

Hosea #6 Ch. 9-10 Hosea

by Chuck Missler

Chuck Missler's sermon on Hosea 9-10 emphasizes Israel's spiritual adultery and the dire consequences of turning away from God in favor of idols.

Duration: 1:00:24

Scripture: Galatians 6:7

Topics: "Hosea"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by discussing a parable from the Bible about a vineyard. He explains that God's vineyard represents the people of Israel and how they have failed to bear good fruit. The preacher then quotes a commentary that suggests that the kind of leaders a society gets reflects the moral character of its people. The sermon concludes by connecting the failed vineyard metaphor to Jesus being the true vine and the importance of staying faithful to God's covenant.

Transcript

Well, for tonight's study, we are in the book of Hosea. Just go to the book of Daniel, turn right, Hosea. And then, chapter 9, verse 1. Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy as other people, for thou hast gone a-whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every corn floor.

See, at every thrashing floor, Israel had erroneously attributed their prosperity of the harvest to idols, to Baal. She'd become an adulteress, in effect, offering worship to Baal, and thus receiving from Baal, in a sense, the wages of a prostitute. There's an analogy, we won't get into the early chapters of Hosea, where God instructs him to marry, go and earn, that whole thing.

I'll leave that behind us for right now. But the wages, in effect, of the prostitute were wheat at the thrashing floor, vines and figs, we'll discover, and food, water, wool, linen, oil and drink, and other chapters. So, Israel believed, by prostituting herself to worship Baal, that Baal was blessing her crops and gave her other necessities of life.

Now, by the way, before that sounds too remote and abstract to us, where do we attribute our prosperity? Wall Street? Our industrial productivity? Internet? Whatever. Interesting. We forget where our prosperity comes from, too.

Verse 2, The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her. See, these plentiful harvests were about to end, and this is actually a fulfillment of the covenant curses. And put in your notes, you won't take the time, because you've got a lot of material to cover, but you might put Deuteronomy 28, almost the whole chapter, certainly the last half of it.

Deuteronomy 28 talks about the, you know, the blessings and curses depending on their obedience. It mentions the Lord will take away their grain and their wine and so forth, as will be explicit here. Blessings abused are blessings withdrawn.

And that's a basic principle, and that's also in Deuteronomy 30, verses 17 and 18. Well, this judgment that God's going to bring upon them will not only have their crops fail, that's just the loss of prosperity is only the beginning of it. Then they're going to go into exile.

Verse 3, They shall not dwell in the Lord's land, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. Ephraim, of course, is the primary tribe of the Northern Kingdom. It's used as a synonym for the Northern Kingdom.

And there's some very interesting wordplay going to be forthcoming here. Moses, you may recall when they were, when, you know, Charlton Heston took them out of Egypt. You know all the story.

He commanded them. Moses commanded them never to return to Egypt. Why? Egypt represents bondage.

That's expressed in Exodus 20, verse 2. Some of the exiles probably did go to Egypt, as historians tell us, but the word I believe is used in this text primarily idiomatically to speak of bondage. So God's judgment will eventually be accomplished through invasion and exile. The land belonged to the Lord.

They were tenants, and the condition of occupancy was obedience. So the Lord was responsible for its fertility. So when they attribute the blessings to Baal, they forfeit the blessings of living on it in peace and prosperity.

Again, there's verses behind all this. They'll be in the notes. We'll just keep moving.

But again, Egypt is mentioned as a symbol of exile. Assyria would be the actual location. The empire that was on the rise, the one that would be used by God as an instrument of judgment was primarily Assyria.

There were some that did go to Egypt, according to Deuteronomy 28, 68, and some others, but a relatively small number of them, actually, we believe. But it's interesting that Israel failed to observe the ceremonial laws, in terms of their diet and so forth. And as a result, they would be forced to live and eat in an unclean land.

And there's an interesting irony here. Rather than the fruits of God's blessing. So the punishment really fits the crime.

They'd been defiled by their sin, and now they're going to have to eat defiled food in a defiled land. Israel, in effect, had proved herself unworthy of the freedom that she had enjoyed in the land. That bothers me.

How about us? How about America? How about our heritage? We also, for 200 years, have been here. A little over 200 years. And we have neglected the God that has blessed us through most of that period of time.

We've turned from them. We've got a pagan society. We have enforced paganism in our schools.

And there's not justice in our courts. You can go right through the list. I won't start on that.

We could spend all evening just summarizing a few of the loose ends. And so it's a very frightening parallel. Maybe God has changed.

I don't think so. Verse 4. They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord, neither shall they be pleasing unto Him. Their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners.

All that eat thereof shall be polluted for their bread, for their souls shall not come into the house of the Lord. Now, the wine offerings it mentions here are going to cease. There are specific wine offerings in Exodus 29.

They were also used with the burnt offerings in Numbers 28 and the peace offerings in Numbers 15. But that's mechanics. The main point is in their exile, legitimate worship of the Lord would end.

And God had prescribed very specifically how He wanted to be worshiped. They would be prevented, precluded from doing that in exile, thus denied that opportunity, denied that blessing of worshiping Him. You know, it's funny how we take that for granted.

We had this wonderful music here, and we had a chance to worship. Do you know that in a large portion of the world, that would be under penalty of death? Take that so for granted. Take that so for granted.

