

THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK

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Verse By Verse Bible Studies

HOSEA

Minister of Reconciliation

A Practical Study

By

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DEDICATION

To

Winford and Sylvia Hammett

And a Host of Others

Who Have Loved and Supported This Pastor

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

THE PROPHET

About all we know about the prophet Hosea is what we read in the autobiographical sections of the book that bears his name. The name "Hosea" means salvation, which is especially appropriate both in light of Israel's spiritual condition and Hosea's relationship with Gomer, his wife.

Hosea was one of four great eighth century B.C. prophets who proclaimed the "thus saith the word of the Lord" during the "Golden Era of Prophecy" in Israel and Judah. Amos and Hosea prophesied in Israel, Isaiah and Micah in Judah. Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa (in the southern kingdom of Judah) had been called by the Lord to go to Israel (the northern kingdom made up of ten tribes) and proclaim an urgent message of impending judgment that would soon fall upon them if they did not repent.

Amos was the first prophet in the Bible whose message was recorded at length. Around 760 B.C. Amos revealed that God was burdened by the gross immorality and injustice, oppression of the poor, and the insincere worship which might be described as religiosity. Israel was a rebellious people addicted to idolatry, with all the drunkenness and immorality associated with ancient fertility cults. They were characterized by greed and injustice. Amos delivered a warning that the wrath of God was about to be poured out on all their enemies, to which the people all cheered. Then he announced God's judgment against Israel, to which they responded by telling him to shut up and go home. The Book of Amos will provide a good backdrop for a study of the Book of Hosea. Particular attention should be given to the sins of the various nations and the consequential judgment the Lord would send upon them.

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of *Damascus*, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof....I will devour the palaces of Ben-hadad (Amos 1:3-4).

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of *Tyrus*, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof...(1:9f).

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of *Edom*, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the word, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:
But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah (1:11-12).

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of *Judah*, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof....(2:4).

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of *Israel*, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof....(2ff).

Hosea was probably well acquainted with the prophecy of Amos and deeply burdened by his people's total rejection of the warning from the Lord. In the years since the message from Amos, the people had not only not repented, they had gone deeper and deeper into idolatry, immorality and greed. Hosea was particularly concerned about the idolatry of his people and their infidelity to God, which the Lord views as spiritual adultery.

Hosea pictured this infidelity in terms of a disastrous marriage - his own. The parallel between Gomer's infidelity to Hosea and Israel's infidelity to God is striking. Hosea's heart was crushed by Gomer's unfaithfulness to her marriage vows. Israel's infidelity caused the Lord a great deal of sorrow. While the parallel is appropriate, it would be interesting to know how many people who read this Book have more sympathy for Hosea than they do for the Lord. But Gomer's sin pales in comparison to Israel's sin against a holy and loving God. The holiness of God demands punishment for sin. Yet in the end God's love and His commitment to His covenant leads Him to take the initiative in seeking to restore the relationship (reconciliation, redemption).

THE TIME

Hosea's prophetic ministry covered more than 30 years, beginning a few years after Amos delivered His message in Bethel about 760 B.C. (two years before the great earthquake, Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5). Josephus related the earthquake to Uzziah's sin in acting as a priest (II Chron. 26:16). The Scripture helps to provide the historical setting:

The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel (1:1).

THE MARRIAGE

Three different views are usually proposed concerning Hosea's marriage:

1. The story is simply an allegory - there was no actual marriage to a harlot.
2. Hosea was ordered to marry a woman who was already a harlot, possibly a temple prostitute.
3. Hosea married a woman who became a harlot after their marriage.

Though Hosea's tragic experience illustrates God's love for His rebellious people, there are no legitimate grounds for rejecting an actual historical marriage. Whether (2) or (3) is correct is

difficult to determine. Without a doubt, many people are going to be more comfortable with the third view.

THE MESSAGE

In this study it is assumed that the events recorded in the first three chapters are to be taken as literal. Others disagree, but whether we accept chapters 1-3 as allegorical or literal with regards to Hosea's marriage, we should not lose sight of the fact that Hosea's troubled marriage is not the central theme of the Book. His marital problems are recorded to direct our attention to the relationship between God and His chosen people. In Gomer we see Israel, unfaithful, rebellious, ungrateful, corrupt. In Hosea we see Jehovah loving the unlovely, desiring the undesirable, touching the untouchable. How can a man love a tramp like Gomer? How can God love a people so deep in spiritual adultery? Answer that and you will begin to understand something of the love of God and why the Bible tells us "God is love." One thing is obvious - Hosea learned his deepest spiritual lesson through his experience with Gomer. "The Book of Hosea should be read with bifocal vision. One part of one's vision should focus upon Hosea and Gomer. The other part of one's vision should focus upon the Lord and Israel" [Honeycutt:].

Hosea's domestic life is covered in chapters 1-3. The prophetic section, Chapters 4-14, records excerpts from his messages during his prophetic ministry. These messages follow three major themes: the sins of the people, certainty of judgment, and assurance of God's love.

HISTORICAL SETTING

David reigned from 1000-961 B.C.; Solomon from 961-925. In 925 the kingdom split. Jeroboam reigned over ten tribes (Israel) and Rehoboam over Judah (Judah & Benjamin).

DATE

JUDAH

ISRAEL

OTHERS

I. HOSEA AND GOMER PORTRAY THE STORMY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND ISRAEL, 1:1-2:1.

A. God Sent a Prophet to Warn His People of His Wrath Which Was about to Be Poured Out on Them, Hosea 1:1.

Hosea preached, exhorted, and prophesied in Israel during the reigns of **Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah** in **Judah** and Jeroboam II in Israel.

B. We Are Introduced to Hosea's Wife and Children: a Story of Personal Crisis, 1:2-9.

1. **GOMER.** Many believe Gomer was pure at the time of the marriage and became a harlot later, possibly a prostitute in the temple of Baal. Others insist that the language of the first chapter suggests that the Lord told Hosea to marry a woman who was already a prostitute. Those who hold the first position point to a the moral principle involved in God's telling him to marry a prostitute. The second position is based on the language of the Book. This writer subscribes to the former position based on moral principle, plus the parallel between Gomer and Israel. The marriage between God and Israel (in Abraham) was based on faith from the beginning, not infidelity. G. Campbell Morgan insists that Gomer was nor a prostitute at the time of the marriage but later became unfaithful. He writes: "After a while, when she had descended to the uttermost depths of degradation, having become a slave, the property of someone else, Hosea sought her out in her degradation, bought her at the price of a slave, and restored her to his side as his bride. This is exactly what God did for Israel. This thought should point us to Calvary. We have here in the Book of Hosea "one of the most arresting revelations of the real nature of sin, and one of the clearest interpretations of the strength of Divine love" [Morgan:].

In this study it is assumed that the events and people are to be taken literally in spite of some difficulties. Hosea was a real person and Gomer really was a harlot whom the Lord told Hosea to redeem as a sign of what He was trying to do for His wayward bride (Israel).

2. God gave Hosea names for his three children.

a. The first son was named **JEZREEL**. The name was full of meaning for Hosea and for the people of his day. Jehu slaughtered King Joram and the royal family at Jezreel (II kings 9-10). This was God's judgment against the house of Ahab. The house of Ahab had been as evil as the house of Jeroboam. Jehu began a new dynasty, which was no better than the old one. We find a two-fold sense of coming judgment here (1:4).

- (1) The Lord would "avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu..."
- (2) He would "cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel."

b. The second child's name was **LO-RUHAMA** (UNLOVED).

The reason given for the name is that God's mercy on Israel would cease. He had seen His chosen people turn from Him to commit spiritual harlotry with false gods. Francis Shaeffer said that the most meaningless word in the English language is the word god spelled with a small "g." Israel, chosen to be the holy, spotless bride of the Lord, had continually played the harlot. He had been longsuffering, but now things were about to change, because He was withdrawing His mercy.

The Lord demonstrated time after time that Israel's survival as a nation was based on His mercy. Militarily, she never did stack up too well against her powerful neighbors. But for the mercy of God she might have been destroyed by Syria or Assyria in the eighth century BC, or by any number of enemies in earlier times. Now that mercy is being withdrawn. Has the Lord withdrawn His mercy from other nations?

Americans should be keenly aware of the fact that this nation was founded on Christian principles. The founding fathers were deeply committed to the Word of God. This nation has witnessed the hand of God as no other nation since ancient Israel (some would suggest modern Israel).

Perhaps Francis Shaeffer was the first to realize that we had moved into the post-Christian era in America. Some would argue that America never was a Christian nation, but there was a Christian consensus in this country until about 1935. For the Bible Belt the date may have been sometime after World War II. Atheistic evolutionary humanism became the religion of those who shaped the minds of our children and young people from that time until another evolution occurred. That evolution was from atheistic evolutionary humanism to pre-Darwinian evolutionary pantheism. In other words, the New Age Movements, in which atheistic humanism was injected with a dose of religion from the far east, primarily Hinduism.

There is yet another question we should ask. Is it possible that God will reach the point that He will withdraw His mercy from individuals? In Genesis 6:3 we read, "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man..."

c. The third child's name was **LO-AMI** (NOT MY PEOPLE).

Whether the name is intended to suggest that Hosea was not the father of this child is debatable but the message to Israel is clear. They had persisted in their rebellion against the covenant relationship with the God Who had chosen them. They rejected Him in favor of false gods and now God is saying that the ten tribes of the northern kingdom would no longer be called His people. God had chosen a people. They refused to be His people. Now they would no longer be called His people. They would no longer be His covenant people and He would no longer be their

covenant God.

