

# Hosea #8 Ch. 13-14 Hosea

by Chuck Missler

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*The sermon explores the themes of idolatry and national decline in Hosea, drawing parallels to contemporary society's spiritual challenges.*

**Duration:** 1:12:17

**Scripture:** Isaiah 43:11, Isaiah 55:4, Hosea 13:4-6, Hosea 13:14, Hosea 14:1

**Topics:** "Hosea"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Hosea and its teachings about the character of God. The book emphasizes four key characteristics of God: sovereignty, holiness, justice, and love. The preacher highlights the importance of not just intellectually understanding God's prophecy, but also discerning how it applies to our lives. The sermon also emphasizes the consequences of disobedience, stating that sin not only causes spiritual death but also the death of family life, culture, and even nations.

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## Transcript

Okay, we're going to wrap up our study of Hosea tonight. We're in chapters 13 and 14. But I want to, before we get into that a little bit, talk about chapter 12 from last time, verse 10.

You may, I'm sure if you were here last time, you marked that passage in your Bible, because I think it's a very interesting one. Your commentators may not highlight it that way, but it's become one that I quote frequently. Verse 10 says, God says through Hosea, I have also spoken by the prophets and I have multiplied visions and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets.

And we talked about that last time, how the Holy Spirit uses figures of speech of all kinds. And similes, similitudes, and puns are a trademark of the Holy Spirit. We see it all through the scripture, but especially in the book of Hosea.

And it may surprise you to know that the Holy Spirit uses many forms of multi-level and also reflexive codes of different kinds as puns, similes, analogies, metaphors, and other figures of speech. Now a figure of speech, what does that mean? That's a legitimate departure from usual laws of grammar and syntax for some special purpose. And I mentioned this here, and I think this verse is important because we should recognize that even as we use that in speech and in writing, the Holy Spirit does too.

And what's interesting is the construction that the Holy Spirit uses. Stitch the whole Bible together, the 66 books penned by 40 different guys over thousands of years, we discover an integrated message. And some of these figures of speech really demonstrate that.

Essentially, the ancient Greeks had their schema and the Romans had their figura, but the decline of learning in the Middle Ages caused the study of linguistic structures of this kind to pretty much die out except among specialists. But it's really interesting to discover how they're used, especially in the scripture. And as I think I mentioned last time in our book, *Cosmic Codes, Hidden Messages from the Edge of Eternity*, we deal with all kinds of hidden messages in the scripture, but we also include an appendix that lists or catalogs, really, over 200 different kinds of rhetorical devices, and where they're used in the scripture as examples.

And examples, first of all, are puns. We don't talk about puns. Denotatively, they're a homonym, two words that sound the same but with a different meaning, usually with a humorous application.

But connotatively, they're really any kind of double reference, and they're not necessarily used just for humor. One of the examples I often think of is the washing of the water by the Word. We wash ourselves daily in the Word of God.

In Revelation, we see the saints standing on the glassy sea, and here we wash in it, there we'll stand on it. You say, gee, that's a pun. Yes, exactly, and the Holy Spirit uses that that way.

And there are also double entendres. We speak of that. That's usually a word or a phrase with a double meaning.

They're often used, but not necessarily with some kind of salacious or sensuous overtone, but not necessarily. Double entendres have broad application. You'll find them in Isaiah 52 verse 13 and elsewhere.

We also use the term oxymoron. How many have heard the term oxymoron? You know, that's a term like, you know, military intelligence or...it's a self-contradictory phrase, it would seem. You know, engineering commitment is another one.

You know, thinking liberal is another one. But we also find those...strangely enough, the Holy Spirit uses those. You'll find some in her book.

There's also what's called a synecdoche among specialists. That's where you exchange...it means transfer one idea for another. You can use the general for the specific or the specific for the general idiomatically, and I won't get it all out here.

But there are more elaborate ones. We speak of allegories. That's a comparison by representation where one thing's an allegory of another.

Perhaps the most classical allegory, of course, is Paul Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. The whole book is an allegory. But we find allegories all through the Scripture, and we also find metaphors.

A metaphor is a representation of a word...declare one thing represents another. And there's a similar kind of thing called a simile, which is resemblance, where one thing...a declaration that one thing resembles another. And then, of course, there's a very strange one that many don't know about, is a hypocatastasis.

That's where...well, I'll come back to that. We have microcodes. Those are codes in the letters themselves and subtleties.

There's also macrocodes. And macrocodes are perhaps the most exciting ones. And that's a macrocode in the computer field.

And also, if you were to use the word processor, you know, you can use a code to tell you in advance what's coming. If you're going to do a fax, you can hit one code, it'll set up your fax. Or if you do email, it sets it up.

There are macro...you can define almost anything you want to do that you frequently into a code, a macrocode, and it'll set it all up for you. Well, macrocodes have the distinction that they can be anticipatory. And we find that Bible is full of models or types, as they're called, or macrocodes, in which they anticipate what's coming.

What's dramatic about that is many of those codes are inserted in the text centuries before the fact. It demonstrates that the origin of the designer of the text is outside the dimensionality of time. And so, we get into some of that.

Now, hypokatastasis is one of these things that there's an implied resemblance of representation. And some of them are extremely subtle, so subtle that scholars often have missed it. There's a little Hebrew word that's called et, an aleph and a tau.

And when it's hooked, it's used as a grammatical connector. But when it freestands, it sometimes doesn't seem to make sense. If you look at Zechariah 12, verse 10, that's where you all remember the verse where it says, and they shall look upon me whom they've pierced.

It's a second coming reference in the book of Zechariah. But if you look at an interlinear Bible, every Hebrew word has an English word equivalent. And you go through that, but you'll discover there's a, between the me and the whom, they shall look upon me, there's two little letters that are not translated, an aleph and a tau.

They're the first and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Let me say it to you if I was saying it to you in Greek. They shall look upon me, the alpha and the omega, whom they've pierced.

But it's in Hebrew. They shall look upon me, the aleph and the tau, whom they've pierced. And we find this aleph and tau used in a very, very strange way a number of times in the book of Genesis 1. In the beginning God, Barashit bara Elohim, there's two little letters not translated.

In the beginning God, the aleph and the tau, created the heaven and the earth. And so these things are kind of interesting. You can dismiss them.

I think they're extremely profound. Microcodes also there, anagrams, acrostics. I won't get into those here, but they'll be in the notes.