We get these flyers or bulletins of Voice of the Martyrs or some of the ministries that are dealing with the persecuted Christians throughout the world. We probably turn a deaf ear to that. We're so busy with our other things.

And yet, if nothing else, aside from praying for, first of all, praying for our brothers in chains, we should recognize how precious it is and maybe how temporary it is. It's interesting, their Levitical worship had been corrupted by hypocrisy, so now they'd be denied the privilege of worship at all. And, again, our own disdain for our own freedom of worship being eroded by this insanity of political correctness, this insanity of hate crimes and all that, absolutely frightening abuse of law and justice in this country.

So, now earlier in this verse, it mentions that the bread of mourners. You may not pick up on that, but see, if you are a mourner, then the bread you eat is defiled ceremonially because you've been in touch with a dead body. So that verse will be a little clearer to somebody that understands the Levitical laws and so forth.

And such bread was not fit for use in worship, is the point. Verse 5, What will ye do this solemn day and in the day of the feast of the Lord? This is sort of a rhetorical question, but it basically emphasizes the exiles' plight, since Israel would be unable to celebrate their most important festival. Both the days there are singular, by the way, and some scholars believe that the Feast of Tabernacles is specifically in view, but that's based on some conjectures.

So what will Israel do when they are in exile in the land and shut out from being able to perform their worship services? Interesting predicament. Leviticus 17:11 says that without the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sins. How can they shed blood? There's no altar.

There's no temple. They're in a real jam. By the way, they've been in that jam since A.D. 70, for virtually 2,000 years.

Why? There's no temple. The Torah is very explicit, and Judaism has had a problem for more than 1,900 years. And the way they've dealt with that is they've rationalized it around to a religion of works, and attempts to gain favor and so forth.

They've really stepped back from the literalness of the Torah itself. Had to, because the Messiah they rejected is the only path available to any of us. Verse 6, So destruction is going to sweep over the land, and those that happen to escape the sword of the invading army, in any case, are going to face exile.

And again, I think Egypt here is idiomatic for bondage in general. Memphis, however, is about 20 miles south of modern Cairo. It was the capital at that time, and it was a famous burial place, so it was associated with burial and so on.

I won't start on their worship of death and all that. We'll just keep going here. But the ultimate destruction, especially to the Jew, would be to be dying in a foreign graveyard.

And so few would ever return to their homeland. Jeremiah 44 deals with this same passage. We'll move on.

But incidentally, while they're in exile, meanwhile back in Israel, the exiles' possessions, their treasures of silver, their homes and so forth, would lie in ruins and be overgrown with briars and thorns and so on. Verse 7, The people's hostility towards the prophets was one of the several reasons for judgment. And this is no different than what Amos encountered when he was preaching against Israel.

He was met at Bethel by Amaziah, the official head of the northern kingdom's religious establishment, who regarded his words as treacherous and kicked him out of the country. That was Amos'... Again, he was rebuffed by the officialdom. And Jeremiah, later, about almost a century later, when he's dealing with the same kind of an issue down to the south, to the house of Judah, he got the same treatment.

He was thrown in prison as a traitor. The Lord Himself. You may recall when he was... when they didn't like his teachings, they accused him of being demon-possessed several times.

John 7, verse 20 is an example. Now, by the way, the word maniac here refers to one who's insane. That's what the inscription is using.

The same term is used by godless men who ridicule two prophets in several places, in 2 Kings, Jeremiah, and elsewhere. The hostility here is used also in chapter 9, verse 8. It refers to the intense animosity that Esau felt against Jacob, if you remember all of that, in Genesis 27. Anyway, the ungodly disregard God, they disobey God when His will is made known unto them, and they despise God when He chastens and judges them.

That's the plight of the ungodly. Verse 8. The watchman of Ephraim was with my God, but the prophet is the snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God. See, the great irony here is that Israel tried to ensnare the prophets that God had placed as watchmen over the nation.

A prophet was a watchman over the nation, and they tried to ensnare them, and so forth. And yet he was the watchman, or the prophet, who was responsible for warning the city of the approaching enemy. And

that's exactly what Hosea is trying to do here, but, of course, getting nothing but rebuffs in response.

And now the house of his God here, the phrase refers to the land of Israel, incidentally, not just the temple and such. But anyway, verse 9. They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah. Therefore He will remember their iniquity.

He will visit their sins. Now here's an allusion that occurs several times in these two chapters. You say, what on earth is all about Gibeah? And this story in Judges 19 through 21 is so grim that there actually have been movements by anti-biblical sources to remove it from schools, because this story in the Bible is not fit for children.

Gibeah was a town that was occupied by the tribe of Benjamin, and it had become a symbol of terrible, terrible deeds. And specifically, the one in Judges, a Levite was traveling, was far from home, could not make it back home before dark, so he sought shelter. There was no shelter in the town that was offered him until finally one old man did offer him shelter for he and his concubine.

A band of depraved youths gathered outside the host's house and desired the Levite for homosexual abuse. And the host, of course, declined that. It's very analogous.

You may recall a similar situation in Genesis 19 when two angels visited Lot, and the townspeople gathered to abuse the two angels homosexually. I'm always amused by that because there's all kinds of scholars that say that angels can't have sex. Well, the homosexuals didn't know that.

Anyway, I won't get into that here. Anyway, you may recall that the disturbing thing about Lot was he offered him his daughters. And, of course, the angels just interfered, blinded all of them, got them out of there.