C. The Persistent Grace of God Offers Hope of Restoration, 1:10-11.

God had promised Abraham "that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore: (Gen. 22:17). The denunciation and ultimate fall of the northern kingdom did not negate that covenant. The heart of this passage is found in verse 10: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." This is an expression of His redemptive love. Jezreel, a place of judgment in verse 4, will be the place of future blessings.

Right up until the end the Lord invited Israel to return to Him. He has offered to forgive them and to restore them to fellowship if they would repent. But the time is rapidly approaching when there will be no more mercy for the nation. They are assured that a remnant would be spared. The remnant would be those individuals who joined themselves to Judah, the southern kingdom.

II. TROUBLE VALLEY WILL BECOME A DOOR OF HOPE FOR ISRAEL, 2:1-3:5.

It has been said many times that we do not break the laws of God, we break ourselves upon them. Man cannot escape the consequences of his sins. Robert Louis Stevenson said, "Everybody, soon or late, sits down to a banquet of consequences." Even in this, however, there is an element of hope because God's purpose in judgment is to turn men back to Him.

A. Unfaithful Gomer Is a Shadow of Unfaithful Israel, 2:1-13.

1. Infidelity will bring horrifying consequences, 2:1-5.

"Brothers" and "sisters" in verse 2 refer to individuals in Israel. "Mother" refers to the nation. Infidelity leads to serious consequences, both to individuals and to nations. The words in verse 2 are similar to those in the Jewish formula for divorce. Hosea had grounds for divorce from Gomer, and the Lord had grounds for divorce from Israel.

There are two aspects of this infidelity: estrangement (vs. 2) and renunciation (vs. 3). In verse 2 we see the command directing the children to plead with their mother. Great urgency is seen in this command. In symbol the command was intended for the Israelites who remained faithful to God. They were urged to exhort the unfaithful to repent.

In verse 3 it is seen that refusal to repent will result in public shame and withdrawal of

mercy. How does this passage apply to us today? Is it possible that we should be placing more emphasis on repentance in our society and less on high self-esteem and how to feel good about one's self? For decades practitioners in the fields of human behavior have been trying to help people get rid of guilt feelings. The Lord will do more than help us get over our guilt feelings. He will forgive our sins and extirpate the guilt. The prophets of old came before the people with the "Thus saith the word of the Lord" rather than "thus reasoneth the mind of man."

2. The consequences of infidelity are bitter and stinging, 2:6-15.

a. Infidelity brings futility and disappointment, 2:6-8.

Israel's lust drove her to discover two amazing facts. First, she might have abandoned the Lord to follow after other gods, but she was not free from God's judgment (vs. 6). "Hedge up" does not refer to one who has lost the way, but to a hedge of thorns planted across the way. God was preparing to build a wall around Israel which she could not scale. In other words, she might be determined to go her own way, but she would find that God had planted a hedge of thorns across the way she had chosen. The purpose is both punitive and redemptive.

The second thing she discovered was that her lovers could not bless her as she had assumed. Neither Gomer nor Israel would find any satisfaction in unfaithfulness (vs. 7). In verse 8 we see that she was not aware that it was her Lord who had blessed her with that which she had lavished on Baal. It is the same today. People reject God and then take that with which He has blessed them and spend it upon the gods of lust, the gods of materialism, and all the false gods of our times. Think of it! Millions are taking the blessings they have received from God and presenting them to the gods of Mormonism, New Age gods, and the false god of Islam.

b. Infidelity leads to deprivation, shame and punishment, 2:9-13.

In verse 9 the Lord says He will take back His blessings. The harvest is coming! God tried to reach Israel time and time again through blessings, but when she refused to acknowledge Him, He followed with famine, and pestilence, and war.

In verse 10 "I will discover her lewdness" (KJV) is rendered "I will uncover her lewdness" in the NASV. He will reveal her before her lovers as the shameful creature she is. The excitement, the adventure, and the gaiety of infidelity will come to an end (vs. 11). Many wives have left their families for a road that seemed full of glamour, only to find at the end of the way shame and disgrace.

In 2:12 the Lord says, "And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of

the field shall eat them." The word for forest also be better translated jungle. When disaster comes it will not be an accident. We must be very careful about judging others when they suffer a disaster. but we must also be clear about this. God does take direct action to punish those who are unfaithful to Him.

"I will visit upon her the days of Baalim..." (vs 13) denotes the judgment of God on Israel for the entire period of Baal worship. Baal was the chief Canaanite deity. The word Baal was the general word for god or lord. Charles Ryrie notes that the worship of Baal developed in three stages:

- (1) Placing the Canaanite gods in a secondary place to the Lord (Yahweh).
- (2) Considering Yahweh as a super-Baal.
- (3) Canaanizing or Baalizing Yahweh worship so that the people completely forsook Yahweh.

c. Even at the depth of degradation there is a ray of hope, 2:14-15.

There is still a possibility of restoration. The love of God is seen in His efforts even at this late date to try to persuade His bride to return to Him. He says He will "speak kindly to her." That is (literally), "I will speak to her heart." No one could blame Him for giving up on her, but He is a long-suffering God.

In 2:15 the Lord says, "I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope..." The valley of Achor is the "valley of trouble" where Achan died. Only through the valley of trouble would Israel find any hope of restoration.

The "window of opportunity" is a term which has become popular in recent years. The Lord's door of hope is the window of opportunity most needed today.

B. God's Never Ending Love Is Demonstrated, 2:16-23.

1. The relationship is to be restored, 2:16-17.

a. Israel would no longer be confused about the name of her God, but would utter His name with reverence, 2:16.

She would no longer confuse Him with Baal and she would no longer address Him as Baali (my owner). Instead, she would address Him as Ishi (my husband). Gomer, when redeemed from her evil masters, would once again address the man in her life as "my husband," and not "my

owner." When Israel was restored she would address Yahweh as "my Husband."

b. She would never again speak the names of Baal, 2:17.

Idolatry was the besetting sin of the Hebrew people during the entire period of the Judges, the united kingdom, and the divided kingdom. From the time they entered the Promised Land Israel they continually rejected the true God and turned to idols. They could never plead ignorance because the Lord had commanded:

For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and [one] call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods (Exodus 34:14-16).

And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations (Lev. 17:7).

After the destruction of the northern kingdom in 722 BC, Judah continued to turn from the Lord to Idols. However, following the Babylonian Captivity the returning Israelites (both Judah and the remnant of Israel) resisted idol worship with fanatical zeal.

2. In that day God would make a new covenant with them, 2:18.

a. A time of new beginnings is promised.

b. A time of peace and harmony is foretold.

3. A wedding is planned, 2:19-20.

The Lord used the institution of marriage to illustrate His relationship with Israel:

I will betroth you to me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion (2:19, NASV)

The word translated lovingkindness (*hesed*) is used about 250 times in the Old Testament. "It means loyal, steadfast, or faithful love and stresses the idea of a belonging together of those

involved in the love relationship" [RSB: Notes].

C. Both Hosea and Jehovah Love the Unloving and Restore the Undeserving, 3:1-5.

NOTE: Chapter 3, the heart of this prophecy, is rich in prophetic truth.

1. God sent Hosea to reclaim an adulterous woman - and to love her, 3:1.

Hosea's feelings for Gomer are not revealed at this point. He had loved her and he would love her again, but he went to reclaim her because God sent him.

2. Hosea paid the price for her redemption, 3:2.

Fifteen pieces of silver is equal to about one-half the price of a slave. One and one-half homers of barley was a day's ration for a slave. Had she sunk so low that Hosea could buy her back from her master so cheaply? Had Israel sunk that low? Has America?

3. Restrictions were placed on Gomer, 3:3.

Certain conditions had to be met.

4. The redeemed harlot had to be disciplined and Jehovah would demand the same of His people, 3:4.

5. A complete reunion was offered, 3:5.

Through Hosea's experience he came to understand God's love and compassion. Israel had played the harlot. God suffers when His people are unfaithful. He loves the sinner but cannot excuse the sin. He takes the initiative in trying to restore the unfaithful. Israel deserved God's love no more than Gomer deserved Hosea's love. Man is totally unworthy but God's love offers hope. The only hope there is His hope.

PART II - CHAPTERS 4-14

"Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1).

I. GOD BRINGS AN INDICTMENT AGAINST ISRAEL, 4:1-19.

NOTE: The picture here is of a heavenly assembly serving as a court of law, a portrait common to the prophets (Jer. 23:22; Micah 6:2).

A. The Lord Accuses Israel, 4:1-3.

1. The Accuser and the accused are introduced, 4:1a.
2. Grounds for the indictment are stated, 4:b.
 - a. There is no truth.

Truth is essential to all relationships and Israel had neither been true to God, nor truthful with Him. Strip truth from a marriage and you have the basis for a broken relationship. The Lord places such a high premium on truth that Jesus would identify Himself as the way the truth, and the life. The Scriptures often remind us that the Lord is faithful in all things. We can even list faithfulness, or truth as one of the attributes of God. He is eternally the truth. All truth, all reality, begins with Him and ends with Him.

b. There is no mercy.

The Lord had always been merciful in dealing with His chosen people and expected them to be merciful in their relationship with each other. Amos had only recently charged Israel and her neighbors with being treacherous in dealing with each other. He is a God of justice, but His justice is tempered with mercy and He demands the same attitude of us. "Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). See Also:

Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them

that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations (Deut. 7:9).

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever (I Chron. 16:34).

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7).

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment (James 2:13).

c. There is no knowledge of God.

The idea is that there was no experiential knowledge of God among His people. They had retained a general knowledge in that they knew certain facts about Him and even offered sacrifices to Him. But their actions and attitudes showed that they did not know Him at all.