And some of these devices are very mysterious. There's a thing called an enigma, a dark saying, a truth expressed in obscure language, all kinds of those. There's also what the Hebrews call a remez, a hint of something deeper.

And of course we talk about that in our book. And the really strange ones are the ones whose meaning rely on the numerical value of the letters. And that's unique to Hebrew and Greek.

They're the only languages that have that characteristic. And interestingly, they're the two languages used in our Bible. Kind of fascinating.

Well, getting back to Hosea, harlotry and adultery are metaphors for idolatry all through the book. We've talked that. I won't go through all the references.

You recognize that. There are all kinds of powerful and rather shocking figures of speech that are used to describe God's pervasive and irresistible judgments. Pus and infection encountered in Chapter 5, the lion, panther, and bear in Chapters 5, 11, and 13, a trapper, vulture, and eagle, so forth.

And more comforting metaphors are pictures of Jehovah as the husband in one case in Chapter 2, a parent in Chapter 11, and a lover in Chapter 14 we'll see. And now Israel is also portrayed with rather vivid figures of speech. A stubborn heifer in Chapter 4, a snare in a net in Chapter 5, a heated oven in a sense in Chapter 7, a treacherous bow in Chapter 7, a useless vessel in Chapter 8, grapes in a fig tree in Chapter 9, a luxuriant vine in Chapter 10, a trained heifer in Chapter 10, a crooked merchant in Chapter 12, a stupid baby in Chapter 13 we'll see.

And its lack of stability is pictured as mist or dew or chaff or smoke in Chapter 13. The futility of her foreign policy is described as riding herd on the wind in Chapter 12. And the fate of her idol worship as a bobbing like a chip on the water in Chapter 10.

And so these rather graphic word pictures are characteristic of the Bible in general, but Hosea specifically. Now puns are also have been a vivid part of our tour of Hosea. The names of his kids that God instructed him to name were puns.

Jezreel has a double meaning. God will scatter. In Chapter 1 it meant like seed and judgment.

And yet God will sow, that is inseminate, in the restoration in Chapter 2. It's used in both senses. The term Sabbath and that will end. It's a pun in the Hebrew language in Chapter 2. Ephraim means on the one case a wild ass and the other case fruitfulness, strangely enough, by just a slight change of pronunciation.

And the use of verbs are related to the ancestors double name, Jacob and Israel. We talked about that last time. And the mocking of Bethel by calling it Beth-Avon or Beth-Abel.

Nearby towns but with very different meanings. And on it goes. So these biting word plays of course would not have been lost on the hearer's ears just as it's not lost on us as we read it.

Many of them are subtle and in the Hebrew and I haven't tried to, you know, distract you with getting into too many of those. But there's another kind of construction that we're going to want to be at least aware of. It's a rather sophisticated perhaps, but it's called an ellipsis in rhetoric.

That's really it technically means an omission in rhetorical terms. And that's where a gap is deliberately left in a sentence or a passage through the omission of some words or other words. And there's a whole bunch.

There's an absolute omission where the words are supplied from the nature of the subject. There's a whole bunch. There's about a number of different categories of these.

The fifth within that subcategory is an interval of time. Entire interval of time is omitted. And we're going...if you've studied Daniel chapter 70 weeks, the third of the four verses, Daniel 9.26 speaks of the interval from the time that he was rejected and he rode the donkey when Messiah was presenting himself as king riding a donkey until the 70th week of Daniel.

There's a whole interval there that we recognize the church age. That interval is not only in the Bible, it's in the Bible 24 times. And that's an interesting number when you recognize...you study the book of Revelation, you understand that 24 is the number in effect of the elders and their apparent representation of the church.

So...and the list of the references will be in your notes. But we develop that, of course, in our book. But the point is, there are a number of other ellipses, but one of the ellipses, one of the strangest kind, in fact, it's one that's usually omitted in analyses of ellipses, is what's called ellipses of reversal.

It's the most unusual of all. And we're going to encounter that in a very unusual way in Hosea. That's why I wanted to digress a little bit to talk...one of the things you learn as you try to study things is not just the content, but the methodology and what I call the adjective aspects of the text.

And so we'll touch a little bit about that as we go, as we discover the truths and the treasures that God has hidden here for us in the book of Hosea. We're going to take Hosea 13 and 14 tonight. Hosea 13 you could subtitle, the death of a nation.

And it was his tragic errand to have to go to the Northern Kingdom and present God's case against them. He's the, if you will, the prosecutor of the case, and he brings the charges against the Northern Kingdom. And their sentence, of course, will be that God will use their enemies to wipe them out.

Romans 6.23 is one of those Bible verses that if you've done any Bible memory at all, I'm sure you've included it in your list. Romans 6.23, the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Sin causes death.

No surprise, you all know that. But we sometimes don't think through that sin also causes the death of family life, of culture, of major movements of history, and even the death of nations. That's glibly said.

What do we mean when we say nations die? How do nations die? Oswald Spengler did a massive two-volume book called *The Decline of the West*, and he compares the movements of history to stages in biological life. Civilizations are born, grow strong, and die. Now he doesn't, he has no attempt to link those to sin, and he has no apparent background in redemption and so forth, but his work still is rather provocative from a historical point of view.

It seems that there are three stages of the death of a nation. The first stage is they die in spirit. The second stage is the soul of the nation dies.

Its national character deteriorates, in other words. And the third stage is when the body itself finally dies. And this does seem to be the pattern of the Northern Kingdom that we're going to deal with in chapter 13 of Hosea.

Let's start with Hosea 13 verse 1. When Ephraim, that's of course an idiom for the Northern Kingdom, that's the lead tribe, but it's used as a synonym, if you will, of the whole nation. When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel. But when he offended in Baal, he died.

Now this is a recap of all we've been going through these chapters, how the Northern Kingdom, even though it was their most prosperous period in history, it was the best of times. They turned to idol worship, and they forgot the Lord that had blessed them, and so it was also the worst of times. They plunged into immorality, and God is using Hosea to announce to them, to declare to them that they're in trouble, and they're going to be wiped out.

Now Ephraim's first phrase here, he exalted himself in Israel, his prominent, Ephraim's prominent place among the tribes of Israel is well known from Genesis 48 onward. Jeroboam I, who had led their secession from Solomon's, after Solomon's death from the South, the first king, Jeroboam I, wasn't Ephraimite from that specific tribe, but it was this tribe though that had taken the lead in embracing Baal worship, false worship. So it's interesting, the first, this I'm going to suggest represents the first stage, and that is they die in spirit.