And there's many lessons out of that chapter 19 of Genesis. But here, in any case, he does instead... He won't let them have the Levite. He regards homosexuals to... He wouldn't let that happen.

But he did give them the concubine, which they abused all night long, and she ends up being left dead at the door. The Levite in the morning picked up her body and went home, cut her up in 12 pieces and shipped it to each of the 12 tribes of Israel that caused an outrage throughout Israel among the 12 tribes. And they went and expressed that outrage against the tribe of Benjamin and almost wiped out the entire tribe of Benjamin.

All but 600 of the Benjamites were wiped out. Now, by the way, the outrage is on both sides. Not only what that gang of guys did, but the reaction, everything was excessive.

And so it's all in Judges 19 and 21 when you're interested in reading some X-rated Bible chapters. As it's summarized in Judges 19, it says, Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt. It's put there as a milestone, as a measure of just how depraved the culture had become.

Not just those guys, the whole thing. And now Hosea is alluding to that here, that that benchmark of their past history is now rivaled by the current state of affairs in the Northern Kingdom. And we could talk about the U.S., but let's move on.

Verse 10, I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at our time, but they went to Baal Peor and separated themselves unto that shame, literally that shameful idol, and their abominations were according as they loved. This section now begins with a reference to Israel's origins and the extreme delight that God had at their beginning.

The grapes in the desert was like an unexpected surprise. The idiom is intended to convey an unexpected surprise when you're in the desert. Grapes in the desert, I mean, wow.

The delicious early fruit of the fig tree was irresistible. And you find, by the way, these idioms are used in Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Micah, a lot of places. But then the Lord's attitude towards the people quickly changed.

When they arrived at Peor, they engaged in sexual immorality with the Moabite Midianite women as part of the fertility rites associated with the worship of Baal Peor. That's all in Numbers 25 if you want to get double back on it later. Now, this Canaanite fertility god, Baal, fertility god, that's going to be important later, so get that in your mind.

It's mentioned here because it also set a pattern for their subsequent history. This movement from joy to despair, by the way, is also in the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, for those of you who are familiar with that passage. But, you know, it's really hard for us to relate to the insanity of paganism, on the one hand.

On the other hand, it's the primary religion taught in our schools. But who can tally the blood that is spilled on the altars of the gods who are not and the demons who are? It's interesting, when the knowledge of the true and living God is refused, false gods inevitably fill the vacuum. And if you want a description of that, you can go to Romans chapter 1, especially verses 22 and 23.

We've done that before in our studies, so we'll keep moving. But here's another interesting observation. In this case, let's take a couple of these.

Turn to Psalm 115. It's fascinating, these little tidbits that are tucked away in the Psalms. 115, it talks about those who make idols.

Verse 4, The idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not. They have eyes, they have, but they see not.

They have ears, but they hear not. Their noses have they, but they smell not. Some might debate that part, but that's a pun.

They have hands, but they handle not. Feet they have they, but they walk not. Neither speak through their throat.

Verse 8, the one I want to focus on. They who make them are like unto them. So is everyone who trusteth in them.

If you worship an idol, you become like that idol. You become. The scripture tells you right here.

It also says the same thing in Psalm 135. Psalm 135, verse 15. Same essential passage from 15 through 18.

They that make them are like them unto them. So is everyone that trusteth in them. Now, let me ask you a question.

Are idols of stone cold, unresponsive, impersonal? Of course they are. So if you worship them, you'll become cold, unresponsive, impersonal. They ask you about the world.

We speak a lot about the world, the materialistic world. Is the world materialistic? Is it harsh? Is the world unforgiving? You bet. If you worship the world, what will happen to you? You'll become materialistic, harsh, and unforgiving.

You become like that which you worship. Let me give you the good news. If you worship Christ, what will you become like? Devoutly to be wished.

You say, well, gee, we don't worship idols. Wait a minute. Colossians 3, 5 tells you that covetousness and greed are idolatry.

America is probably the most advanced nation in the development and export of covetousness. It's called Madison Avenue and all that goes with it. We're experts at it.

We're probably the world's experts at it. Anyway, back to Hosea 9, verse 11. But as for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird from the birth and from the womb and from the conception.

There we go. We got a great theological debate to deal with here. Birth, from the birth, from the womb, and from the conception.

You know, the group of ministers were arguing about when life begins. Okay. The liberal Protestants said, of course, life begins at birth.

The Catholic priest says, no, no, no, no. Life begins at conception. How many have heard those kinds of debates? The Jewish rabbi says, you both got it wrong.

Life begins when the dog dies and the kids are off to college, see? You know, what's funny about those silly cracks is to see the people add them to their notes, you know. It's interesting that as punishment for Israel's sin regarding their involvement with Baal, that the Lord's going to bring covenant curses of infertility. And how, you see, do you understand God's interesting use of irony? The punishment always fits the crime.

So they're going to have covenant curses of infertility, for death, exile of the nation. Now the name Ephraim, which is the idiom that God is using to speak of the whole northern kingdom, it's the lead tribe, but it uses the, the name Ephraim means fruitfulness. In fact, it means double fruitfulness.

In Genesis 41, I believe it is, and also 48, it mentions that. You'll pick it up that when the son was named Ephraim, that was meant fruitfulness. So Ephraim means fruitfulness, and they are really fruitless.

The irony, that's the problem. So conception, birth, and children are going to be taken away. It's interesting, Hosea, more than any other ancient writer, traces the results of the national immorality resulting in a declining population.

