

## Hosea'S Prophecy (Part Four)

Hosea 8 and 9

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This week we continue our analysis of the book of Hosea, as a reminder let me give you the historical setting. Hosea prophesied about the time the city of Rome was built, the beginning of the Olympiads, and during the reign of four kings, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, of Judah, and also Jeroboam II, son of Joash of Israel.

Israelites were surrounded by enemies, but instead of driving them out as God had commanded, they formed alliances with them. Because of this these nations, especially the Philistines, became a stumbling block to the Israelites because the people absorbed the ways of the gentiles, as God warned them against.

The principle nations and enemies with whom alliances were formed were Assyria, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Philistines, and then later Egypt. Because of these alliances there was a continual changing of the confederation of nations. Israel allied with some Gentile nations and Judah allied with other gentile nations and sometimes they were the same Gentile nations, and sometimes not, so the conflicts between Judah and Israel were sometimes and sometimes not, depending on who they were allied with.

Any alliance with Gentile nations caused nothing but trouble for the Israelites and the Jews.

Most of the conflict came from territorial disputes, often with Judah, then the prophet Hosea came on the scene. Israel was enjoying the greatest peace and prosperity since the time of their division into the two separate nations, of Israel and Judah.

They were affluent and living in luxury at the time. The setting is so similar to what we are looking at today. This was much the same as we are experiencing in all the Israelitish nations today, not just the United States. This makes Hosea's prophecy all the more relevant for us today, it was during the great decline of Israel's morality and wealth that this takes place.

As a reminder let me briefly summarize what I covered in my previous sermons on Hosea. God has a marriage relationship with Israel, which is depicted in type by the marriage of Hosea to Gomer, but Israel turned to other gods, made alliances with other countries, and took on their pagan cultures much the way Gomer did as Hosea's wife. As a result, physical Israel ended up in the condition of not having attained mercy from

God and not being God's people; in other words they were cut off from God, divorced.

Today the church of God is the Israel of God and we have obtained mercy and are God's people. Nevertheless, physical Israel is commanded to repent and turn to God, but the repentance will not happen until the end of the Great Tribulation and on into the millennium. When she does she will have obtained mercy and will once again be God's people.

At that time God will have mercy on all Israel and through the Israel of God, the Gentiles will also enter into a covenant relationship with God and eventually all the world will have obtained mercy and be God's people. Anyone who does not will be destroyed and will not be God's people.

This will take quite a bit of time; it will not happen overnight. Nevertheless Christ will accomplish His redemptive work regarding both His church and the renewed nation of Israel. As we continue on through Hosea, we saw God's indictment of Israel and his warning of her coming punishment. But Israel and Judah refused to repent, and the rest of the book illustrates and explains God's assertion and intermittently reminds Israel of their need for repentance.

God just does not remind them once, let it go, and then punish them. He reminds them over and over again. We see that very vividly in Hosea. With this fourth sermon on Hosea prophesy, we will analyze chapter 8, which deals with Israel's apostasy and hypocrisy, and chapter 9, which deals with God's judgment of her sin. This begins God's punishment of Israel initially.

Let us look at some of the problems that Israel is having at this time. You will see many parallels to what is going on in our nation today. The people of Israel may claim to know and love the Lord God, but their deeds prove otherwise. Because of their sins and that they forgot God, they will reap the whirlwind.

The whirlwind represents the fact that they will reap not merely as they have sown, but with an awful increase because they should have known better. They sowed folly and pride and will reap not merely emptiness and disappointment but sudden overwhelming destruction. Those who sow the seed of unrighteousness will reap a harvest of judgment.

In chapters 8 and 9 in Hosea, we will see God's standard for judgment. A major problem with Israel is that they see God as the one who is not there. Because of this sinful attitude, God pronounces the sentence.

The people of Israel claim to know and love God, but they neglected to do even the basics of living God's way of life.

**Luke 16:10** He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

That was Israel; they were unjust in the little, simple things that they thought were unimportant which made them unjust in much. Humans reason that it is a little thing to forget our relationship with God; we trust in our own resources rather than in Him, and when in reality this is a spiritually immense thing, a tremendous and huge sin. This neglect seems small at first but it grows worse and ends in destruction.

This is the meaning of the two Proverbs that lie at the heart of Hosea 8.

**Hosea 8:7** They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud. It shall never produce meal. If it should produce, aliens would swallow it up.