And when a nation forgets God, and begins to worship that which is not God, that's stage one. We saw that in Nazi Germany, where they worshiped race, and we see that in the United States, where they worship, where we worship material prosperity, instead of God. The Nazi party in Germany was not only a Nazi party, but it also is very occultic, and there's many, many books on that.

It's a very, very provocative study. The United States has, just like the Northern Kingdom, in that they had two centuries in which they finally, they just rejected, forgot, abandoned their heritage, so are we. And that's why this is such a provocative study.

So the first step in the dissipation is when the God consciousness dissipates, or worse, is even deliberately removed. Prayer and Bible reading removed from our schools, forcibly. Identification even with biblical principles, where there's debates about the Ten Commandments appearing in one of our courtrooms.

And, of course, what happens then? Weapons and diplomacy replace quickly the dependence on God. Let's get to verse 2. So what happens at Ephraim? Now they sin more and more. They have made them molten images of their silver, their idols according to their own understanding, and all of it the work of the craftsmen.

They say of them, let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. Now kissing here is referring really to paying homage to. Very interesting phrase to use, because it's in contrast to Psalm 2, which is this trilogy, if you will, between the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 2, you won't understand unless you diagram it. Sit down and read Psalm 2 sometime and figure out who's talking to whom. It's finally, kiss the Son lest he be angry.

And same idea, except in this case it's they're kissing the calves, the idols. So part of this idol worship caused them to multiply their sin further and further. And this, in effect, I'm going to suggest is parallel to stage 2. That's when the soul of a nation dies.

Its national character deteriorates. What happens? They start lowering the moral climate within the nation. Corruption starts to get accelerated, even in the leadership, and causes the breakup of families.

There's a drive towards materialism, an increase in crime and violence, the failure of even the government to keep faith with its own people, let alone other nations. What are ways that governments fail to keep faith to the people? One way is to allow inflation, which debases the currency, undermines savings, and all the

rest of it. Have we had that here? Like 50% every 10 years.

Every 10 years, cut in half, almost predictably. Another failure, of course, is the failure to honor agreements with their nations. And we've probably seen the most dramatic example of that on April 24th of 1999, when NATO, a defensive alliance of 15 nations, agreeing to defend themselves against any attacker, redefined themselves as a global police force.

And without getting into all the mechanics of it, what's interesting about that whole procedure, we violated every known international law that pertains. We violated the Helsinki Accords of 1975, the Vienna Convention of 1980. We've even violated the UN Charter.

And even our own War Powers Act had expired on that issue. So the parallels here are too dramatic not to notice. Verse 3 of Hosea 13.

Therefore, they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes the way, and as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney. Now, there are four similes here, obviously, the mist, the dew, the chaff, and the smoke, all suggestive, all trying to make graphic the idea they're going to just dissipate. They'll vanish.

These idioms could be used many ways. Here, they're clearly used to indicate that it's over. They're going to be gone.

And this is stage three. The judgment of God would make these idolaters quickly vanish. And it would result in the total dissipation of the nation.

This nation would disappear and never return again. And this is the final stage when the body of the nation dies. Now, by the way, in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, it happened suddenly.

And in the cases of other cases, it's happened suddenly. It doesn't necessarily happen suddenly by sudden or total overthrows. It can happen in small degrees.

They can break down bit by bit. The police can become ineffective. The courts can become technical battlegrounds where justice is perverted.

Politicians pander to the elite. Schools cease to educate. The population, oblivious to the trends, drifts into oblivion.

Does that seem uncomfortable to you? It should. Verse four. God continues through Hosea.

Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me, for there is no Savior beside me. Here's God reasserting what they should have been remembering on their own. And he refers to the God from the land of Egypt because that's where they were in bondage and he delivered them.

Not because they deserved it, but just as a gracious father. And he keeps harping on that. They've forgotten the source of their blessings, the source of their heritage, the source of their freedom.

Wow. How many of us in our country keep in mind the source of our freedom, our blessings, our prosperity? The parallels here I find most disturbing. Isaiah 43, 11 and also 54, 21, where God says the same thing.

Beside me there is no Savior. This assertion is all through the scripture. I've mentioned a couple of places.

See, the first commandment is what God's talking about. And that, of course, was lost in Hosea's day. And, of course, obviously is in ours also.

Verse five. I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great draught. Verse six.

According to their pasture, so they were filled. They were filled and their heart was exalted, therefore they have forgotten me. See, once again, God is reminding them not only of their deliverance of bondage, but that he cared for them.

He nurtured them. He says according to their pasture. The idiom here suggests a calm, peaceful, freely grazing analogy here in terms of his grace towards them and taking care of them.

And especially through the wilderness. All these ordeals through the wilderness wandering. He's there always providing for them.

Sometimes quite miraculously. And then, of course, ultimately lets them feed in the promised land. Delivers them into the promised land and so forth.

So, and what they should have done in return is simply be grateful. Just acknowledge them. Gee, thanks God.

That's neat. But no. Instead they're worshiping their idols, taking credit for things themselves, turning their... just demonstrating disloyalty.

It's not like he wanted to be repaid. It's just like he wanted to be acknowledged. Doesn't sound so bad, does it? And yet, even that, they became proud on their own and forgot him.

Does that sound like another country you know? Verse seven. Therefore, I will be unto them as a lion, as a leopard by the way, while I observe them. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps.

And I will rend the call of their heart. And there I will devour them like a lion. The wild beast shall tear them or rip them.

Wow. That's strong language. Who's talking here? Who's talking here? God is.

It's interesting language for him to use. That he would attack his people. See, and he's still using the idioms here.

Still continuing like they're a helpless flock. He's going to, you know, he's upset. Now it fascinates me to notice the idioms he's using here.

There are four animals. A lion, a leopard, a bear, and a wild beast. Does that ring familiar to you? Daniel chapter seven, where he describes the empires that will come from Babylon to the end.

There's a lion, a leopard, a bear, and then a wild beast. And they're not in quite the same order. So I wouldn't make too much of this.

But yet it's interesting that we find the same idioms used to describe the Gentile world that God uses to deal with Israel. We're going to talk more about that as we go. Verse nine, O Israel, thou hast destroyed

thyself, but in me is thine help.