Is it possible that a great percentage of those who identify themselves as Christian come under this same indictment? How can one profess to know the Lord and have no burning desire to:

- (1) Study the Word of God.
- (2) Spend time with Him in Prayer.
- (3) Worship with His people.
- (4) Let the Holy Spirit control their life.
- (5) Obey Him in all things.
- (6) Honor His Name.
- (7) Honor His day.
- (8) Honor His tithe.

3. Their sins are listed, 4:2.

- a. Swearing.
- b. Lying.
- c. Killing.
- d. Stealing.
- e. Adultery.
- f. Continuous violence (bloodshed touches bloodshed).

Their sins remind one of the catalog of sins Paul listed in Romans 1 that were common among the pagan Gentiles who reject the true God for gods they made in their own image. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom.1:28).

4. Their punishment is announced, 4:3.

For more on their punishment go back and read the Book of Amos. Remember that many of the same people who heard Amos had an opportunity to hear Hosea. We are looking at the same people, the same sins, and the same punishment.

B. The Lord Accuses the Priests, 4:4-10.

Leaders face a greater level of responsibility than others. James warned, "Let not many of you become teachers...for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). The people are not likely to rise above the level of their leaders.

1. The priests and prophets are in the front line of responsibility, 4:4-5.
2. The priests lacked a personal relationship with the Lord, 4:6a.
3. They forgot (actually, rejected) His law, 4:6b.
4. The more they increased the more they sinned, 4:7.
5. They exploited worshipers and encouraged them to sin, 4:8.

This is reminiscent of Hophni and Phinehas, the wicked sons of Eli, the priest who trained Samuel (I Samuel 1-4).

6. These priests had "forsaken the Lord to cherish harlotry" (4:10 RSV).

C. The Lord Accuses the People, 4:11-14.

1. "Wine is robbing my people of their senses" (4:11 TEV).

There is grave danger in social drinking. Alcoholism has reached epidemic proportions in our day but modern man has rejected all warnings in the Scripture. One of the saddest things one sees in our society is the person who has been robbed of his/her senses by alcohol or drugs. Though viewed by society as basically a social problem, addiction to alcohol and drugs is, at its roots, a

spiritual problem. It is said that we are losing the war on drugs, and it seems that most Christian soldiers have gone AWOL in the war against alcoholism. Many have gone over to the other side. We would do well to heed the warnings of the Word of God and it is imperative that we teach them to our children and young people.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise (Pro. 20:1).

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions?
who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who
hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine;
they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the
wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the
cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it
biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder"
(Pro. 23:29-32).

Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that
puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also,
that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" (Hab. 2:15).

When I was a student at Mississippi College I looked for opportunities to serve the Lord. During my first two years I preached every time I had an opportunity, including serving mission churches each summer. During my junior and senior years I served as a student pastor, led a BSU group that went to a rescue mission every Wednesday evening. But perhaps the most fulfilling work I found was my jail and prison ministry. For two and one-half years I went to the Hinds County Jail in Jackson every Thursday afternoon and for one year I preached at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

During this time I learned a lot about the evils of beverage alcohol. I read a report at the time in which some researchers claimed that alcohol was involved in over 94% of cases in which people were sentenced to penal institutions. This was a little before illegal drugs became a major factor. I asked the state's most infamous inmate, Kenny Wagner, what he thought about the report, and without hesitation he said, "It's higher than that."

When I visited one of the prison camps on the expansive prison farm I noticed some poems printed on the wall. While waiting for the men to go to the mess hall for the service, I quickly copied two of them. One was entitled, "No Time for God." The other one reflected lessons many of the prisoners had learned the hard way - by experience. The author was unknown to the man who did the lettering, but the evils of beverage alcoholic was certainly not unknown to him.

THE BAR

The name of each saloon is bar,
The fittest of it's names by far.
A bar to Heaven, a door to hell,
Whoever named it, named it well.
A bar to manliness and wealth,
A door to want and broken health.
A bar to honor, pride, and fame,
A door to grief, sin, and shame.
A bar to hopes, a bar to prayer,
A door to darkness and despair.
A bar to honored, useful life,
A door to brawling, senseless strife.
A bar to all that's true and brave,
A door to every drunkard's grave.
A bar to joy that home imparts,
A door to tears and aching hearts.
A bar to Heaven, a door to Hell,
Whoever named it, named it well.

2. The people rejected Divine revelation in favor of objects of divination, 4:12a.
3. Religious compromise led to spiritual harlotry, 4:12b-13.
4. Gross immorality, both with temple prostitutes and common harlots, was wide spread, 4:14a.
 - a. Both men and women are guilty of spiritual harlotry.
 - b. The men, as head of the home, will bear the brunt of God's wrath.
5. Immorality and Apostasy lead to moral depravity, 4:14b.

D. A Personal Warning to Judah, 4:15-19.

Yahweh warns, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (4:17). Ephraim was the younger son of Joseph who was blessed by Jacob (Israel) above Manasseh, his brother. Ephraim was the dominant tribe in the northern kingdom and its name was often used interchangeably with Israel. This does not mean that God would leave Ephraim alone. The rest of this prophecy proves that. This would be inconsistent with the nature of God and His purpose for Israel. In Hosea 11:8 He asks, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" This is a warning to Judah that she enter into no alliance, either economic, political, or military with Israel. This also serves as a warning to Christians today to avoid alliances with non-Christians which may lead them to compromise the law and the glory of Almighty God.

II. CONSIDER WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GOD WITHDRAWS FROM HIS PEOPLE, 5:1-14.

While it is true that God always takes the initiative in reaching man, it is just as true that no one is redeemed automatically. When a person persists in rejecting God he will, at some point, find himself rejected by God. The Lord had never stopped loving Israel and He had been long-suffering in dealing with His chosen people. But, as Amos revealed, a nation or an individual can reach the point of no return. The following verses from Amos illustrate the point:

In the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Beth-el: and **the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground** (3:14).

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and Because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel (4:12).

When the Lord says He will cut off the horns of the altar, He is saying, "NO MORE MERCY!" He had blessed Israel and sent His prophets with the "Thus saith the Word of the Lord," but she had rejected every effort on His part to get them to repent. Therefore, "prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

A. Israel's Religious Leaders Are Condemned, 5:1-2.

1. Hosea identifies the guilty persons.

2. He restates the charges.
3. He announces judgment once again.

B. Hosea Continues to Warn Israel, 5:3-7.

1. The Lord had perfect knowledge of Israel and her sins, 5:3.

Their ancestors has been warned in the wilderness, "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). God has perfect knowledge of our sins. Nothing escapes His eyes. In Genesis 18:25 we see that He is a righteous Judge: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" In Ezekiel 7:27 we read, "I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I am the LORD" (Ez. 7:27b). David wrote, "For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off" (Ps. 37:28).

2. Israel's degradation made it impossible for her to return of her own accord, 5:4.
 - a. Her evil prevented her return to God.
 - b. Her idolatry prevented her return to God.

3. Pride and arrogance caused Israel to stumble and Judah was influenced by sins, 5:5. **h**

It would be interesting to go to a major book store or library and compare the number of books you find on humility with those on self-worth, self-esteem, and self-love. Andrew Murray wrote a marvelous little book on the subject of humility, but that was many years ago. Perhaps more books would be written on the subject if more of us appreciated the value the Lord places on humility and applied those lessons to our own lives. One sees and hears a lot about pride: "I'm proud to be an American" (I am, too). Or, "I'm proud of my college" (so am I). People take pride in their race, church, family, civic club, and their favorite football team.

But let us never forget that "the fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate" (Pro. 8:13). The word "pride" is used 49 times and "proud" 48 times in the Bible (KJV), and almost without exception they are portrayed as evil. For example, "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in

hand, he shall not be unpunished" (Pro. 16:5).

The word "humble" and related words such as "Lowly" and "humility" are used often, and they are always portrayed as positive, or good. In Pro. 29:23, we see that "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit. James wrote (4:6), "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

4. Superficial worship prevents one from finding God, 5:6.

This is as true today as it was then. All who call Him, "Lord, Lord" will not enter the kingdom of heaven. We might relate this to some of the religious sects and some modern cults which claim to be Christian, but either reject portions of God's word, alter it to suit their purpose, or even present their own teachings as superior to the Word of God. A number of groups, including some New Age groups use the name of Jesus but detract either from His deity or His humanity.

A professional person described a colleague as being genuinely superficial, or sincerely pseudoficial. He went on to explain, "She has been playing this pseudoficial role so long that she doesn't even know it." I wonder if I might have known some people who have been playing church so long that they have convinced themselves it is for real. They talk the talk, but they don't walk the walk.

5. Unfaithfulness alienates man from God, 5:7.

David certainly understood this when He prayed in his great penitential prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Ps. 51:10-12). Sin separates us from God and fellowship is restored only when we repent. "God has demanded what only He can provide, which is of course, the point of the whole book. Israel does not have it, she needs it, and only God can provide it" (Scott) Can you name some things which stand between America and spiritual renewal.

C. Consider the Consequences of Rejecting God, 5:8-14.

Judah came to invade the cities in southern Israel soon after the Syro-Ephriamitic War (735 BC). Israel and Syria, once bitter enemies, discovered that they both faced a far greater threat from Assyria than from each other. So, they combined their forces and tried to stop the aggression of the brutal Assyrian army which was bent on conquest of the whole world as they knew it. They were defeated and final destruction Israel (northern 10 tribes) was immanent. This message may have been preached about that time.

