Israel . . . GOD LOVED THEM AGAIN, JUST AS HOSEA REDEEMED HIS WIFE FROM SLAVERY!
 - B. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:25-27
 - C. "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb . . ." Rev. 19:9 "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." 21:2
- II. SO, THE EXHORTATION OF HOSEA TO YOU IF YOU ARE A PART OF HIS BRIDE IN 1968 IS.
- A. Do not be found guilty of harboring in your heart "the spirit of harlotry."
 - 1. Check the conditions which betray such a spirit being harbored in the heart."
 - 2. Be careful not to let pride, parrotism or perversity cause you to sow the seeds of the spirit of harlotry in your heart
 - 3. Perceive, be Penitent and Practice righteousness
 - B. IF YOU ARE NOT A PART OF HIS BRIDE THEN TO YOU IS THE INVITATION OF THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE Rev. 22:17
- III. MANY PEOPLE TODAY THINK THEY ARE CHRISTIANS . . . THEY ARE MEMBERS OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST
- A. When two people marry there are certain things they must do and say before they are legally married. No matter how much they may claim to be married, unless they have gone through the initial ceremonies they are not!

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B. On the other hand, there are some who have gone through the right initial ceremonies, but they are UNFAITHFUL and they are not really married . . .

IN BOTH THERE IS THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

AND SO IT IS WITH THOSE WHO WISH TO BE KNOWN AS MARRIED TO CHRIST, BUT DON'T WANT TO BE FAITHFUL EITHER IN THE INITIAL CEREMONY OR IN THE SUCCEEDING YEARS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING, IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SERVE, WORSHIP—LOOK OUT! THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY IS TAKING ROOT IN YOUR HEART—IF ONE CHURCH IS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER NO MATTER WHAT THEY TEACH—LOOK OUT!

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