See, it's ironic that the helper of Israel would become her destroyer because she was against him. You see the irony here? Can you see, can you get a sense of God's frustration? He's the one that chose them. He's the one that's delivered them.

He's the one that's cared for them. And because of the disloyalty and their stubborn resistance, His justice has to be served. He's going to have to do this.

Now as you watch this, in addition to trying to put yourself in that Old Testament period and try to understand the dynamics here, the real issue we want to get from all of this is to try to understand the character of God. That's really what we're going, one of the main things that I believe this is here for. But as we do this, we can't help but ask ourselves, what about the parallel between America and Israel? We started that way.

We've known it all the way through the study. Where is America relative to the Northern Kingdom? Most prosperous period they ever had in their history, and it was also their most despicable, from immorality and what have you. And here's America.

Never been more prosperous. Baffling all the analysts. The strength, the apparent strength of the economy is enormous.

And yet we've become the lowest we've ever been in our history and in the world. We've become the exporter. The entertainment industry has been the exporter of everything you can imagine that God abhors.

Well as we understand where we are, as we understand where Israel was, as we understand how God felt He had to do with Israel, where does that put us? What are we expecting? That God is going to just, you know, He couldn't shrug it off for Israel. He had to deal with it there. What's He going to do with us? Wink at it? Let's let it go for a little longer? Or do you think there's some point at which God's going to say, okay guys, enough's enough.

We'll see. Verse 10. Now speaking nationally, obviously individually it's a whole different thing in terms of your position in Christ.

But as a nation, God deals with nations too. He deals with this at all levels. Anyway, verse 10.

I will be thy king. Where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? And thy judges of whom thou saidst, give me a king and a prince and princes. See when the Lord comes to destroy, there'll be no one that'll be able to save the people.

Not even the political leaders that they had demanded from the Lord. Bear in mind, see they had, they had set up their own leaders. Verse 11.

I gave thee a king in mine anger and took him away in my wrath. What that probably refers to is the northern tribes part in the original crowning of Saul. That goes back in 1st Samuel 8. We won't go into that here tonight.

But it also can allude to their secession from, from Judah in, after Solomon's death under Jeroboam I. Either way it can apply. It also can allude to the removal of the king Hosea. That was not Hosea, but the

final king of the northern kingdom when Assyrius uses God's judgment to wipe them out.

That was under their final king Hosea. And that's also all in view in that. Well verse 12.

The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up. His sin is hid. Now it's bound up like stored for a treasure.

It's sort of the sin is taken and stored. Get ready to be brought out at the right time. See God has not overlooked Israel's guilt.

We hit that in chapter 10, 12, and here it is in 13 again. Come up with some more. And the sinful deeds of the northern kingdom are compared now in a sense like a document that's tucked away and locked up for the occasion that's coming.

That's sort of the tone of it all here. It's as if the sins of the northern kingdom are being guarded carefully until the day of retribution. And where they will be brought forth as a testimony against the nation.

Now I'm fond of pointing out this is in contrast to yours, sin, and mine. In Hebrews 10, 17, also in Hebrews 8, 12. One of the great commitments of our God is he says to you and I for in Christ, I will remember your sins, how long? No more.

And there's another place where it says that as far as the east is from the west, right? That's a long way by the way. If he said as far as the north and the south, that's got a terminus. You see, you can only go so far north before you're starting to go south again.

You follow me? The north and south are, you know, what are they? 8,000 miles apart. That's all. How far is the east and the west? Those directions are indeterminate.

They have no terminus, right? You can go east forever. You can go west forever. How far is the east from the west? See, it's interesting that even in the choice of the idioms in the text, they take advantage of a reality that you and I take for granted, but they may not have in those days.

Follow what I'm saying? It's interesting, you know. It's interesting how Jesus telegraphs all kinds of insights. He says two women will be grinding at the mill.

One will be taking the other left. Two men will be working in the field. One will be taking the other left.

Two people sleeping in the same bed. One will be taking the other. This all happens in the twinkling of an eye, right? Wait a minute.

Two women at the mill grinding was the thing you did before breakfast. You ground the meal for the day. That's what the women did in those days.

Two men working in the field. When? That's the middle of the day. One or two people sleeping in the same bed at night.

You got morning, noon, and night at the same instant. World is round. Same instant.

So we take that for granted. But this is a quote from Jesus Christ in the Gospel period. I think that's interesting.

But anyway, let's move on. Verse 13. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him.

He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. Now that's a clumsy translation. It's hard to improve on it.

But you have to understand what he's trying to get across is that all basis of hope has disappeared because Israel has not responded to God's call for repentance during the period of grace that he'd extended. Now what's going on here is this procrastinating nation, or stubborn nation, however you want to put it, was compared to a baby does not come out of his mother's womb despite her strenuous efforts at labor. And such a delay will result in death for both the woman and the child.

And since the baby seemingly doesn't observe the proper time for his birth, so to speak, he is referred to figuratively as without wisdom, you see, as an unwise son. It's a strange, in our reckoning it sounds a little strange, but it's speaking as an analogy of course. But it's going to be like the baby wasn't smart enough to come out at the right time, so they're all going to die.

That's because you didn't have the sense to come out of your idolatry and accept the Lord. There's a parallel here. Call it an allegory, call it whatever you will.

But now we're going to get into a very interesting verse that most commentators are confused about. And it's actually an ellipsis of reversal, but I'll come back to that in a minute. Verse 14, very famous verse, you might want to mark it.

God says, I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues.

O grave, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. Now traditionally this verse, especially the front part of it, is interpreted as an expression of hope and promise of salvation.

The NASB, the NIV, tweet it that way. It sounds great, you know, but it turns out that if you really look at the Hebrew, that's a rather problematic bending of the text. You see, and even though Hosea's text is often characterized by sudden shifts of tone, this kind of a shift here would be premature, because we'll see as the rest of the verses go.

The shift in this section really comes more at chapter 14, verse 1. And if that's the case, that would leave chapter 13, verse 14 rather awkwardly connected with what's following. So it turns out that exegetically the first two statements would be better translated as rhetorical questions, implying a negative answer. Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? Is really more accurate.

Strangely enough, that's what the RSV deals with that way. Then the next two questions that follow, where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? And thus the passage really if taken strictly and carefully both in its structure, but also in its position with the verses both before and after, are really virtually appeals for death to unleash plagues and destruction against Ephraim. So it does not appear as a triumphant cry of victory over death.