1. The watchman is ordered to sound the alarm, 5:8.
2. Judgment is inevitable and inescapable, 5:9-10.
3. The final picture of Ephraim's doom is set, before her, 5:11-14.

Honeycutt was right when he said, "The Lord is identified as one who is standing beyond history, though acting within history." The Book of Daniel illustrates this point, as does the Prophecy of Isaiah in which the history of Judah is written a century before they live it.

D. God's Withdrawal Is Announced, 5:15.

The Lord says, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early" (5:15). It is important that we note that the Lord said He would withdraw - UNTIL. G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "Such withdrawal is the ultimate and direst calamity that can ever overtake a nation, any nation; a man, any man" [MORGAN:].

III. THE LORD FACES A PERPLEXING SITUATION, 6:1-11.

A. The People Talk of Returning to the Lord, 6:1-3.

1. When trouble comes they talk of returning to the Lord, 6:1.
2. They are counting on a restoration after a short period of time, 6:2.
3. They say, "Let us press on to know the Lord" (NASV), 6:3.

Their problem is not ignorance, but iniquity. They know they are guilty but find security in their knowledge that they can continue in their sin until judgment comes and then they can turn to the Lord and He will restore them. They had forgotten the counsel of Samuel: "And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart" (I Samuel 12:20). The Lord expects us to follow Him with all our heart, and when we sin He insists that we repent with all our heart. "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). See II Chronicles 7:14.

B. The Lord's Response to the People, 6:4-11.

1. They present a problem for the Lord, 6:4-6.

a. The problem is stated, 6:4.

"Your love for me disappears as quickly as the morning mist" (paraphrase). The NASV has, "your loyalty is like a morning cloud." Israel's attempt at self restoration and their attempt to gain God's favor through religious exercises and activities were as deceptive as the morning cloud. It is interesting to observe how much attention the Lord pays to His creation. If it is so important to Him, should it not be important to us? When we observe His creation we should praise Him for "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1).

This compounds the sin of those who walk in the presence of His handiwork and refuse to acknowledge Him. Paul wrote, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). It also compounds the sin of those who observe His creation and give someone credit (a false god), adopt a pantheistic world view, or worship the creation rather than the Creator (Rom. 1 23ff).

The Lord is not deceived by a shallow, or deceptive repentance. Their are people who go through a cycle of sin and repentance. In a sense we all do this in that we all sin and must confess our sin daily (I John 1:9). But it seems that some people are always "repenting" emotionally without any intention of changing their behavior. Genuine repentance involves a change of mind in which the individual makes a firm commitment that, by the grace of God he will not turn around and commit the same sin again - and again - and again.

b. Their sin and their false repentance brought God's judgment, 6:5.

c. "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice," 6:6

The Lord desires loyalty (NASV), or mercy (KJV), or love. What God desires is steadfast love, fidelity, or as Honeycutt puts it, "that quality within covenant relationship which prompts loyalty." God would respond to genuine repentance but all He saw was a sacrificial response to His love and providential care. There was never anything more than a superficial repentance. He loves them and wants to forgive them, but how can He when all He sees is a cursory response.

It is a serious mistake to think God will accept a religious exercise in place of genuine repentance. This is ever bit as serious today as it was in when Samuel asked, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (I Sam. 15:22-23).

2. As soon as Israel entered the land they began their rejection of God, 6:7-10.

a. Like Adam, they transgressed the covenant, 6:7a.

Adam may refer to Adam's original sin, or to mankind in general transgressing God's covenant.

b. "They have dealt treacherously with me" (NAV), 6:7.

c. Their transgressions can be "tracked with bloody footprints" (6:8, NASV).

d. Israel had defiled itself with violence and harlotry, 6:9-10.

3. Judah would not escape punishment for its sins, 6:11.

Judah must not gloat over what the Lord would do to Israel. Rather, they should take what they saw God doing with Israel as an object lesson. The prophets pleaded with Judah to profit from Israel's transgressions and the price she paid. But Judah refused to learn from Israel's mistakes just as she refused to be loyal to the covenant the Lord had made with her. As a result she would pay a severe price. God's delay in judgment gave her a false sense of security but her rebellion refusal to repent brought the wrath of God down on her (as prophesied by Isaiah and by Jeremiah a century later).

We should take this as a warning to us today. God has not changed and His response to sin is the same as it was in Hosea's day. I have spent a lot of time reading statements made by some of the founding fathers of America and I can assure you that, regardless of claims to the contrary, this nation was founded on Christian principles. For example, Patrick Henry said:

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ."

John Quincy Adams explained why Christmas and the Fourth of July were our two top holidays:

"Is it not that, in the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior? That it forms a leading event in the progress of the gospel dispensation? Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth? That it laid the

cornerstone of human government upon the precepts of Christianity?"

Have you seen anything like that in your child's textbooks lately? David Barton, in two booklets entitled "The Foundations of American Government" and "America's Godly Heritage" (see quotes above) has documented the quotations of many of the founding fathers of our country, including George Washington, John Adams, John Jay and James Madison, the "Chief Architect of the Constitution. In his "Farewell Address" Washington left us with about a dozen warnings, four of which were religious. His "Farewell Address had not been seen in text-books for nearly four decades. In the last few years his "Farewell Address" has resurfaced - minus the four religious warnings. Washington stressed that "the two foundations for political prosperity in America were religion and morality, and that no one could be called an American patriot who attempted to separate politics from its two foundations" [*America's Godly Heritage*:].

We are well aware of decisions handed down by the Supreme Court in recent years and how they impact Christianity. But are you aware that for generations the Supreme Court sought to keep the Bible as the basis of our government? Many today would be surprised at the ruling handed down by the Supreme Court in 1892:

"Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of the Redeemer of mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise. In this sense and to this extent, our civilizations and our institutions are emphatically Christian." [*America's Godly Heritage*:].

In 1947 the Court began to speak of a "separation of church and state." Finally one of the judges who was fed up with the phrase "wrote a dissent that if the court did not stop talking about the 'separation of church and state,' people were going to start thinking it was part of the Constitution" (Barton, "America's Godly Heritage"). That was in 1958! In 1962, in the case of *Engel v. Vitale*, the Supreme Court delivered its first ever ruling which completely separated Christian principles from education as they struck down school prayer. In 1963 they banned Bible reading.

You may use all the psychological and sociological arguments you like in support of those decisions. There are some sticky issues involved. But have you noticed that in documenting the moral degeneration of America, how many of the charts begin with the year 1963? Think about it!

Think of the commitment of the early settlers and their leaders to the Lord and to His Word. Think of the great victories God gave us through the work of Roger Williams and Obadiah Holmes, of John Leland and others behind the Bill of Rights. Think of price early Baptists paid in the fight for religious freedom. Think about all the ground we have lost. Think about it, and **SOUND THE ALARM!**

IV. ISRAEL'S IS CALLED A HALF-BAKED RELIGION, 7:1-16.

A. The Evils of a Half-Baked Religion Exposed, 7:1-7

"God is the only one who can heal Israel (6:1), yet God will not heal as long as evil is covered up" (Scott). Hosea is trying to show God's desire to heal and restore; but "that desire is constantly frustrated by the pollution of the nation and its willful ignoring of God's will" (Morgan).

1. The situation seemed helpless, 7:1-2.

a. God wanted to heal Israel but all He could see was her wickedness, 7:1.

"When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without."

INIQUITY is one three words frequently used for sin in the Old Testament. Sin means to miss the mark. Transgression means to cross over the line, to sin with one's eyes wide open. The idea behind iniquity is twisted or crooked. A progression in sin is seen as one moves from simply falling short of, the mark (as an archer misses the target), to deliberately stepping over the line, to a condition in which one's life has become twisted and warped by wickedness, and evil behavior is the natural expression of the heart.

EPHRAIM is the name of the dominant tribe of the northern kingdom. As such the name is used interchangeably with Israel. SAMARIA was the capital of Ephraim (Israel).

b. "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness," 7:2.

We may paraphrase this statement, "It never enters their mind that I will remember their wickedness." Is it any different today. I am not just talking about those who professes to be atheists or agnostics; nor am I thinking about those who belong to cults, or the occult. I am thinking of church members whose lives are filled with unconfessed, and therefore unforgiven sin. We must be concerned about sin in society, but we should be much more concerned about sin in the church.

2. Conspiracy in the palace is condemned, 7:3-7.

a. Hatred, violence, and deceit characterized the people surrounding the king, 7:3.

Compare this setting with David and the people with whom he surrounded himself (II Samuel 23:8ff). David surrounded himself with thirty mighty men, including the three chief men.

Compare them with some modern heads-of-state and the leaders with whom they surround themselves.

b. Drunkenness and violence were associated with the king's celebrations.

It must be remembered that from the time Jeroboam I led the ten tribes in revolting against Rehoboam, Israel never had a godly king. The godly kings one reads about in during this period (Hezekiah, Josiah, et al) were in Judah, the southern kingdom. Five of Israel's last six kings were murdered in cold blood.

c. "All night their anger smoldered, and in the morning it burst into flames" (7:6 TEV).

This is evil at its worst. The point is that this was not an occasional outburst of anger but a simmering, smoldering anger ready to erupt at any moment, over any thing.

d. Murder of leaders became the national past time, 7:7.

B. Israel and the Nations Are Indicted (7:8-16).

1. "The people of Israel are no better than a half-baked loaf of bread" (7:8).

This is an abhorrent condition. God expresses His contempt for those who are lukewarm (Rev. 3:15ff). "God had a purpose for Israel. Through her He desired to redeem and reconcile the nations. The tragic truth, however, was that Israel was not willing to be used by God to realize this purpose" (Wood).