Now this verse speaks of Ephraim's glory is going to depart as swiftly as a bird. That idiom is pretty straightforward. Verse 12, Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not

be a man left.

Yea, woe unto them when I depart from them. Boy, so they'll become sterile and barren and all of that. What a contrast.

Verse 13, Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place, but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. Now this Tyre phrase in here, Tyre, of course, was a very, very major Phoenician commercial center, but what this Hebrew actually says is there's an attempt to make sense out of a very difficult Hebrew text, and what some people feel is just trying to contrast Ephraim's prosperous past to the ultimate destruction of Tyre, but there's a time problem if that's the case. The Septuagint translates this a little differently, that Ephraim's sons, as I have seen, are destined for a prey, and that seems to develop better parallelism with the rest of the verse.

Now, the Septuagint, interestingly enough, was the Greek rendering of the Old Testament, developed the third century before Christ, and the Septuagint really was the Christian's text throughout the New Testament period. Most of the quotes in the New Testament are from the Septuagint. In the first century A.D., the rabbis were upset because the Septuagint had become the Christian's Bible, so they had a whole Council of Yamnia, out of which came the Masoretic text, which is what most Bibles use, but it's interesting.

I'm really quite intrigued with how many discoveries we're making by little subtleties in the Septuagint that have really been overlooked, even though it's a much older source than the Masoretic, but let's move on. Verse 14, Give them, O LORD, and then there's a break. He doesn't finish his thought.

What wilt thou give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. That's what Hosea... Hosea's prayer for them is broken off. He doesn't know how to finish it.

Give them, O LORD. What? What do you give them? He understands the indictments against them. He understands the futility of this.

He doesn't know what to ask for. It would seem that he's choosing childlessness, which has also been prophesied here, as a way to limit the miseries that will occur in the Day of Judgment. And there are some strange verses subsequent in this passage that are hard for us to relate to.

But in any case, many would miscarry, watch their children die in the forthcoming invasions, and of course the women's breasts would be dry with no children to nurse and so forth. There's a parallel passage in Exodus 32 where Moses does the same thing, praying for Israel, and he breaks it off. And a very similar kind of emotional agony in his prayer.

We'll keep moving. Verse 15, All their wickedness is in Gilgal. For there I hated them.

For the wickedness of their doings, I will drive them out of mine house. I will love them no more. All their princes are revolvers.

Now Gilgal stood for the historic rebellion against God and the establishment of a human monarchy. 1 Samuel 11 and a number of other chapters. And also, as thus alluded to here, is the current spiritual rebellion in the shrine to Baal.

And there's allusions to this also, several of them in Amos. And again, it'll be in Hosea chapter 12. But we'll move on.

God says, I will drive them out of my house. The verb there in the Hebrew is *garash*, which is the same word that's used when Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden. It's the same verb that's used when Cain was driven out.

And the same word that's used when Hagar and Ishmael were driven out. But other than the Genesis use of that word, all the other places it's used, pretty much, are when they were driving the Canaanites out of the land in Exodus and Numbers and Joshua and Judges, all the dozens of them. And it's that same word that God is now using to drive Israel out of their own land because of their sin and their hypocrisy.

And we'll get into all of that. Now, one can build a whole case here that God, that the language also is that which would be used in a household, like driving an unfaithful wife out from the household. Again, echoing the early two chapters in Hosea with Hagomer and all of that.

Now, the princes were revolters. This, again, is opposition to the Lord's covenants, epitomized by the Gilgal fertility cult. And, again, leads to them being driven out and so forth.

Verse 16, Ephraim is smitten, the root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit. Again, there's an irony here, bearing no fruit versus the name Ephraim itself meaning fruitfulness. Yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.

It says the root is dried up. A withering root is an expression of hopelessness. There's no hope for the future if the root is withered.

The root's still there, you can always grow something out of it. But if the root is withered, it's an expression, it's an agricultural idiom for hopelessness. And, of course, with the widespread infertility and infant mortality, Ephraim would be compared to a withering plant.

You say, well, gee, Chuck, that's not our situation, isn't it? I was fascinated. I've been doing some reading, you know, economic forecasting kind of, you know, futuristic kind of reading. And this one particular author makes a huge case.

It's a rather interesting book because it's a very optimistic book. When I start looking at reality too much, I get down, so I try to read one of these optimistic, you know, this boom-coming kind of books. The author makes a big case about the increase in new family formations, baby boomers, all those kinds, all these statistics and charts and so forth, drawing analogies to the 20s, all the boom of the 20s, which I thought was kind of interesting because, did he know what happened in 29? But anyway, what was fascinating, though, is what they didn't account for in the charts.

But they're in his charts, in his data. He just didn't analyze it, is the dip in our new births, the 35 million babies we've murdered for convenience. And what's really fascinating is you take those babies out of our demographics.

You take out a major chunk of the growth, that prosperity that should be coming down 10, 20, 30 years downstream. You follow me? So it's interesting. In Israel's case, they'll be dried up because of God's judgment.

In our case, we've disenfranchised our future because of the inconvenience. There is another aspect here too. Israel is also viewed as a fig tree.

You may recall when Jesus was walking by the fig tree, and there wasn't any fruit, so he cursed it. And the next day, they're walking by, and the disciples were shocked because here's this tree that had withered. Overnight, apparently.