Now how do we solve this exegetical enigma, if we're going to be precise? It's interesting that several commentators are quite confused about this. Now, I'm really intrigued with this, because as you wrestle with the technicalities of the text, it is confusing, because you'd like to bend it around to be a positive thing, and I'll come back to that why. But at the same time, that's really not what the text is saying.

Now, what do you do whenever you find a problem text in the scripture? You find something in the scripture that you don't understand. Well, let me back up a second. Let's set this aside for a more broadly.

It's too important. Whenever you find a passage that you struggle with, that you don't understand, seems to contradict itself, or it doesn't make sense, you want to get your journal, a little diary that you're going to reserve just for this purpose, that's your private little place. You want to put down the date, you want to put down the reference, and you want to put down why it is, this is the hard part, why it is that this passage, whichever it is, bothers you.

You do this in ink, not in pencil. You do it in a private journal. You'll never show anybody else this is your private place, because you want to be absolutely honest and candid with yourself.

Date, reference, and what it is that seems so confusing about this passage. Then what you do is you close your little journal, and you take it before the throne of God. And you remind the Lord that, Lord, you said that the Holy Spirit would teach me all things.

Not most things. All things. Well, Father, I've got this area in your word that I'm confused about, doesn't make sense, seems to contradict, whatever, whatever, whatever.

I'm asking you to reveal what it is you have for me here in this verse. And commit that, you know, pleading the blood of Jesus Christ, and so forth. Amen.

Now, it won't necessarily happen in the next ten seconds, or hour even. It might happen the next day, a week later, who knows. It might come when you're hearing some sermon on Sunday morning on an unrelated topic.

Or it might be some tape that you're listening to. Or it might be something you overhear. It can be a conversation you overhear in a restaurant.

Who knows what the Holy Spirit's going to be. What He will do, He is going to bring something in your path that will cause you to understand that verse. The problem is this.

It's going to be suddenly so clear, you will have forgotten how confused you were about it. So that's why I want you to go back to your journal and put down that date, you know, find that reference, put down the date, and put down how the Holy Spirit revealed that to you. Now, you say, why do I want to do all that paperwork? Very simply, because the day will come when you'll go through your valley of doubt.

You'll go through some ordeal. You'll go through some time where you just sometimes think, gee, maybe I've just gotten carried away with it all. I want you to go back to that journal and see how the Holy Spirit carried you step by step.

Not Chuck Missler, not whoever. The Holy Spirit took you personally and tutored you through the Scripture. But now, that's all aside parenthetical remark.

How do you solve this little exegetical enigma? Well, one way you do this is a technique you use every time. Try putting Jesus Christ right in the middle of the issue and see what happens. Now, we find when we get to 1 Corinthians 15 that the Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, applied the language of this text, which is, I'm assuming, the negative rhetorical question approach.

He applied it in the opposite sense in 1 Corinthians 15 verses 55 through 56. And you might, let's hold your place in Hosea here, but you might turn to 1 Corinthians 15. And I would suggest to you that's probably the most important chapter in the Bible.

That's quite a statement. Why? Because if you don't have 1 Corinthians 15, we got nothing. It's all about the resurrection.

It's the resurrection chapter. Paul even makes that point. But let's take a look at this.

1 Corinthians 15 verse 54. Paul says, So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Paul can take that same series of rhetorical questions and turn them over in a positive statement because he is on the other side of an empty tomb. An empty tomb that's still there.

An empty tomb that was, that demonstrated this victory over death. He paid for it on the cross, but the empty tomb demonstrated it was adequate and could not hold him. And so it's interesting to me to see this ellipsis closed.

The ellipsis that started there, this gap, this interval, is tied with a knot in 1 Corinthians 15. But what's exciting about that to me is, if you stand back, you can discern how the ultimate author of these 66 books is employing an ellipsis. It happens to be what's called ellipsis of reverse, which demonstrates the unified design of the whole.

You see, it wasn't Hosea, it wasn't Paul, it's the Holy Spirit that put a ribbon on the whole thing. And an ellipsis of reversal is a contrast where ellipsis is supplied in reverses in an opposite sense from the preceding or succeeding clause. And this Hosea passage is perhaps one of the best examples.

So there isn't just the substance of it, there's also the lesson here to realize as you get more and more sensitive to the Scripture, don't think of Old Testament, New Testament. Indeed, take it book by book, but recognize that each of these books in the Bible, all 66 of them, are elements of a unified whole that are elegantly designed to fit together. And as you discover that for yourself, you'll have a whole different attitude towards the Word of God, in contrast to the pseudo-scholarship that tries to cut it up into pieces and put those pieces at variance against themselves.

Anyway, moving on in chapter 13, verse 15, Hosea continues, Though he be fruitful among his brethren, speaking of Ephraim, Though he be fruitful among his brethren, and fruitful, of course, is a pun on the word Ephraim, among his brethren. And east wind shall come, and the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up, and he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. See, with the Lord's compassion removed, Israel's prosperity, of course, would come to an end.

And the Lord would come, or His enemies, He'd bring the enemies, their enemies, like a hot east wind, which dries up everything in its path. And, of course, the reality behind this idiom, of course, is the Assyrian invasion that comes and wipes out the land in 722 BC. Now, by the way, small point, but the Hebrew Bible, chapter 13, ends here.

There's a slight difference in chapter divisions here, but let's just keep moving on. Samaria shall become desolate. And by the way, how many have been to Samaria? Desolate, huh? It's a desolate place, to this day.

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. Now, by the way, verses 15 and 16 correspond to the plagues and destruction of death that were mentioned in verse 14.

But when we move on, the language here that we're seeing is the same language as in the covenant curse in Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28 and 32, and also Amos 4. The references will be in your notes. And so, anyways, destruction would come, God said, because Israel had rebelled against him. Now we're in chapter 14, verse 1, O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Now, the whole book is going to end on a positive note, one of exhortation to repentance. I'll come back to all that in some surprising ways. It's interesting to notice how Hosea never gets tired of using the word return.

Return, return, return. Verse 2, Take with you words, and turn to the Lord. Say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so we will render the calves of our lips.

That's a strange phrase for you and I. It really means the fruit of their lips, prayers of forgiveness. It's an idiom for prayers of forgiveness. One of the underlying things here, something is not learned.