The first of these sayings...“they sow the wind and reap the whirlwind,” expresses the principle that there is a correspondence between what a person does and what happens to him or her later. Generally we call this cause and effect. Since wind in scripture often refers to what is empty or illusive, the Proverb means that Israel has sown the seed of meaningless religion and immorality and will therefore reap a harvest of judgment at the hand of God.

The second saying reinforces the first. A headless stalk of wheat is worthless. Since it will not produce any flour, it is useless and fit only to be carted away and burned. According to Hosea the enemy will come against Israel and will prove the truth of this principle as an instrument of God's judgment.

The specifics of what Israel has done is spelled out in chapter 8, but these specific sins flow from the more basic sin mentioned at the end of the chapter, in verse 14.

**Hosea 8:14** For Israel has forgotten his maker, and has built temples. Judah also has multiplied fortified cities. But I will send fire upon his cities. And it shall devour his palaces.

Does this mean that Israel has forgotten that there is a God? That is not the meaning

here. Not only had Israel not forgotten God—she still knew that He existed and even thought that she was worshiping Him. It is actually the case that no one ever forgets God in the absolute intellectual sense.

It is our inescapable knowledge of God coupled with our unreasonable and sinful rejection of that knowledge that makes us guilty before Him. What the word *forget* actually means is neglect. Israel knew God intellectually, but she had neglected Him by pushing Him aside; she had allowed other, lesser things to become central in the national life.

Notice the similarity to the warning given to Israel by Moses shortly before his death. It is found in the earlier chapters of Deuteronomy. In these chapters, Moses reviewed the mighty acts of God, on Israel's behalf—bringing them out of Egypt and giving them a land that they were then to go in and possess. He repeatedly wanted them not to forget these things after they were established in the land.

**Deuteronomy 4:23** Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you.

Here again we see a caution against disobedience.

**Deuteronomy 6:10-12** And it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build. Houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant. When you have eaten and are full then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Again, this is an emphasis Hosea is trying to make (in Hosea's prophecy), but God made that many years before, through Moses.

**Deuteronomy 8:10-14** When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you, Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest when you

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have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them. And when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied. When your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

**Deuteronomy 8:19-20** Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God.

That is the warning that God gave the Israelites back in the time of Moses. It is the warning He gave through Hosea and the other prophets, and it is the warning that this nation has today. These verses and others show that the problem involved was not an intellectual forgetting of God, but a moral forgetting, in which a general worship of God and a rigorous obedience to His commandments are neglected; forgetting is neglectful.

This was in danger of coming about when the Israelites became settled in the land and were prosperous. Moses sense of the danger of that time was because he had vision; he saw Israel's tendencies and he projected what she would be like in the future. He knew her main problem would be that she would forget God. Of course God is the one who put that understanding in his mind. If they could not intellectually forget God, they could put Him out of their calculation; they could shove Him aside and act as if He did not exist.

A similar situation prevails today in many Christian circles. It is not necessarily that God is denied; on the contrary, He is acknowledged, sometimes with great ceremony and by the most elaborate services. The problem is that worshipers forget that God must be obeyed and that they must therefore live their lives differently from the world. There are people who could be very useful in God's work, but are useless because they are taken up with their jobs, families, cars, or houses. They have no time for service; others are made useless by sin.

They have forgotten God by the way they are living, wrongly thinking that they can profess Christ as savior while ignoring Him as Lord. And for all practical purposes forgetting God. That is the danger that this nation is in, up to their necks; and the danger that some in God's church are in as well.

In the greater churches of God there are people who are committing adultery or engaging in premarital sex, who do not want to change, but who nevertheless come to church and make a profession of godliness. They are unhappy, yet they will not stop.

The five sinful reasons for God's judgment are brought out in this chapter of Hosea 8—that resulted from Israel's forgetting God. These are warnings to the Israelitish nations today. Those Israelite nations of the U.S., Canada, UK, Australia, parts of Europe, Scandinavia, and the Israelites scattered throughout various nations in the world.

The first sinful reason for God's judgment, seen in Hosea 8, is the breaking of God's covenant. We can see very vividly the powerful image of Israel's failure to stay in covenant with God, in chapters 1-3 in Hosea, where Hosea takes Gomer for a wife and she later becomes a harlot. The faithful Hosea is a parabolic representation of God's faithfulness to His people.

**Hosea 8:1-3** Set the trumpet to your mouth. He shall come like an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law. Israel will cry to Me, "My God, we know You." Israel has cast off the good. The enemy will pursue him.