And he sort of went, gee, that was kind of severe of the Lord. You know, he wanted that fig pretty bad. No.

No, he didn't make it a point. If it's not bearing fruit, it's over. Now, I won't ask you for a show of hands, but what I usually do with the audience, how many of you guys are saved? All the hands go up.

What have you done with it? In the evangelical community, we have a tendency to, in my opinion, over-celebrate a decision for Christ. Get a stirring message, an altar call, you come down the aisle, make that commitment to Christ. And that's obviously great, good, super neat.

But we have a tendency to look at that as a climax. Not a climax, it's a beginning. It should be a beginning of a changed life.

Of a fruitful life. But anyway, getting off the end, let's see. Verse 17.

My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto Him. They shall be wanderers among the nations. Really? Gee, the ten tribes are lost.

No, the twelve tribes are lost. Wandering for what? Two thousand years. Homeless.

Until God regathers them the second time, as Isaiah predicted. And we're watching that unfold before our eyes. Very interesting, again, how the punishment fits the crime.

They wandered astray from the path of the covenant loyalty, to the point where they were now outside the covenant. About a divided heart, the empty vine. Verse 1, chapter 10.

Israel is an empty vine. He bringeth forth fruit unto himself. According to the multitude of his fruit, he hath increased the altars.

According to the goodness of his Lamb, they have made goodly images. Again, we're using a botanical, if you will, metaphor, referring to Israel's earlier history. Israel is planted like a vine in the land of Canaan, and blest are with fruit, prosperity, and so forth.

This is the same idiom that Isaiah uses in chapter 5. It's the same idiom that Jeremiah uses in chapter 2. It's the same idiom that Ezekiel uses in chapter 15, and also in chapter 19. Let's do Chaste out Isaiah 5, because I think we've got time, and I think it's fruitful enough. Let's take a look at that.

The whole chapter fits, but we're going to focus on the opening verses, because they're so descriptive of exactly what Isaiah is dealing with here. Isaiah chapter 5. Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. Doesn't that sound great? It's going to be upbeat here.

Oh yeah? Well, let's watch. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he dug it, gathered it out with stones, planted it with the choicest vine, built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress of it.

And he looked for it to bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. In the translation, you don't pick up on that, but it's like weeds. Think of it that way.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. You know, he's calling you to be referee of this now. This is God talking about His vineyard.

What's His vineyard? Israel. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? Why, when I look for it to bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes. And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard.

I will take away its hedge, and it will be eaten up, and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. And I will lay it waste, and it shall not be pruned nor digged. But there shall come up briars and thorns, and I will also command the clouds that they not rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant. And He looked for justice, but behold, oppression, for righteousness, but behold, a cry. Then he goes on to list six woes.

And when you read these six woes, I often people say, gee, you see United States in prophecy. Oh yes, I sure do. Oh really? Yes, Isaiah 5. These six woes.

Verse 8. Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field. There is no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth. That's called freeway rush hour traffic.

By overdevelopment. I'm not being flippant. I mean that sincerely.

The development, the prosperity. And it goes on. Verse 11.

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, who continue until night, till wine inflames them. Alcoholism. I won't even start on that.

Verse 18. Woe unto them. This one is really graphic to me.

Woe unto them who draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as it were with a cart rope. They're not only sinning, they're proud of it. It's a pride parade.

They're in carts showing themselves off at how sinful they are. Does that ring familiar to you? Verse 20. Woe unto them who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Really? You have your truth. I have mine. It's all relative.

Oh really? You mean I can call evil good and good evil? Sure. That's what we're being taught in our culture in many ways. Verse 21.

Woe unto them who are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight. Verse 22. Woe unto them who are mighty to drink wine and men of strength strong drink and justify the wicked for reward and take away the righteousness of the righteousness from him.

And on it goes. Bribery. Perversion of justice.

And on it goes. Anyway, this is one example. I used the Isaiah example, but Jeremiah has one.

Ezekiel has one. And Psalm 80. I won't take the time, but Psalm 80 has the same kind of idioms.

What's interesting is every time the vineyard is brought forth as an idiom for Israel, it's always derogatory. It's always the vineyard that didn't live up to its expectations. Always a degenerate situation.

It's interesting that in Revelation 14 we have the ultimate wrath of God, the judgment poured up on the earth, and the idioms there are the grapes of wrath, the wine press, etc. Again, we have the same kind of idiomatic domain being used there. And again, here, the nation attributed its prosperity to our own success rather than the Lord.

And exactly what we do in our industry or our military or whatever, it's always our acumen, our skill, our pride that gets in the way and leads us away from really understanding the source of our blessings. And the altars, by the way, that are mentioned here too are probably referred to as the hypocritical formalism. We're going to hear more about that as Hosea gets warmed up here.

Verse 2. Their heart is divided. How shall they be found faulty? He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.

That's the root trouble, is double-mindedness. They were worshiping the Lord, but Balaam too. They were doing both.

Remember what James said in verse 8 of chapter 1? A double-minded man is what? Unstable in all his ways. Exactly right. And remember Elijah's challenge in 1 Kings 18.

How long will you halt between two opinions? It wasn't just that they were just Baal. They were worshiping... They were trying to be all things to all people. Did their market research.

They want to, you know, have a large... They want to be a large tent that we can all dwell in. Yeah. Anyway, Israel's unfaithfulness established her guilt and necessity of punishment.