First of all, what is learning? What is learning? It's not intellectual things. Learning is defined as the modification of behavior. Learning is defined as the modification of behavior.

Something is not truly learned until it results in changed behavior. That's why he's saying for them to return, to repent. And frankly, this appeal of his is going to be rejected by an arrogant, stubborn nation, and they're going to get wiped out.

But at least his calling for repentance was in effect a message of hope to the people that are listening to his message or reading his words. Because it can provide a repentant generation in the future a model to follow in returning to the Lord. And true repentance would eventually involve an acknowledgement of sin.

And we did, I want to return of the believing nation at the end time. That's the purpose of the tribulation. Now there it's talking about the full nation.

Now one of the things I want to emphasize, it's very naive, and many, many people who study the Bible are quite naive about this whole issue of northern, southern kingdom. Because the northern kingdom is called Israel. The southern kingdom is called the kingdom of Judah.

Let me remind you one more time what happened most people don't understand. Solomon dies. Rehoboam, they're already heavily taxed.

Rehoboam, the successor of Solomon's son, taxes even more against the advice of his counselors. That caused a rebellion. Jeroboam I rebels, and the northern kingdom incorporated within the boundaries of the tribal areas of ten northern tribes rebel and separates the seed.

And they call themselves the kingdom of Israel. Judah and Benjamin, the two tribes in the south, stay faithful to the temple and to Judaistic worship. Now, and they call themselves the house of Judah, the

northern kingdom, the house of Israel.

What everybody missed, and you have to understand that when you speak of the areas, you can speak of the area called Ephraim, which is a geographic area that was given to the tribe of Ephraim under the days of Joshua and was their area. What happens, if you look at 2nd, in fact we have the time, I think I can do this. Keep, hold your place here and Isaiah.

Turn to 2nd Chronicles chapter 11. It's important that we understand this because you'll avoid a lot of confusion by popular literature that fails to understand what really happened there. 2nd Chronicles, let's start about, yeah about 13, thank you.

Jeroboam is rebelled. I want you to picture the northern kingdom. Jeroboam I, up in the north, is going to go to idolatry.

Scattered throughout the entire nation are cities, 48 of them, that are given to the Levites. All the other tribes got zones of area that were laid out for them. Levites had the Lord as their inheritance.

They didn't get that kind of thing. They did get cities, 48 of them, Levitical cities. But they're scattered all through the land.

Six of those 48 are cities of refuge and all that. Well, if you are a Levite, committed to temple worship, and you happen to be in the part of the country that seceded, how do you feel? You're disenfranchised. The official religion is paganism.

What are you going to do? Pick up and go down south. This is what they do. Verse 13, And the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel, that's the nation now, resorted to him out of all their borders.

For the Levites left their suburban lands and their possession and came to Judah and Jerusalem. For Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the Lord. Jeroboam sets up the northern kingdom of idol worship.

The priests and Levites are, the franchise is expired. They're over. They're out.

What do they do? They pack up and go south to the temple area. At least there they're among friends. They can worship.

Are you with me? Let's read on. Speaking of Jeroboam, And he appointed for himself priests of the high places, and for the he-goats, that's a demon term by the way, and for the calves which he had made. Now notice verse 16.

And after them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, they came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the God, the Lord God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, strong three years. For three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon.

And it goes on. So you need to understand what really happened. The people, let's ignore the geographical boundaries we're in.

The people up north that were faithful went south. They didn't want any part of these golden calves and stuff. It doesn't say this, but put yourself in the position of an idol worshiper in the south.

You've been secretly worshiping idols. Hey, up north it's the official religion. What are you going to do? You're going to pack up and go north.

See, the nation commingles. That's the point. So when you speak of the northern kingdom, don't think of it as ten tribes.

Yes, it's the geographical area given to those ten tribes, but it is not confined to those ten tribes. There's commingling. The northern kingdom, because it refuses to leave its idolatry, gets wiped out, never to be seen again.

And what the Assyrians also did, they had a policy of, they call it, where they take their captives and transplant them. They brought their other captives from other nations there, and they took some of them and planted them elsewhere. They deliberately did that to break down any nationalism.

So that meant the descendants of those people were half-Jews. They're called Samaritans. Samaria was their capital.

That's where the whole Samaritan thing starts, is from all this. Now, the southern kingdom also has a couple of good kings, but finally it also gets into trouble, and God uses Babylon to take them into captivity for seven years, but they return. You will find twelve tribes, all twelve, alluded to in terms of the house of Judah and the nation subsequently.

In the New Testament, you'll discover that the tribes from the northern kingdom are represented in Judah. Simeon and Anna in the early stages and so forth, and it goes on and on. And we have a comprehensive study of this, of all twelve tribes.

It's an eight-tape volume that is connected, it's sort of like volume two of Joshua. We have the commentary on Joshua, it's eight tapes, but then we have a second tape which gets into the detail of each of the twelve tribes, but especially one of the tapes specifically deals with this myth, this literary myth of the so-called Lost Ten Tribes. It derives from a lack of understanding of the text.

But it's amazing how much literature, how many otherwise knowledgeable scholars don't fall into the trap of assuming there's ten tribes lost. No, no, no, they're not lost, for lots of reasons. But so, if that's about to bother you, I encourage you, don't let that sit, dig into it, find out the truth.

It's important in your understanding of the rest. But in any case, we do find in Hosea 5.15 that the nation will come to repentance, but what does it take to get them to repentance? Hosea's preaching didn't do it. Okay? What's going to bring them to repentance? Hosea 5.15 tells you.

It says, Lord says, I will go and return to my place, my former place. That means he must have left it. That's after his first coming.

He's saying that after his first coming then, huh? I will return to my former place until they acknowledge their offense in their affliction they will seek me earnestly. What affliction? The Great Tribulation. The purpose of the Great Tribulation is to drive Israel to the wall to do, to finally repent of her sin.

And it's, by the way, the sin there is specific, it's singular, it's the rejection of their Messiah. So the Tribulation has nothing to do with the church, it has to do with Israel. Anyone that thinks the church goes through the Tribulation needs to do some homework on what the Tribulation is really all about and what

the mystery of the body of Christ is really all about.

They're mutually exclusive for lots of reasons. Anyway, let's move on. You have to decide, don't accept it because I say so.

You need to do your own homework, come to your own conclusions. But anyway, we get down to Hosea 14 verse 3. Asher will not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. See, no longer will Israel trust Assyria, as they had been with their foreign policy, or any other nations.