For the second time, Hosea calls for the trumpet to be blown (in Hosea 8:1 and earlier in Hosea 5:8). According to Numbers 10, Israelites use trumpets to announce special occasions, to sound alarms, to gather the people for assemblies, and to proclaim war. This call was a trumpet of alarm, because the enemy was coming and God was giving His people an opportunity to repent. Hosea used a number of images to show the people what God would do to them because of their sin.

The word covenant here means agreement. It is essentially personal. Law is an objective standard and sin is a broken relationship. If you break God's covenant, you break God's law; and similarly, to break God's law is to offend against God's personality. Verse one combines the breaking of God's covenant with rebellion against God's law; it mentions both there. It is saying something very timely and significant. It is saying that we cannot call God *God* without obedience. If we are, we are hypocrites.

In Luke 6:46, Jesus indicated the same thing when He asked, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?" This question is immediately followed by the parable of a man who built his house on the sand and suffered the loss of everything when the storm struck.

There is one more thing that we need to notice about this breaking of God's covenant. It is the reaction of God to the hypocrisy. We see His reaction and the tone of the passage primarily in the emphasis on the words *My*, *Me*, and also *You*, in these verses. You will notice them there. *My* covenant; *My* law. Israel will cry to *Me*, "My God." Israel replies, "We know *You*." You can see the emphasis is on God.

It was God's covenant that they were breaking. God is saying that He hates the hypocrisy of it all; they dare to claim that they acknowledge Him when actually they are disregarding His covenant and His law.

The second sinful reason for God's judgment is the choice of kings and other national leaders without God direction or consent.

**Hosea 8:4** They set up kings, but not by Me. They made princes, and I did not acknowledge it. From their silver and gold they made idols for themselves, that they might be cut off.

The grievance is twofold. The leaders are not God's choice, and these usurpers are not godly. Hosea and the people were well aware that God knows everything. The point is not whether God was aware of the leaders they had set up, but rather that the people had never asked Him for guidance before choosing these leaders.

God does set up leaders and breaks them down, but He does expect His nation, Israel, the people, the citizenship to pray and ask for God's guidance in choosing them. We do not vote for one reason because if we voted for Romney and God wanted Obama back in, we would be voting against God's choice and vice versa. All we have to do is to pray and ask God for His choice to be placed in there, and that is much more powerful than all the votes in the entire nation.

One of the great gifts of God to a nation is upright and Godly leadership. How are we to have that leadership unless we ask God for it? We cannot see into human hearts; true character is known to God alone. There are certain things that God gives us as discernment as members of God's church, and we can see. We can see that neither candidate is fit to lead: Romney, a globalist, first Governor to vote in cap and trade which is a slavery policy from the UN; and Obama...all we have to do is look at his fruits. So neither is fit to rule this nation.

To choose leaders without the direction of God is not only sinful, but it is foolish. Those

who follow their own human reasoning regarding the choice of leaders will inevitably get what they deserve: one who represents their sinful ways most accurately.

The third sinful reason for God's judgment is idolatry. The choice of bad rulers leads to bad religion and vice versa. It is no surprise that the next step In Israel's rebellion against God is idolatry. We will continue on in Hosea 8:4.

**Hosea 8:4-6** They set up kings, but not by Me. They made princes, and I did not acknowledge it. From their silver and gold they made idols for themselves. That they might be cut off. Your calf is rejected, O Samaria. My anger is aroused against them. How long will it be until they attain to innocence? For from Israel is even this. A workman made it, and it is not God. But the calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces.

God promising judgment and punishment. God condemns the worship of the calf idol at the cult centers of the Northern Kingdom as idolatry. But we miss the point if we think of this calf worship as an outright rejection of God for idols. The sin was far more subtle; it did include that, but it was far more subtle and even worse. What happened was quite similar to what had happened in the days of Moses and Aaron, when the people were gathered around Mt. Sinai and clambered for a god like the gods of Egypt. Aaron made them a little calf out of the gold they had brought up from Egypt. Aaron did not think of this as an idol; that is the point, he thought of the calf as a representation of the strength of the Lord and even proclaimed the dedication feast, which turned into an orgy, as a festival to the Lord. The people missed the distinction; they identified the calf with the fertility bull gods of Egypt and behaved accordingly. It was a fertility god so they went into an orgy to worship it.