2. Unconscious decay is denoted, 7:9a.

"Gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knoweth it not." Obvious signs were present but Israel was unaware of them. Samson did not know that Jehovah was departed from him (Jud. 16:20). When Phinehas' wife learned of the death of Eli and her husband and that the ark was taken, she went into labor and when the baby was born, "she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken" (I Sam. 4:21).

Is it possible that the glory of God could depart from an individual today without his knowing it? What about a church? Jesus warned the church at Ephesus, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:4f).

3. Reliance on foreigners had robbed them of their strength, 7:9b.

"Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart:
they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria" (Hos. 7:11).

Jeremiah prophesied against the same alliances. Judah did not know whether to form an alliance with Assyria for protection against Egypt, or with Egypt against Assyria. He wrote:

"And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" (Jer. 2:18).

"Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria" (2:36).

4. Israel refused to return to God, even after punishment, 7:10.

Amos noted the same thing (Amos 3-4). The tried to reach them through blessings and they would not return to Him. Then He tried to reach them through judgment, but they still refused to repent.

5. "Israel flits around like a silly dove" playing politics with Egypt and Assyria, 7:11-12.

They would continue to seek such alliances but the Lord had already ruled against them. "When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard" (7:12).

6. They are doomed, 7:13-15.

"Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them!
because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed
them, yet they have spoken lies against me" (7:13).

7. They kept on turning away from God to follow gods that were powerless, 7:16a.

8. They were as unreliable as a "crooked bow," 7:16b.

V. GOD'S LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING, 8:1-14.

This chapter contains a message of judgment; judgment in the sense of punishment and calamity about to fall upon the people of Israel. They had sown to the wind and now they must reap the whirlwind (8:7). Compare this with Paul's warning to the Galatians:

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).

The theme of chapter 8 is the broken covenant. Jehovah entered into a covenant with Israel and they persistently violated it, often for long periods totally disregarding the God of the covenant and dishonoring the covenant of God. Now the Lord commands, "**Sound the alarm!**"

A. Judgment Is Coming, 8:1-13.

The reasons for the judgment are enumerated in dramatic fashion and colorful language. It has been suggested that repetition is to be expected since these messages were preached over a period of some thirty years. At this point a little common sense seems appropriate. While Hosea might well have announced the reasons for God's judgment over a period of thirty years, that would not have precluded him from preaching all of them in one message.

The same applies to the Sermon on the Mount. The fact that Jesus might have taught the various truths set forth in the Sermon does not mean that He could not have preached or taught them all at one time. Some say it was too long to have been preached at one time. There is no doubt that it is too long for a lot of American church members. But tell that to a saint in Russia, South Korea, or Zimbabwe and see if he thinks it was is long. Paul was known to preach a lot longer sermons, a fact to which Eutychus could have testified.

The trumpet sounded to warn of the threat of an imminent attack on a city. The advances of Tiglath-Pileaser III were characterized as an eagle circling to throw itself on Israel. God is seen as working in history, even using pagan nations to carry out His purpose. Observe the reasons for

God's judgment and ask yourself if these same reason might bring the judgment of God upon an individual or a nation today.

1. They were covenant breakers, 8:1-3.

The Lord is saying, "My people have broken the covenant I made with them" (v. 1). Yet Israel continues to cry out to the Lord that they still know Him (v. 2). But God is not deceived: "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him" (v. 3). Tiglath-Pileaser is circling for the kill.

2. They did not consider God in choosing their leaders, 8:4.

The Lord continued, "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not" (v. 4). Christians have a responsibility to God to vote for leaders. This country desperately needs leaders who are sensitive to God's will and purpose for our nation. John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court - and one of the three men most responsible for the Constitution - declared:

"Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty - as well as he privilege and interest - of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers" (Barton, "America's Godly Heritage).

3. They continued to worship the golden bull Jeroboam had set up in Samaria, 8:5-7.

One of the strongest arguments against idolatry is its folly. See Hab. 2:18; Isaiah 44:9ff; Jer. 10:3. Here the sin is compounded as two sins are combined. When the northern ten tribes pulled away from Rehoboam, they followed Jeroboam I and made him their king. In so doing they set a pattern for choosing kings without the Lord's approval. God had chosen the house of David to reign over His people. But as soon as the kingdom split Jeroboam set up the golden calf at Samaria to keep the people from returning to Jerusalem to worship. They spurned God and now they were being spurned by Him. Man mad religions have always failed, and always will. There are no exceptions. Even those that closely resemble the real thing are destined to fail.

a. The calf could not protect them against God's anger (8:5).

b. "Workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces" (8:6).

c. "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (8:7).

He explains, "it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall

swallow it up." As Haggai says, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Hag. 1:6). Amos wrote of the coming day of the judgment:

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD" to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him" (Amos 5:18).

4. They looked to Assyria for help, 8:8-10.

a. They would be swallowed up by Assyria, 8:8a.

b. They would be scattered among the Gentiles, 8b-9.

c. God as the source of the judgment, Assyria simply the instrument, 8:10.

5. Altars to false gods invited judgment, 8:11-13

a. "Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin" (v. 11).

"They knew this from the Law: "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure **your sin will find you out**" (Num. 32:23).

b. They offered sacrifices, but the Lord rejected them (v. 12-13).

B. The Penalty for Breaking the Covenant Is Divine Judgment, 8:14.

The sins of this chapter are summed up in the statement, "For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof" (v. 14). For the meaning of "forgetting" see Deut. 4:9.

This involves more than simple forgetfulness. Man may not forget God in the usual sense, but he can deny Him, or reject Him. This is not a sin committed by accident. It involves conscious, deliberate rebellion. As Paul wrote, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Romans 1:28).

VI. APPROACHING THE POINT OF NO RETURN, 9:1-17.

A. Opportunity for True Worship Will Be Taken Away, 9:1-9.

1. Israel celebrated its feasts like pagans, 9:1-3.

The NASV reads, "Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations..." The point is that Israel had followed her pagan neighbors in the worship of Baal, with all the licentious fertility rites associated with it. Gross immorality was associated with the worship of the fertility gods. Israel never stopped claiming Yahweh as their God; but they continued to go to participate in these drunken orgies before the altar of Baal. They gave Baal credit for blessings they received from God.

Imminent judgment should be expected. From the time the Israelites entered Canaan to possess their possessions, she embraced the worship of her pagan neighbors. The Lord had commanded His people to take the land and drive out all those who worshiped false gods. Rather than driving them out, they joined them in their heathen fertility rites. The Book of Judges chronicles the cycle of Israel's spiritual harlotry, repentance, and deliverance. The cycle was repeated some fifteen times.

- (1) Israel turned from God to play the harlot with false gods, the drunken orgies being a major attraction.
- (2) God would raise up an enemy to oppress them.
- (3) When the oppression became unbearable they called on the Lord to deliver them.
- (4) God would send a judge to deliver them.
- (5) They would be faithful and prosper as long as that judge lived and served as their judge.

The period of the judges ended with the anointing of Saul as the first king of Israel, but the idolatry did not end. It would take the Babylonian Captivity to put a stop to idolatry. Those who returned from Babylon would rather die than bow before an idol - and often did.

The judgment would be very severe: "They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria" (9:3). Some of the people did go to Egypt (II Kings 25:26). Others would be scattered among the pagan Assyrians and

among other people conquered by them. Some would stay in the land, but the Assyrians would bring in pagan people and scatter them among in Israel. The Samaritans of Jesus' day were the offsprings of the amalgamation of the Israelites and their pagan neighbors.

2. Joy in God's forgiveness will end, 9:4.

The wine offering (the pouring out of wine) symbolized the joy that came to one whose sins were forgiven. The people would be deprived of the opportunity to make this offering - meaning they would be deprived of the joy symbolized by it. When they were taken away by the Assyrians they were not permitted to continue their fasts and festivals. All food would be needed to sustain life. None would be left for the festivals and sacrifices.

Amos gives a shocking picture of this. The Lord said, "I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places..." (Amos 4:6). The picture might seem a little crude, but what he is saying is that there would be no reason to pick your teeth. It also may mean that if you pick your teeth, what you extract would be swallowed and not spit out. God had sent such a famine and they still had not repented.

3. The Lord had a question for them, 9:5-6.

The question is, "What will you do..." In other words, when the famine comes and there is no bread for a sacrifice, what will you do then?" When judgment comes, what will you do?" It is about time America asks itself that same question. Since entering the post-Christian era in America, I believe we have been on course for an encounter with the Lord. That encounter may be the return of Jesus Christ. We had better pray that it is, because if it is not, it might be an encounter with God as His wrath is poured out on us as it was on ancient Israel. I am prepared for the former; the latter scares me half to death! But in one way or the other, we seem to be on a collision course with our destiny.

Religious freedom has always been important to believers in America. Most people seem to take it for granted. The attitude of a large percentage of the church is one of indifference. But what if worship opportunities were restricted, church buildings destroyed, and assembly denied. What they?

4. They have a distorted vision, 9:7-9.

They called the prophet a fool, and "the man of the spirit" mad. They thought Hosea was demented, when, in reality, he was the watchman of the nation. They rejected the true prophet and his message in favor of the false prophet and a compromise ethic. Ahab despised the true prophet (Elijah) in his day (I Kings 22). Festus thought Paul was mad (Acts 26).

Once, after several warnings about the dangers of the New Age religions in America,

a few people criticized me, saying that they did not want to hear about that. An elderly man, a seasoned saint, said, "Let me tell you something, its not the messenger you don't like, its the message that is bothering you." He was right. If I had been saying what they wanted to hear they would have been happy with me. How do I know that? Because when I was new on the field, I preached a number of textual and topical sermons and some expository sermons as I tried to determine where my people were in terms of Bible knowledge and understanding. The praise was embarrassing!