And nor will they call her, their handmade idols, their gods. So this is, this is positive. In other words, they're finally waking up.

This is, this has in view their ultimate repentance. Verse 4. And God says, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him. See, this, this book is going to close on positives.

It's going to talk about their ultimate repentance. Tragically, it won't affect their near term, because this nation is not going to listen. They're going to go into, into oblivion.

But the promise to Israel brought, more broadly spoken, is good. It speaks of their ultimate restoration, because it will be built on their ultimate repentance. In that day of their repentance, God's going to turn from his anger, and demonstrate his love by healing them.

And that time, at that time, God's blessing will return. And so it's important to understand that, because that promise goes to the whole nation collectively. It's not aimed at those ten tribes, or just two tribes.

It's aimed at the nation collectively. Chapter 14, verse 5. I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall grow as a lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

So it's, the lily, of course, was renowned for its beauty. We saw that in Song of Solomon, when we did the Song of Songs in chapter 2, verse 2. And this is, in effect, a complete reversal of the imagery used back in chapter 13, verse 15, if you will. Verse 6. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

And so, again, Israel and their prosperity has been compared to the cedar of Lebanon, which has very deep roots, very luxuriant growth, and a very aromatic smell. So all these things are very, very, very strong metaphors to be used here. And they're very well known.

And, of course, the olive tree is also known for its luxuriance. And, of course, the oil was crucial to that economy in those days. It had much, great significance.

Verse 7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return. They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

Now, there's all kinds of debate as what shadow are we talking about here. The shade or shadow could refer to the Lord's protection, because He is compared as a pine tree in verse 8 and so forth. But most of the experts point out that the grammar is wrong, because it appears that Israel itself is the tree beneath whose shade the members of the nation flourish with freshness and vigor.

A technical point, perhaps, but it's interesting that there are some struggles with some of the details here. And the latter view is more consistent with the imagery in Chapter 14, verses 5 and 6. So, again, we have the Israelites, again, growing grain, points to the return to the covenantal blessings, because, again, we're drawing on all...the whole book draws heavily on the commitments God made in Deuteronomy 28 and elsewhere. And, once again, Israel will be like a fruitful vine.

Now, that...don't let that...don't miss that. The word fruitful is a pun on the name Ephraim. Ephraim means fruitfulness.

Now we get into another interesting verse here. Verse 8 in the King James says, Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him and observed him. I am like a green fir tree, and from me is thy fruit found.

Now, the contrast in attitude here with Ephraim, of course, compared to earlier is very, very stark, very different. And the Lord confirms his concern for Israel. The word here, observed him, is actually sure.

It means...it sounded like lurk there back in Chapter 13. Here it means cared for. Same word, but used in an opposite sense.

In one case, it was predatory. Here it is in a caring sense. The same God that stealthily watched Israel as a leopard ready to pounce and pray was the idiom earlier.

Now that same word is used for one who carefully watches over his people to protect them. Different tone. And comparing himself to a green pine tree, the Lord asserts that he is the nation's source of prosperity.

Your fruitfulness comes from me, he says. Now, what makes...the reason I bring this up...there's another view of this verse that's kind of interesting. I'm not sure it's correct, but you'll run into it maybe if you study.

And that is that some have suggested that this verse resembles marriage vows. With Ephraim speaking lines one and three and the Lord responding with lines two and four. And that would...in other words, Ephraim would say, what have I to do anymore with idols? And the Lord says, I have heard him and observed him.

Then Ephraim says, I am like a green fir tree. And the Lord says, from me is thy fruit found. In other words, it's almost antiphonal between the two of them in the minds of some scholars.

But neither the NASB nor the King James support that view. In fact, the King James translators have added the words, Ephraim shall say, you with me, to indicate who's speaking. So they've bent it the other way.

But it wouldn't surprise me that this might really be the right view of it, because it would be an interesting ellipsis, closing the marriage...the unfaithful marriage vows that were so prominent in chapters one and two between Gomer and Hosea, where Gomer was the unfaithful wife and is used as an allegory, in a sense, of Israel is the unfaithful wife of Jehovah or Jehovah, right? And so it'd be very interesting as we close up to have like a repeat of marriage vows at the end. So even though there's some scholastic debate on the exegesis here, I wouldn't press it, but I do call it to your interest. Okay, we have verse nine.

It's the conclusion. Who is wise and he shall understand these things? Prudent, then, 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.

So the book ends with a word on wisdom. One who is wise and discerning will learn three lessons from Hosea's book. First, the ways of the Lord, his covenantal demands, are correct.

First point. Second point, the righteous walk in them and experience the blessings of loyalty. And third point is the rebellious will stumble, fall, however, in them or over them, in the sense that the destruction or stumbling is a direct result of disobedience.

And so the broken commandments are, of course, the ultimate reason for the downfall. So that's a very simple, obvious, you say, gee, that's obvious. Yeah, maybe, maybe not, because it doesn't seem to penetrate any of us well enough.

The ways of the Lord is right. The righteous that obey him get blessings that go with loyalty. Those that are rebellious and fail to do that will stumble and get broken.

Very simple. And now, standing back from this book that's been through the early chapters, especially, through Hosea's enduring the whole profligacy of his wife and the nation both, and also through his comprehensive exposition, the main thing that he has revealed to us, and I encourage you to go back and review your notes and skim through it again, is the character of God. The one thing you and I pick up from this, aside from the history and all the details, is to stand back and try to understand the character of God.

His sovereignty was emphasized in the first three chapters. The sovereignty of God. He is who he is.

His holiness is the main subject of chapters four, five, six, and seven. His justice, chapters eight, nine, and ten. Therein lies the problem.

He can't wick at sin. The character of God requires justice. And then, of course, the last chapters, eleven through fourteen, his love.

Four key characteristics of God you can study in Hosea by looking at his sovereignty in the first three chapters, his holiness in the next four chapters, his justice in the next three chapters, and then his love in the last five chapters, or excuse me, last four chapters, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, last four chapters. Now, the one thing that Hosea has emphasized all through the book is that it's not enough to intellectually understand his prophecy. But you and I have to discern how that knowledge can apply to our lives, all the way through.

And he uses incredibly graphic metaphors, similes, and so forth to make that point. So that's the book. How many have enjoyed the book? Well, I've got some disturbing news for you.