The word is divided by the way. Chalak, which is a... literally means slippery smooth. We would say slick.

Okay? Who would I possibly be referring to? Hey, you did that. I did. Deceitful, unreliable speech and so forth.

Okay. And so is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy.

And of course, the Lord was going to destroy the sites of all the hypocritical or false worship. The sacred stones as it's used here and elsewhere. Verse 3, For now shall they say, We have no king because we feared not the Lord.

What then should a king do to us? By the way, they never had one good king in the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom had a few good ones. Some bad, some good and it eventually deteriorates but they had a couple of good guys.

Northern Kingdom went from bad to worse. And so their political structure would be shattered. Their king removed.

And the people would, in the aftermath, recognize that their unfaithfulness was the basis of the judgment. We too, we say, that's not us. Wait a minute, wait a minute.

Reach in your pocket, pull out a coin to say in God we trust. Do we? Hardly. It's amazing that the ACLU and all these, they haven't got that offer of coins yet but they're working on it, I'm sure.

Verse 4, They have spoken words swearing falsely in making a covenant thus judgment springeth up as a hemlock in the furrows of the field. Israel swore falsely in making covenants. They broke faith with Shalmaneser.

They had agreed with him but they made an agreement with Egypt. They were trying to, and that was a big mistake because then Shalmaneser started invading and that's finally what brought them down. Israel had abandoned here the sanctity of a commitment.

You saw it in their foreign policy. Rather than trusting God they were doing all this chicanery. They abandoned the sanctity of a commitment We do the same thing.

We do it in our marriages. We take vows before the throne of God and yet change wives like a fashion statement in our culture. We abandon the sanctity of commitment in our business relationships.

The term fiduciary is forgotten in relationships. I won't start on all of that. We did a breathing package, being faithful in a faithless world.

It's absolutely disturbing to me to personally have observed the deterioration of ethical conduct on Wall Street during my 30 year career. I can remember vividly starting companies dealing with men on the street whose word was their bond. They may not have been moral men for all I know but they kept their word.

If they said they were going to do it you could count on it. That's the way it worked back then. That was the ethic of the street.

Not today. I've done deals with prominent CEOs of large companies, CEO to CEO, in writing, celebrated, 30 days later, so sue me. Ignoring them.

I remember I gave a speech in Silicon Valley that was picked up by the San Jose Mercury. That going from any industry to the semiconductor industry was like going from a condom to a brothel. They loved that line.

They put it on the front page. And I have to tell you, I have to tell you honestly, in the last eight years that I've been in what you might call professional Christianity, it's worse. I thought it was rough and tumble in the auto industry, semiconductor industry, computer industry.

Those are rough industries. But the betrayal, the betrayal is plural in the so-called professional Christian community is really disturbing. I've got a number of talks being plunged in the age of deceit.

Well, Israel had abandoned the sanctity of their commitments. And so now we're going to get into some of the details of the judgment that God is approaching them with. Verse 5, The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves in Beth-Avon.

For the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof because it is departed from it. Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom. And Beth-Avon was

nearby, but it's used as an epithet for Bethel.

They'd all be carried away by the victorious Assyrian army, and the calf idols that they were worshipping would be carried away by their enemies. And by the way, the term for priests here is a rare term, implies idolatrous priests, used only of priests of Baal, incidentally. Verse 6, It shall also be carried into Assyria for a present to King Yarem.

Ephraim shall receive shame, Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. And by the way, the Assyrians carrying off all this stuff is amply testified in the Assyrian art. If you go to a museum, you see a lot of this being celebrated there, especially the London Museum if you ever get a chance there.

King Yarem is the great king. Of course, he refers to Assyria as king. There are some slight different treatments in the NIV and NASB, but it basically carries the same thought.

Verse 7, As for Samaria, her king is cut off from the foam as the foam upon the water. So Israel's king as well as her idols will be carried away in the invasion. The nation itself would be floated away like a twig or foam on the water.

Verse 8, The high places also of Avon, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. The thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars. They shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills fall on us.

You know, this phrase fascinates me how frequently it is in the Scripture. Here, Hosea, of course, is predicting, or God's predicting through us that they're going to say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills fall on us. This is exactly when in Joshua, remember the long day of Joshua, and how they went after those kings and the kings hid in caves, and that is an echo.

The whole book of Joshua is a foreshadowing, structurally and idiomatically, book of Revelation. I won't get into that. We don't have time.

It's another blessing tonight. I don't have time to go into that detour. I encourage you to take a look at that comparison, though.

Jesus himself made the same prediction in Luke 23, verse 30. And what intrigues me about it, in Joshua's case, which is a foreshadowing of Revelation, it's in Revelation, Chapter 6, in the great, the unbelievers in the great tribulation will hide in caves saying, Rocks, fall on us and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb. I'm always, maybe I'm excessively fascinated with this, but I just see the uniformity of idioms in Joshua, Hosea, the Gospels, and Revelation to me are the fingerprints of the Holy Spirit.

Sixty-six books penned by forty guys, but it's one integrated message, even in the use of the idioms and phrases. Now, it's interesting that there's a reference here to the destruction of the high places. That's ironic again because they're told to do that in Leviticus 26.

And when Israel entered the land, they were commanded to destroy the worship centers, but because Israel didn't do it, a foreign army is going to come in and do it for them and wipe them out on the way, of course. Verse 9, O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah. There they stood, the battle of Gibeah, against the children of Iniquity, did not overtake them.