In verse 9, the sins of Israel in Hosea's day are compared to the evil in the days of Gibeah (Judges 19-21) when the tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out.

B. Sin Brings Grave Consequences to Israel, 9:10-12.

1. At first Israel was like fresh fruit in the desert, 9:10.

They were like those grapes found by Joshua, Caleb and the other spies (Num. 13). But Israel began to fail God even before they entered the Promised Land (at Baal- Peor, Num. 25:1-3). They yielded to the pagan rites of the Moabites. After entering the land they found the Canaanite fertility cults especially attractive. Divine retribution would be severe.

2. Baal worship was one of the reasons Israel would be scattered among the nations, 9:9-10.

Their forefathers wandered in the wilderness for forty years because of their disobedience. Now the Lord says the Israelites will be wanderers among the nations because of her sin. It is not that they had not been warned. The Lord had said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, (Gen. 6:3). Now He says, "Yes, woe to them indeed when I depart from them! (NASV). And woe to the person today from whom God departs! Can you think of anything more horrible?

C. Hosea's Vision of the Judgment (9:13-14).

1. Ephraim was planted a luxuriant vine, 9:13.

This was not a new metaphor for Israel. God had planted Israel a fresh vine with a marvelous potential. But she continually rebelled against Him and turned to false gods.

Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it (Ps. 80:8).

"And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also

made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes" (Is. 5:2).

Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? (Jer. 2:21).

2. They will get what they deserve, 9:14.

The NASV translates this verse: "Give them, O Lord - what wilt Thou give them? Give them a miscarrying womb and a dry breast." What they can expect is a famine, the like of which their generation had never seen and could not imagine.

D. The Price of Rebellion (9:15-17).

1. It began at Gilgal, 9:15.

See I Samuel 11:14f. The Israelites rejected God as their king and demanded a king like the Philistines, Amorites, etc. When they persisted God instructed Samuel to anoint Saul. God wanted to be their King but they rejected Him.

2. Ephraim is stricken, 9:16.

3. Exile from the land is foretold again, 9:17.

Judgment was coming and it was not coming by accident or as some random act of some enemy. "My God shall cast them away" (NASV). During the "cold war" period America and the Soviet Union had an undetermined number of missiles with an incredible number of nuclear warheads aimed at each other. The total megatons of explosive power packed in those missiles is incomprehensible to the average person. We heard a lot about the red phones and the "button" the American president and his Soviet counterpart kept within reach at all times.

I visited the SAC Museum at SAC (Strategic Air Command) Headquarters, Offutt Air Force Base, Bellevue, Nebraska. A pilot who had just landed the "Looking Glass," one of three specially equipped planes which flew above the Midwest in eight hour shifts. One of the planes had to be in the air at all times. It was under the command of an Air Force general and staffed by highly trained officers. When we stopped at the end of the runway I got out and made pictures of one of the planes as it prepared to take off. I discovered the next day that we had caused an "alert."

There were several alerts each day, sometimes the result of some signal bounced off a satellite, but more often than not, it was a human error. At the museum there was a model of the top secret room from which a counter nuclear attack could conceivably have been directed. Ideally it would have been directed from Washington, but if it had been bombed, it would have been directed

from SAC, unless it had been bombed; in which case it would have been directed from the airborne Looking Glass.

A lot of people feared that the world would be destroyed by an accident. They were afraid someone would hit the button by accident, or possibly the red phone would fail. As evangelicals thought about it we became convinced that when the time comes, the world would not be destroyed by accident. The Bible is Clear: when the time comes it will be by the direct will and purpose of God.

VII. HOSEA DETAILS THE FRUITS OF UNGODLINESS, 10:1-17.

Chapter 10 is a complete message. It concludes a section in which the prophet was dealing with the pollution of the nation and the punishment of the rebellious people.

A. Hosea Sees Israel As a Luxuriant Vine, 10:1-8).

1. The luxuriant vine, Israel, yields its fruit, 10:1-4.

Some see this as a vine that sheds its fruits, but the picture here is of a luxuriant vine bearing fruit. But what are the fruits? False altars, worship rituals, shrines, idolatry, ungodly kings. Israel compounded her guilt by piling sin upon sin:

a. "The more his fruit, The more altars he made," (10:1, NASV).

b. Her heart was faithless (10:2).

They are guilty and now they must bear their guilt. The Lord was prepared to break down their altars and destroy their sacred pillars. There are a lot of people in this day who are bowing before pagan altars, and when they do so they are bowing that which has already been marked for destruction.

c. Their kings made covenants with worthless words, 10:3-4.

They would say they had no kings because they had none worth mentioning. Their kings made worthless covenants. Injustice sprouted like poisonous weeds in a plowed field. One has to cultivate a field to produce a bountiful harvest, but obnoxious weeds, grass, and vines do not have to be cultivated.

2. Idolatry would be the target of God's wrath, 10:5-8.

Beth-aven (v. 5), which means "house of wickedness," was Hosea's contemptuous name for Bethel (House of God). The people would cry out for that which it had been lost. The priests mourned for the House of God, but the glory had departed from it. Samaria would be cut off (10:7) and all the places of Baal worship would be destroyed. "Then they will say to the mountains, 'cover us!' And to the hills, 'Fall on us.'"

B. God Pronounced Judgment on Israel, 10:9-15.

1. War would be the instrument of God's judgment, 10:9-10.

Gibeah is symbolic of gross immorality and cruelty (Judges 19). The chastisement would come at God's discretion. He is always in control, and unlike human beings, He never runs out of time and His hand is never forced.

2. A time of crisis should make them aware of the need to return to the Lord, 10:11-12.

The Lord focused His judgment primarily on Israel, but Judah would not escape His wrath. He still appeals to them to "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (10:12). He had placed no heavy yoke on Ephraim's neck, but now, since she had been disobedient, He would cause her to draw a heavy load.

3. Instead of repenting Israel had responded to judgment by compounding sins and trusting in chariots of war, 10:13-15.

"Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity" (v. 13). In 8:7 He says, "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." Israel had trusted in her military power (v. 13b).

In verse 14 Shalman may be Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria. This is the only record of a battle at Beth-arbel. What we do know is that war had a devastating effect on women and children. In fact, the Assyrians were known for cruelty to the extreme. I noticed in some of my earlier Bible studies I referred to the Assyrians as the Nazis of the Old Testament period. Hosea, in 13:16, shows just how cruel they were:

"Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in

pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up."

This is a ghastly picture. The Assyrians would sweep down upon a defeated foe, putting men who resisted to the sword, sinking hooks into the flesh of those marked for slavery, and slaying others. They ripped open the abdomen of pregnant women so that their baby would fall out on the ground. They slaughtered the little children.

We are told of spiritual awakenings in early days in America. We are even told of many who turned to God for help, strength, and comfort during the First World War, the great Depression, and World War II. But during the war in Viet Nam there was little evidence of America's awareness of her need for God. No energy crisis, no earthquake or other disaster, and no other natural disaster has caused America has caused this nation to fall on its face before God and seek His forgiveness and His guidance. Is it possible that God is dealing with us right now?" If so, have we responded with indifference, or do we seek His will.

In summary, chapter 10 describes Israel as prosperous and luxuriant, spending her increase on the extension and improvements of her places of worship (vv. 1-2). It seems to have been the best of times. Actually, it was the worst of times for the religious system. Her altars were about to be crushed (vv. 3-8); warfare was imminent (vv. 9-15). Still, the time was right to turn to the Lord. Surely, they were familiar with II Chronicles 7:14:

"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."

This is America's one and only hope today. There will be no legal, political, sociological, economic, ecological, educational, or psychological solution to our problems. The only answer is spiritual, and the only spiritual solution is Jesus Christ. The false gods of our time are totally power- less to help us, but they have been instrumental in getting us into the fix we are in today.

VIII. THE DEPTH OF GOD'S LOVE IS REVEALED, 11:1-12.

Because God is holy and righteous He hates sin and His nature reacts against it. At the same time He loves the sinner. "Perhaps Hosea had this in mind when he placed between two sections condemning Israel's sin one of he most heart warming poems on the Father's love to be found in all literature" (Wood).

A. A Loving Father Called Israel Into Sonship, 11:1-2.

Israel was not chosen for its merit. God might have chosen Egypt with its wisdom, or Assyria with its military might, but He chose a slave people to be His son. For a better understanding of His unique relationship with Israel, see Deut. 7:7-8. God's relationship to Israel has been previously seen in a husband-wife relationship. Here Israel is portrayed as a stubborn son (Deut. 21:18ff). A warm and personal relationship is seen in the translation of verse 1 in the NEB: "When Israel was a boy, I loved him; I called my son out of Egypt." This reminds us of Matthew 2:15 (God's bringing His Son out of Egypt).

B. A Loving Father Suffers When His Children Are Insensitive to His Love (11:3-4).

The Lord loves them now and He has always loved them but they never returned His love. They bow before pagan altars, but God and God alone had loved and protected them.

Yet it is I who taught
Ephraim to walk,
I took them in My arms;
But they did know that
I healed them.

I led them with cords of a
man, with bonds of love,
And I became to them as
one who lifts the yoke
from their jaws;
And I bent down and fed them.

11:3-4, NASV.

C. A Loving Father Must Chastise His Children (11:5-7).

Israel abandoned God and the consequences of this rejection could not be escaped. He would abandon them - "until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress seek me" (5:15). They were bent on turning away from God; now He is bent on purging Israel of idolatry, even if only a remnant was spared.