In Hosea's Israel, it was all happening again. In reality the calves of the cult center were not gods. They were actually calf pedestals at that time on which the true and invisible god was supposed to stand, but because the people could not see the invisible god, even while they could see the calf, inevitably the true God was debased and the idol worshiped.

You do not have to say, "I am worshiping an idol to actually worship an idol." We can say that we are worshiping God, but we worship an idol: our money, our homes, cars, our positions, spouse, and children. Even when we associate those things with God or think of them as the gift of God, it is a question not of what we say but of that to which we actually give our time and allegiance in the place of God.

The fourth sinful reason for God's judgment is the formation of alliances with ungodly nations. Israelites placed their hope for safety and protection in Gentile nations rather than in God, in their alliances with Judah rather than God, as well.

**Hosea 8:7-10** They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud. It shall never produce meal. If it should produce, Aliens would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up. Now they are among the Gentiles like a vessel in which there is no pleasure. For they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey alone by itself. Ephraim has hired lovers. Yes though they gather them. And they shall sorrow a little, because of the burden of the king of princes.

This can apply today in the way we have shipped manufacturing overseas; it is the labor of the Chinese and the Japanese, Indonesians, and so on. Trusting flimsy alliances, sowing the wind, will exacerbate the situation by reaping the whirlwind, by bringing on a ruthless invader. We no longer own most of this nation; sixteen trillion dollars has to come from somewhere. It always comes from hard assets, gold, silver, land and buildings, and manufacturing.

This drift of policy was all quite literal in the Northern Kingdom's last days. Israel's last king ascended the throne through the murder of his predecessor, Pekah, and his first act after his assumption of the throne, was to submit to Assyria. He submitted by paying tribute; in his mind this was his only chance of remaining king.

Our debt is sixteen trillion dollars now; we owe that to someone else; we are slaves. Same thing Israel did back then; Israel never learns. The same thing had been done by Menachem some years before. No doubt these kings would have pleaded political expediency, emergency measures, quantitative reasoning and so on. They would have said, "It is all we could do," but God is not impressed with this faithless reasoning. Instead of congratulating them on their astute political wisdom, God compares such leadership to a wild donkey and a prostitute.

Political expediency will not work. Instead of surviving, Israel will become scattered among the nations to whom she looked for support. Will that happen to this nation? It appears so by the prophecies that we read.

The fifth and final sinful reason for God's pending judgment cited in this chapter is the construction of false altars. Hosea had first shown Israelites, especially the Ephraimites, their folly for forsaking God, for the help of man. Now he shows the folly of attempting to

secure themselves by their great show or pretenses of religion and devotion in a false way.

Islam is allowed to be taught in the government's schools, but Christianity is not. All the eastern religions are allowed to be taught in the government's schools, but Christianity is not. I could go on and on with every institution in this nation; it is the same thing.

**Hosea 8:11** Because Ephraim has made many altars for sin, they have become for him altars for sinning. I have written for him the great things of My law, but they were considered a strange thing. For the sacrifices of My offerings they sacrifice flesh and eat it, but the Lord does not accept them. Now He will remember their iniquity and punish their sins. They shall return to Egypt.

Egypt is another word or term for sin and slavery. God had appointed one altar at Jerusalem, there He willed the sacrifices to be offered, which He would accept. To multiply altars, much more to set up altars against the one altar, was to multiply sin. Initially these altars were false, not because they were dedicated to a god other than the Lord—that was part of it, but because they wrongly added to the mere formality of Israel's religious practices and therefore became a cause of further sinning. They introduced many different ceremonial things and rituals into their worship of who they thought was the true God.

Our equivalent today are these altars, churches, and other Christian symbols that claim to represent God and Christ, but are not established by scriptural backing. In other words they are not authorized by God because they do not follow His instructions but instead follow the traditions of men. These churches use symbols with the pagan origins to represent Christianity: crucifix, fish, Christmas trees, yule logs, rabbits, eggs, the sun are just a few of the ancient pagan occult symbols.

Professing Christian churches hypocritically celebrate: 1) Easter, the most ancient and pagan sun worship services—rising early on Sunday morning to stand in awe of the rising sun the same way the ancient pagans praised Ishtar. 2) Halloween, the most demonic holiday of the year—dressing up the children in ungodly costumes and selling pagan jack O' lanterns to make money. Dark demonic activities clearly permeate this holiday. It is the one that people spend the most money on of all the holidays. It is Satan's, most cherished day. 3) Christmas, the ancient pagan festivals of Brumalia and Saturnalia in which the rising of the bright sun is worshiped as it is claimed to be reborn; it is named after Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Hypocrisy, apostasy. Israel was guilty of it then, and it is guilty of it today, therefore we should expect no difference in how God reacts to this nation than what He did to Israel back then. Very sobering things.