And again, this is an allusion to the Gibeah thing that we talked about in chapter 9, verse 9. Again, since that time, Israel persisted in the sin. It's used idiomatically to describe just how grim it was. By the way, the

question there is better translated, will not war overtake the evildoers in Gibeah? That's the way NESB does it.

It's probably a little better. It's very strange that that should overtake Israel. It should serve as a pattern.

But anyway, verse 10, It is my desire that I should chastise them and the people shall be gathered against them when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows. See, at the Lord's own timing, He will choose to punish them, or the word chastise, if you will, by gathering what? All nations against her. The exact translation and the meaning of that last line is a little uncertain and I won't get into some of the different conjectures, whether it's a double sin or whatever, or maybe it's referring to the two calves at Bethel and Dan and Gilgal.

Those are all conjectures. Verse 11, And Ephraim is as a heifer that is taught and loveth to tread out the corn, but I passed over upon her fair neck, and I will make Ephraim to ride, Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods. Again, we're talking Israel, the idioms here as compared to the cow.

What you need to understand is that a heifer likes to thrash because when they're thrashing, the law required in Deuteronomy 25.4 that you do not muzzle the ox that treadeth the corn. So if you were the ox, you preferred that duty in contrast to plowing or some of these other things. Do you follow me? So that's what... Unless you're in that culture, you don't pick up on this, but instead of being allowed to thrash, they're going to be plowing.

They were in the land. God blessed them. They didn't acknowledge them.

That's over, guys. Now they're going to be slaves in Babylon. That's, in effect, the net of this.

So the Lord is going to have a different kind of a yoke put on Israel's neck, and she's going to engage in the extremely arduous work of plowing and so forth. By the way, Judah is mentioned here too. This is a glimmer that Judah, it's a century away, but Judah was also going to be facing that judgment.

By the way, another thing to be sensitive to, this idiom of thrashing is also often used of the tribulation, and I think that's particularly interesting because in the book of Ruth, there's a very key in chapter 3, a thrashing floor scene. But where is Ruth during that scene? At the feet of Boaz. You don't build doctrine from that, but if you're a pre-tribber, that looks kind of exciting.

Verse 12. Now it's time to seek the Lord. So we have an upbeat verse here.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and reign righteousness upon you. There's a brief call here to them back to covenant loyalty. God never has judgment, but there isn't an opportunity for repentance.

Did they repent? No. They got it. It's very important for you and I to understand verse 12.

Here it's a token reference, but it is an opportunity. God always holds out the possibility of repentance and blessing, and so Micah 6.8 is really the cross reference in here and again I'm going to take the time for you to look it up with me. Very key verse, but it pertains right here to what Israel failed to do.

Micah 6.8 He hath shown thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before thy God. That's it. Straightforward.

Now this other words in this verse, back in verse 12 here, the reigning of righteousness is probably accurate. The word reign and the word teach are very close, but basically it's just treatment in the form of deliverance. And in the agricultural idioms that have been used, reign would signify that.

Verse 13. Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity, ye have eaten the fruit of lies, because thou didst trust in thy way in the multitude of thy mighty men. And again, these whole two chapters echo Galatians chapter 6, verses 7 and 8. Which basically, what a man soweth, so shall he reap.

And that same idea is embodied in Psalm 22, verse 8, 2 Corinthians 9, 6. But most of us reckon it as Galatians 6, verse 8. Jeremiah 17.5 Curse on the man that trusts in man. Strong language. See, rather than relying on the power of God, they were relying on their own military might.

And by the way, for you prophecy buffs, in Daniel 9.27 we have the Antichrist enforce the covenant with the many for that final seven week, the famous 70 week of Daniel. That verse is misunderstood by many prophecy buffs. It doesn't say he signs a treaty.

In fact, he enforces a treaty. What it says is he shall enforce or confirm the covenant with the many, which is the name for Israel. It may be that he's enforcing a treaty of some kind.

That's what people have been looking at for years, and especially lately. They think that may be on the threshold. Who knows? But he may do nothing more than be enforcing the Palestinian covenant, the right to the land.

Why does Isaiah call that a covenant with hell? Because they're looking to a leader, not God, for that right and that protection. It could be that simple. Should we argue about it? No.

Let's stand back and watch. It's not far off. Okay.

Now Israel's problem is they were relying on their own military might rather than God. So are we. So are we.

By the way, if you think you can escape the results of sin, you're making God a liar. I love what J. Vernon McGee said. I had to quote it literally.

I've used about a half a dozen different commentaries that have become my favorites, but I always check him too to see what he's saying. Quote, Godless people cannot elect a righteous leader. This is J. Vernon McGee writing many years ago.

If the people are liars, they'll get a liar as a leader. If they are adulterers, they will get an adulterer. If they are thieves, that's the kind of leader they will have, close quote.

J. Vernon McGee, back a couple decades ago. I just thought you'd kind of share his insight Verse 14, Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled as Shalman spoiled Beth Arbel in the day of battle. The mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.

See, in response to Israel's pride, the Lord said He would destroy the source of false confidence, their fortresses, if you will. The judgment is emphasized by comparison of a historical incident that was apparently well known to Hosea's contemporaries. And Beth Arbel is the house of the, it means the house of the ambush of God.