D. A Loving Father Could Not Give Up His Children (11:8-9).

A parent can appreciate this. The sins of a child hurt the parent. God suffers when His children sin but He cannot compromise with sin. His children must be punished but He will not give up on them. With God, there is hope for those who repent.

E. A Loving Father Calls His Children Home (11:10-12).

The Lord will roar like a lion to call His children home. In 5:14 and 13:7 the lion's roar is a sign of judgment. Here the lion roars against the enemies of His people.

IX. HOSEA PAINTS A PICTURE OF ABSOLUTE FUTILITY, 12:1-14.

Honeycutt translates 12:1: "Ephraim herds the wind, and pursues the east wind all the day long." One may herd domestic animals, and even some wild animals, but how does one herd the wind? The very thought is absurd. This might suggest to us that some of the methods we employ in our quest for personal happiness and world peace are about as ludicrous as trying to herd the wind.

In this study of Hosea I am expanding and rewriting an earlier study. The first was prepared about eighteen years ago. The above paragraph was copied almost verbatim. In my wildest imagination I would never have believed the changes I have seen in this one area. We have government agencies, the congress and White House all trying to find a solution to some of the world's problems. We may add various "Think Tanks," special interest groups, colleges and universities, and various movements, such as the New Age Movements.

They are all telling us what is wrong with the country and the world. We are practically bombarded with information about health care, foreign trade, recession, inflation, the economy, racial problems, depletion of natural resources, a possible hole in the ozone layer, toxic waste, pollution, sexual harassment, and abuse of every description. It seems that every one has an answer - or at least an agenda.

I have a confession. I sometimes listen to talk radio when I am driving, and I like to read letters to the editors of news papers and news magazines. The host of the radio programs, whether Rush Limbaugh or one of the others, invites people to call in and ask questions or suggest solutions to various problems. Editors invite readers to write letters to the editor.

I am convinced that everyone has a world view, whether they realize it or not. As I listen to the radio or read the letters to the editor, I like to try to determine where some of these people are coming from and where they are going. It is amazing how many people think they have the definitive answer to most of the problems of the world, from criminal rehabilitation to the threat

to the tropical rain forests. I never cease to be amazed at how many obviously intelligent people never include God in their answer.

It is equally as interesting to listen to these people, or read editorials and letters in response to them to try to determine what their authority is. If they reject the Bible, does science become their authority? A political science text book? A psychologist, or a Harvard law professor?

It is disturbing to observe how few people include God, or the Word of God, in their proposals. Is it possible that most of the experts, especially those with humanistic or New Age solutions, may be in the same position as the people Hosea describes who are trying to herd the wind?

A. Hosea Points Out the Futility of Betraying the Lord and Seeking Salvation Through Political Alliances, 12:1.

1. Ephraim follows the east wind rather than the Lord, 12:1a.

They had to see which way the wind was blowing before making a decision, and at the time the strongest wind was blowing from the east (from Assyria). Actually, 11:12- 12:1 forms a unit and should be read together. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah warned the people of the folly of trusting in alliances with other nations rather than trusting God. World leaders today fly all over the world to peace conferences to seek peace from those who reject the Prince of Peace. This writer is not suggesting that they should not attend these conferences, or seek peace with other nations. He is simply suggesting one reason that so many of these treaties and alliances do not hold up.

2. "He multiplies lies and violence," 12:1b (NASV).

B. The Lord Brings an Indictment Against His People, 12:2-6.

1. The Lord brings an indictment against Judah, 12:2.

The setting is a courtroom where Hosea is bringing a legal suit for the Lord against Judah. Both Judah and Israel are God's chosen people, but as we see in 11:12, there is a difference: "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints." If the Lord would indict Judah, surely Israel would not escape.

2. Jacob is an example of repentance and restoration, 12:3-6.

Jacob was an unusual character, a rascal and a scoundrel when view from his worst side, cheating, deceiving, and manipulating for his own personal gain. But on the positive side he was a man of courage and commitment, and compassion. Esau's younger twin was born grasping his brother's heel, thus the name. Jacob means "heel grasper," denoting one who follows after another to trip him up, a deceiver.

But God saw a potential for good in Jacob and chose him for a special place in His plan for man's redemption. In Jacob we see a rascal turn to the Lord and be transformed from a trickster into "Israel," a prince and servant of God. As long as there is a Jew or a Christian on earth, the man who gave God's people their name will ever be remembered as the man who wrestled with the angel of the Lord and prevailed against him (12:4).

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el (Gen. 28:18-19).

Jacob was chosen by the grace of the Lord, not through his merit, to be blessed by the Lord and to be used by the Lord to bless others. On the basis of his example Israel is urged to emulate their forefather and:

- (1) Return to the Lord.
- (2) Hold fast to love and justice.
- (3) Wait continually on your God.

C. Trust in Wealth Gives a False Sense of Security, 12:7-14.

1. Sarcasm is used in referring to Israel as Canaan, 12:7-9.

The word translated merchant may be translated Canaan, or swindler. Canaan refers to the lowlands of Palestine, including some of the lands of the Phoenicians, who were known for their "wheeling and dealing." The Phoenicians were the sea merchants of the ancient world, sailing to all the ports of the Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Aegean Seas. This might have led ancients to associate the word (Canaan) with the word "merchant" or "trafficker."

More to the point here, as G. Campbell Morgan has noted, the word Canaan means "subjugated, humiliated; but it always connotes the humiliation of depravity, pollution." In the Bible, Canaan when used in this context, is a symbol for the corruption which results from a lack of

personal knowledge of God. The word is not used interchangeably with heaven. Israel stands for the direct opposite of Canaan.

When the Lord calls Israel Canaan, He is saying that Israel was created to make Canaan Israel, but Canaan had made Israel Canaan. Instead of Israel changing Canaan, Canaan had changed Israel. Could this be happening to the church in the world today? Some are concerned about what sin is doing to the world, but we had better take a look at what sin is doing to the church. We are disturbed when we cannot see the church changing the world, but we should be more concerned by the way the world is changing the church. And, dear friends, we had better face another fact - we not only have the world in the church, Satan is on a rampage in the church in America at this time.

Ephraim (Israel) continues to proclaim her innocence and bases the claim on the her material prosperity. Verse 8 in the NASV reads:

And Ephraim said, 'Surely, I have become rich,
I have found wealth for myself;
In all my labors they will find in me
No iniquity, which would be sin.'

But God's responds to that claim in verse 9 (NASV):

"But I have been the Lord your God since
the land of Egypt;
I will make you live in tents again,
As in the days of the appointed festival.

Ephraim might deny her sin on the basis of her prosperity, but the Lord had been their God since Egypt and knew all her transgressions. The people would once again live in tents, as in the wilderness, because her cities would be destroyed.

Wealth is a poor barometer of spirituality or holiness. Job's friends held the same view. They reasoned, "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" The Pharisees in Jesus' day subscribed to the same philosophy. Unfortunately, based on some of the health and wealth junk food being served up by some of the tel-evangelists. The true saint should be grateful for his health and be a faithful steward of wealth, but his richest blessings are not physical.

2. God's revelation was continually rejected, 12:10-14.

The Lord had spoken through visions and parables to the people through the prophets. So, they are without excuse. Their spiritual condition was not the result of ignorance, but iniquity. Paul, in the first chapter of Romans, tells us that the real issue even among the most primitive pagan is iniquity and not simply ignorance.

In verse 12 Hosea refers to Jacob's flight to Syria (Aram). The account of this flight and his marriage is found in Genesis 29. The prophet of verse 13 is Moses, by whom God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt. In verse 14 the Lord is saying that Ephraim would have to bear the consequences of sin. The KJV reads, "Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him." The NASV reads:

Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger;
So his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him,
And bring back his reproach to him.

X. A FINAL STATEMENT OF JUDGMENT IS MADE, 13:1-16.

Chapter 13 is a final statement of Israel's doom. In a sense it summarizes all the preceding messages of judgment. Here the blame for Israel's plight is placed squarely on her own shoulders. The punishment would come in the form of a savage war and a cruel exile - and exile from which she would never return (only a remnant would be spared). And contrary to the claim made by one of the major cults, Israel did not simply migrate to America to become the American Indians! If God scatters a people, only He can gather it again. If He loses something, don't look for it; only He can reveal it.

A. Idolatry Is Portrayed in All Its Folly, 13:1-3.

1. Ephraim, once exalted, is now abased, 13:1.

Ephraim was the dominant tribe in the northern kingdom, and as such it was often used interchangeably with Israel. Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph, was honored over Manasseh, his brother, when Joseph brought his sons before His father Israel (Jacob) for his blessing. Some think the reference here is to Mt. Ephraim, the place of the residence of the king. Whether the tribe of Mr. Ephraim is intended, the application is to all Israel. Israel worshipped Baal and died (spiritually).

2. Hosea denotes the increase in idolatry, 13:2.

Man is so created that he has an inherent need for God. He has a capacity to know God and his life is not complete without God. He will worship something unless he suppresses that spiritual drive. Paul deals with this in Romans:

...That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen... so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things (Rom. 1:19-23).

Idolatry is the false answer to the religious call within each person.

3. Hosea announces the verdict, 13:3.

"Therefore" is a common word for introducing the verdict in prophetic speeches of judgment. Here Israel is characterized as:

- (1) A morning mist (or cloud).
- (2) Dew which soon disappears.
- (3) Chaff that is blown away from the threshing floor.
- (4) Smoke from a chimney.

The point is clear. Apart from the Lord there is no permanence, no security, no hope.