Hosea's preaching, eloquent though it was, thorough though it was, was a failure. We've gone through this book, enjoyed his incredible articulation, his graphic idioms, his imaginative puns, his wonderful book, and the drama of the situation. Terrific book.

And yet, Hosea's preaching was a failure. What do you mean by that? What do you mean it was a failure? Well, he was called to preach repentance to the northern kingdom, or they'd get wiped out. And what happened? They got wiped out.

Did they repent? No. What was his preaching for? To get him to repent. Did they repent? No.

Well, he blew it, sort of. Wasn't his fault, I don't mean that, but he did his best. In fact, he did a wonderful job through the Holy Spirit.

He did a great job. But it failed. That should bother you.

Not because it's so elegant and all that. For another reason, in Isaiah 55, verse 11, God makes an announcement. We all quote it all the time.

God declares in Isaiah 55, 11, My word will not return void. Right? Whenever you declare the word of God in a conversation, or any opportunity you have, you can do so knowing that that word will not return void. It will accomplish God's purpose.

Any time you're moved to quote a verse, quote the word of God, your failure to do so is a failure of stewardship. Because you might be at that moment in time in that place to do just that, even though you might not see its result. Why? Because of Isaiah 55, 11, where God declares, My word will not return void.

That's quite a statement. Well, we've got a problem. We've been together now for eight sessions, and we've rather laboriously gone through Hosea 1 through 14 in those eight sessions.

We've enjoyed him, we've plunged in, we've learned some interesting things, we've stumbled on a few things probably, and whatever, and yet now we discover, we get to the end of the course here, we discover, whoops, his preaching was a failure. It didn't help his hearers. They didn't hear him.

They didn't repent. They didn't turn from their idols. They didn't stop their violence and their sinning and all the rest of it.

And what happened? They got wiped out as a nation, never to be seen again in history. They are not returning. Israel as a nation, the combined, for a lot of other reasons, will ultimately, but what about these guys? What about Hosea? He blew it.

You know what Hosea is waiting for? He wants to see fruit from his word. You know who's going to have to give him that fruit? You and me. You and me.

His contemporaries blew it. When they read this, they didn't repent. The northern kingdom kaput.

But you see, his word doesn't end there. It's sitting in your lap and mine. And I believe the Holy Spirit would have us discern the parallels between the predicament of the readers of Hosea, and our predicament as we pick up our newspaper every morning.

As we reflect that our nation, unlike others, was designed by prayer, by men who didn't necessarily all share the same religious views, but did anchor this nation on the word of God. That from our creator, we had inalienable rights. They're not given by the state, they're given by him.

And you can't read the Declaration of Independence or even the Constitution without recognizing that what our bedrock heritage was built upon. And these guys didn't do it for self gain. Most of them died penniless, homes burned, families destroyed, but they did it still willingly because they felt they're doing it for their posterity, for the children, grandchildren, and so forth.

What a different attitude they had than we have today. The myopia of what's in it for me pervades our land everywhere. This nation that has this heritage has abandoned that heritage just as the northern kingdom abandoned it.

They had abandoned theirs for essentially two centuries. How long have we abandoned ours? We've been here a better part of two centuries. A little more than that actually, a little.

We may be overdue. As we look at the stages, the sins, as you go through Hosea again and look at the specific examples, they fit us like a glove. And I won't recount those again, you can fill in the blanks.

So Hosea's preachment wasn't just to the northern kingdom in Israel. I believe it's to you and I in this day right here and now, you and I right here. And I think it's our sins of ingratitude, our failure to be loyal to the source of our blessings.

Our ability to meet here together in this substantial group this night is a blessing that can't be done in most of the world. There are parts of the world that pastors are being crucified literally on crosses if they're found. There are places in the world where if we were meeting it would have to be in small groups in homes and we don't all arrive or depart at the same time so we don't raise suspicion.

Where the declaration of your belief in Jesus Christ subjects you to penalty of death. That's not in small little isolated pockets of oppression that's in most of the world today. And yet we sit here shrugging it off as something we take for granted while there are militant politicians and special groups trying to snip this away from us.

Don't underestimate the sinister nature of some of the elements of what we call euphemistically liberalism. They're out to pull away your right to worship. They're out to enforce paganism on your children in schools.

They're out to disconnect your authority over your children. You can go through the whole list and as you do that it makes your hair curl to realize the sinister nature of these. We're not talking about difference of political theories and other stuff that was typically the debates of politics over the last century or so.

No we're talking a spiritual warfare that's going on every day, every week in the legislatures and the kinds of bills that are being contrived by congressmen who pass them without reading them about the corruption left and right by the criminalization of our major institutions and on it goes on and on and on. That's not the problem we are. The American people.

The apathy and the ignorance. No no we need a repentance. So where will the fruit from Hosea's words come? Not from his listeners, not from his readers then.

It has to be for you and me. You and I have to be his fruit bearers. Let's stand for a closing word of prayer and let's bow our hearts.

Father we praise your name. We thank you father for the incredible blessings you have showered upon us. We thank you father for this land and the heritage that we are beneficiaries of.

We thank you father for your word that we can share so freely and enjoy together so casually. But above all father we thank you that your word became incarnate and dwelt among us so that we could behold his glory full of grace and truth. Oh father we would ask that through your holy spirit you would help us grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

We pray father too that you would increase in each of us a sense of the stewardship that falls upon us for these blessings, these privileges, this abundance that comes from your hand to our families. We ask your forgiveness father. We acknowledge and confess our sin of ingratitude and presumption and indifference

to the spiritual attacks surrounding us.

Oh father we acknowledge that it's our negligence that has allowed the pagan left to take charge of our land and its institutions that have infused the corruption that we are now faced with. And yet father we also thank you that you've brought us together at this time in this study. We pray father that indeed your word would not return void, not in our lives, but it would bear fruit for your kingdom.

We would ask father that through your holy spirit you would illuminate specifically before us those paths, those actions, those opportunities that you would have us embrace. We ask all this father that we in a small way might bring pleasure to your heart father. Let us discern your heart.

Help us to be sensitive and responsive to your will in our lives that we might in a small way manifest a small thank you for what you've done. That we might bear fruit for your kingdom. That we might fulfill that destiny you, that unique specific destiny you have for each of us.

Help us to sense it, to embrace it, to be effective for you. Not by power or by might or anything that we might add, but by your spirit father. As we commit ourselves before your throne, once again, in the name of Yeshua, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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