It deals with a battle about which we don't know a lot, but Hosea's contemporaries would have. So, I won't get into those conjectures. And Shalman, it could have been any one of the Shalman, Shalman Ezra III, the Assyrian ruler who campaigned against the West in the ninth century B.C. or Shalman Ezra V, which was actually the ruler to the time when it fell.

And, who knows. Beth Arbel has been identified by some as the modern Erebit or Arbella in the northern Transjordan. About 18 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee.

Others think it was two miles west of the Sea of Galilee. Scholars debate about this a little bit. But it's vividly remembered for its atrocities and the wholesale slaughter of women and children and so forth.

There's a very disturbing verse in Psalm 137, verses 8 and 9 you can put in your notes, look at at your leisure. Again, it has to do with this idea of being childless as being a form of mercy. Verse 15, So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness in a morning shall the king of Israel be utterly cut off.

And again, Bethel here represents the nation as a whole. And, well, let's just wrap it up. The chapter opened with an allusion to Israel as a vine.

Right? And it's interesting to notice that the official symbol of Israel is not the Star of David, what we call the Magen David, the Star of David. That's the flag, yes. But the official symbol of Israel is the Menorah, the seven-branched lampstand.

It's interesting that while Israel has failed to be fruitful as a vine, Christ had much to say about who is the true vine. Who is the true vine? Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John is organized around seven miracles which give rise to seven discourses, which include seven I Am statements.

I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the door to the sheepfold, and so forth.

And one of those, of course, I am the true vine. That's in John chapter 15. You may recall he said, Abide in me and I in you, as a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

John 15 verses 4 through 6. We've been talking about the unfruitfulness of Israel on the national level. Now we can start to apply that to ourselves, but unless we apply that in any other way other than relying on Jesus Christ, we're wasting our time. The only way you and I can bear any fruit at all is to be abiding in Christ.

And it's very interesting how he says, I am the vine, ye are the branches. The menorah is a beaten out of one piece gold with six branches on the base one. I am the vine, ye are the branches.

The six of man plus him makes seven are complete. The passage in Hosea 9 and 10 of course is referring to Israel nationally and probably our first concern is our own fruitfulness. Are we guilty of that individually? And that's crucial to go back and think that through.

Are we double minded? Are we really worshipping God and God alone? He doesn't want to be number one on a list of ten. He wants to be number one on a list of one. Are we really committed without

reservation to him? That's your first concern.

But taking that one step further then, to the extent that Israel is judged because she had forgotten her source of blessings, had failed to show gratitude and response to the unusual blessings God had poured out. That should give us concern for America. Because we have a unique heritage.

We were designed by geniuses prayerfully. And it served us well. Our checks and balances, due process, all of that.

A government rooted in the Bible and the Judeo-Christian heritage. And we've abandoned it. We've discarded it.

We've thrown it away. We demean it. We've stripped it out of our national capital.

We've stripped it out of our courts. Out of our schools. And yes, out of our churches.

Not many churches will preach on the blood of Christ and preach repentance and the uniqueness of Christ's redemption. No, we've got problems here. Now, if there is a parallel then what God did with the Northern Kingdom was to use their enemies to wipe them out.

And as you and I sit here tonight studying this passage, we have no missile defense, none, zero. We have no second strike capability to scare them away. We have Russia busily preparing for nuclear war.

We have China busily preparing for nuclear war. We've got rogue states of North Korea, Iran, Iraq, you name it, with nuclear weapons and delivery capability increasing every day. And we're sitting here exposed.

Is our hope in a missile defense? We have the money and the technology but that shouldn't be our hope. Here's our hope, right here. And if you care about your kids and grandchildren, I encourage you to spend some time in prayer.

That somehow our leaders will wake up, somehow that God will in His sovereignty give us a revival. Because His judgment is never without repentance on the one hand and yet God hasn't changed and as you read Hosea and as you begin to realize the indictments that God is bringing against the Northern Kingdom, boy, it fits like a glove. The more you study this passage and the more you look around what's going on in our country, the more disturbing it becomes.

I think it's time to take God seriously in our personalized first and then in our national consciousness too. Let's stand for a closing word of prayer. Well, Father, we do thank You that You have given us such a precious heritage.

We thank You, Father, that You have given us the freedoms and the prosperity and the blessings. Yes, and Father, Your Word and the freedom to worship You that we take so for granted. And Father, we come before Your throne acknowledging our sin.

We own it. It's ours. We've done it or not done it.

We confess before Your throne our ingratitude, our presumption, our self-centeredness. Oh, Father, we do bring this before Your throne without any excuse, without any refuge except the blood of Jesus Christ, which we do plead, Father, on our behalf. We thank You, Father, that You've gone to such extremes that

we might be reconciled to You by His completed work, that we might hear Your voice and that You might hear our cry.

Oh, Father, we do confess our sin. We do ask You, Father, to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It's Your faithfulness that we cling to, Father, not our own.

And yet, Father, as we come before You, we come before You with a burden for this country. We acknowledge that we have failed. We have our negligence, our lack of diligence has allowed it to be usurped by the pagan left.

Oh, Father, we do ask for a revival and let it begin with us. And Father, we just look to You to illuminate the path before us. We do pray, Father, You'd hear the cry of Your people that You would guide us, cleanse us, forgive us, and yet guide us, strengthen us, equip us for what You would have of us in the days that remain as we commit ourselves afresh into Your hands.

In the name of Yeshua, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

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