B. There Is No Other God, 13:4-8.

1. The Lord had been their God since He led them out of Egypt, 13:4.

They were never to have known any other god but Him. It was His redemptive activity that was responsible for their deliverance from Egypt. Hosea indicts Israel for having forgotten this (vv 4-6). There are two aspects of this indictment. (1) It was the Lord alone who redeemed Israel, and (2) Israel had forgotten His redemptive love. The Lord is emphatic, "I am the LORD thy God." This title is a way of affirming the singular nature of God. He is the only real

God. He alone is God. The word "know" in the Old Testament means personal or experiential knowledge (See Isaiah 1:2). The word "forget" involves more than a memory lapse. It implies active renunciation, rejection.

2. They forgot God when they became proud, 13:5-6.

He had been Israel's defender and provider in the wilderness, but "they became satisfied, and being satisfied, their heart became proud" (NASV). That is when they forgot the Lord.

3. The Lord promises to destroy Israel, 13:7-8.

God had been their protector in the wilderness, but now He will be her judge and destroyer. "Like a lion He would devour; like a leopard He would lie in wait or lurk, suddenly springing on an unprepared people; and like a bear His judgment would be ferocious" (Ryrie).

C. There Would Be No More Kings, 13:9-11.

Israel had demanded a king (I Sam. 8:6-18). They abandoned the Lord in favor of an earthly king. Can you imagine a nation giving up Jehovah for Saul? But that is exactly what they had done. The Lord asks, "Where are your kings now?" They had had six kings in fifteen years after the death of Jeroboam II. None of them could save Israel, nor would there be any king in their future who could save them. Their only hope was in the King of Kings.

D. There Is No Other Hope, 13:12-16.

1. Israel's sins are recorded, 13:12.

Her sins are recorded and secured (bound up). waiting for judgment. man's sins are still written down, awaiting the judgment of the Lord.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works, (Rev. 20:10).

2. Israel had an opportunity to live, but was too foolish to take it, 13:13.

The picture here is of an unwise son, too foolish to come out of the womb into the new life of obedience and fellowship.

3. The Lord would refuse to save Israel, 13:14.

God has offered to save her, but she refused. Therefore, He says, "Compassion will be hidden from my sight." He asks, "O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting" (NASV). Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin...But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:55).

4. Israel had flourished like a reed, but the Lord was about to destroy her, 13:15.

She had flourished like a reed for a while, but now God will send a hot east wind from the desert to dry up the moisture and the reed will be destroyed. Assyria was the violent, savage east wind the Lord would unleash upon Israel.

5. The verdict against Israel reaches a shocking note, 13:16.

Hosea prophesied, "Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up." Assyria waged a savage and cruel warfare. War is especially hard on women and children, whether in ancient Israel, or in Somalia or Bosnia today. But the Assyrians made infants and children deliberate targets. What can be more shocking than taking an infant by the heels and dashing its brains out against a wall or a tree? Can you imagine anything more sickening than deliberately ripping open the abdomen of a pregnant woman and spilling the fetus out on the ground?

We should thank the Lord every day that one of the great accomplishments of Christianity is the protection and benefits offered women and children in most "Christian lands" (there are some sad exceptions, of course).

XI. A CALL TO REPENTANCE, 14:1-9.

A. The Wanderer Is Exhorted to Return, 14:1.

Hosea concluded this section with a passionate plea to Israel to return to the Lord

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The appeal to return is predicated on the assumption that Israel had stumbled. The reason they had stumbled was sin. "Return" here means repent. The word "stumble" is used in Jeremiah 18:15; Isaiah 3:8; 59:10. A person may stumble beneath a heavy burden; Israel had stumbled under a load of sin. One of the most serious aspects of sin is seen in the fact that sin separates one from God. The only solution is to return to the Lord for His cleansing and restoration.

B. The Way Back Is Suggested By Hosea, 14:2-3.

Hosea pleaded with Israel to return to the Lord in prayer: "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." The NASV reads:

Take words with you and return to the Lord.
Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity,
And receive us graciously,
That we may present the fruit of our lips.

Confession and repentance were demanded of the rebellious people. It is important to see that man is expected to verbalize his prayer of repentance. In I John 1:9, we are told, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." To confess literally means to "name the same thing." In other words, we must name the sin in our prayer of repentance.

1. Hosea counsels Israel to confess her sins, 14:2.

Honeycutt says "Putting faith into words, acknowledging guilt, asking forgiveness; each of these and other aspects of religious experience not only need to be verbalized, they must be cast into word form if they are to become real."

Is it possible that we may sometimes become so concerned with nickels and noses that we try to oversimplify repentance? We ask lost people (and backsliders) to "pray the sinner's prayer," but rather than letting them pray, we put the words in their mouth. We may elicit a shallow, thus false response by trying to make it easy for the person to whom we witness. This may help explain why some of the people we "lead to the Lord" do not stay with the Lord - or with the church. The response was not valid or genuine.

The Bible says, "Take with you words, and return to the Lord." Verbalizing our sins forces us to face them in a way we might like to avoid. Sometimes a sincere person may pray, "Lord forgive us of any sin we may have committed this past week?" In public prayer, we may not name our sins and we certainly should not confess for our neighbor, but in private prayer, and at times in public prayer, we must come before the Lord with words of repentance. See Romans 10:9-13.

2. To confess God is to repudiate idolatry, 14:3.

a. Israel must not trust in alliances with ungodly nations, 14:3a.

Dependence upon anyone or anything other than God would lead to separation from Him, and therefore to judgment. Israel violated this command time and time again. The Lord had already dealt with this issue (Hosea 7:11): "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." Judah was well aware of the warning God had given Israel, but she stubbornly refused to obey the Lord. Over a century later He asked through the prophet Jeremiah, "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria" (Jer. 2:36). Zechariah later wrote of the time when God would take action "and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart away."

b. Israel must promise never to worship idols again, 14:3b.

When the Lord permitted Israel to enter the Promised Land He commanded them to drive out the idolatrous people who inhabited the land. They disobeyed Him and in time joined the pagans at their places of worship. From that time until the eighth century BC, Israel continually turned to idolatry. Whatever sins they might have been guilty of, idolatry was always at the heart of it. It would remain so in Judah until the Babylonian Captivity. When God returned a remnant to the land in 536 BC, they returned without idols. From that time forward the Hebrew people rejected idolatry with a passionate zeal. During the inter-biblical period many Jews chose a violent death rather than bow before a pagan god or worship at a pagan altar.

C. Forgiveness and Restoration Is Promised Israel if She Repents, 14:4-8.

1. The Lord anticipated bringing His people back to Himself, 14:4-5.

Here the Lord is speaking about Israel rather than to her. Special attention should be given to the "I wills" in this passage. God is acting, and will act in behalf of His people. Students of the Word may subscribe to different interpretations of this passage. Is this healing to take place at some time in the near future? Will it be associated with the coming of the Messiah? Does it have to do with the return of the Jews to Israel in 1948, or the Six Day War of 1963? Or, does this refer to the blessings the Lord will pour out on Israel during the Millennium?

2. Even though she has a spotted past, Israel is promised a glorious future, 14:6-7.

Read this entire passage, within the context of the entire Book of Hosea. Then review the history of Israel. Consider some practical questions:

- (1) Did Israel realize these promises in the eighth century BC?
 - (2) What happened to Israel not too long after this was written?
 - (3) Could God not accomplish it, or were the blessings withheld because of Israel's unfaithfulness?
 - (4) Were these blessings experienced by Israel at any time before the birth of Christ?
 - (5) Were they realized during the earthly ministry of Jesus?
 - (6) Is there any evidence that these promises were ever fulfilled from the crucifixion of Christ to World War II?
 - (7) Are the promises being fulfilled today in Israel?
 - (8) Is it possible that these blessings will only be visited upon Israel during the Millennium?
3. After wandering Israel returned to God she would have nothing more to do with idols, 14:8.

The Lord gave Israel and Judah an opportunity to repent. For ages it was His great desire to reconcile Israel unto Himself. But in time it became more and more obvious that Israel would not repent. Therefore, the Lord revealed His plan to forgive and restore individuals who repented. He declared that only a remnant of Israel would be spared.

That remnant consisted of two groups. First, there were the Jews who fled to Judah before the Israel was defeated and the people dispersed by Sargon II in 722 BC dispersed by Sargon II of Assyria. Second, when Jews of Judah were permitted by Cyrus to return to Jerusalem in 536 BC to rebuild the temple, there were some dispersed Jews from Israel who attached themselves to the returning Hebrew people from Judah. Thus, the Lord's promise that He would spare a remnant from Israel and a remnant from Judah was fulfilled. The remnant idea has a prominent place in Old Testament.

Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, [and] we should have been like unto Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:9).

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and

such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth (Isaiah 10:20).

And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt (Isaiah 11:16).

A major purpose in the Babylonian Captivity was to purge the Jews of idolatry. When they returned from Babylonian Captivity, they returned without idols. They also returned with a determination that they would die rather than worship idols in any way.

CONCLUSION, 14:9.

"Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein" (Hosea 14:9).

It seems almost beyond belief that anyone could really understand the message contained in this prophecy and not confess his sin and plead for God's forgiveness. To see God as He is revealed in the Book of Hosea is to love Him and to desire to be loved by Him. The God revealed in Hosea - that is the kind of God one can believe in - and the only God I can accept. Recall His word to His people: "I am the Lord your God...you have no God but me. I alone am your Saviour" (Hosea 13:4, TEV)

In the space below list some ways in which the message of Hosea may be applied to America. List first some of the sins common to both ancient Israel and modern America, and then some of the things the Lord expects of us.

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