The keeping of all these holidays of pagan origins are justified by people saying, "I look at it from a Christian perspective." The omnipotence sovereign God does not accept that lame excuse for such hypocrisy and deceit.

Each of these 5 symbols, which flow from a forgetfulness of God, brings judgment, and this is the way verses 13-14 end.

**Hosea 8:13-14** For the sacrifices of My offerings they sacrifice flesh and eat it, But the Lord does not accept them. Now He will remember their iniquity and punish their sins. They shall return to Egypt [slavery, sin]. For Israel has forgotten his Maker and has built temples. Judah also has multiplied fortified cities. But I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces.

Our imagination can run wild with what that means—"I will send fire upon his cities." It surely means destruction.

There is one more thing to be noted before we close our analysis of this chapter. At the beginning we looked at the root cause of these 5 deviations and found them explained in some form by the first phrase of verse 14: Israel has forgotten his Maker. That was true then, and it is true today. In the space between the summary and the concluding words of judgment, "I will send fire upon their cities and it shall devour his palaces," God notes one other item of the people's behavior that flows from their foolishness.

What God says in these interim phrases is that Israel built palaces and Judah has fortified many towns. On the surface, this does not seem to be very meaningful, perhaps it is even a bit out of place, but we see why this is included when we realize that the basic idea of the word translated *palaces* is spaciousness and immenseness. The King James translates this word as *temples*. The New King James version, RSV and NIV versions, say *palaces* because the central idea is immenseness. The word may actually mean either one—palaces or temples, spaciousness or immenseness.

What God is talking about in these phrases is the passion of the nation at that time to build immense things. Having forsaken God who alone was immense enough for her need, Israel tried to compensate by the construction of immense things without Him. This brings to mind many of today's ultra-high skyscrapers, especially the new freedom

tower in New York City that thumbs the nose at God.

This is so contemporary, all of this, and so true of humanity in general. If we have God, we can be content with however little or much He gives us, but if we have lost Him, we find ourselves striving to build immense things to take God's place so that we can pat ourselves on the back or so that we can thumb our noses at God.

I cannot get over how many obelisks phallic symbols that you see in every city as you drive around. Nashville, an obelisk; Baltimore, an obelisk, go up town, down town. Charlotte, and you see obelisks—all thumbing the nose at God. People are disgusting when they disobey God.

People tend toward a preoccupation with immenseness; society is a shallow movement, shallow in commitment, knowledge, morality, and service.

With regard to churches, parishioners fear that this lack of a relationship with God will become apparent to others, so they launch bigger and bigger projects, build larger and larger churches and raise more and more money. They try to entice more and more people to join them, but it is God who calls people; we do not drag people in.

Put into a formula they might say, "Immensity equals blessings," meaning that size is a proof of God's presence, but that is not necessarily true. Sometimes God does bless in this way. He prospers His people and certainly would desire to see more rather than little happen. We desire very strongly to see lots and lots of people come into God's church, but God is the one who calls them, and it is not happening at this time in a big way. It is just a trickle, but we are very thankful for that. Remember we need to be thankful in the little things as well as the much.

**Luke 12:32-34** Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms, provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where is this nation's treasure? If God gives immenseness, fine; but whenever we find ourselves longing for this and struggling for it, we had best be on guard. Just as in the secular world, it is often the case that we strive for immenseness when God is least present in our lives. In order that by that means, we as human beings may cover up the moral poverty and the spiritual futility of our lives.

Hosea 8 deals Israel's hypocrisy. It is true that God is always there and is ultimately inescapable, but there is a certain sense in which He sometimes judges His people by turning from them, so that He is not there for them when they cry to Him. In Hosea 9, this is what God says He is about to do to Israel.

For years they had benefited from His presence, even though they did not honor Him, and now He will withdraw, and the result will be the end of their blessings. Again a parallel to what is happening in this nation and other Israelitish nations.

There are five important elements to God's judgment, in chapter 9. 1) The death of joy, found in verses 1-2. 2) Exile from their land in verses 3-6. 3) The loss of spiritual discernment in verses 7-9. 4) A declining birth rate in verses 10-16. 5) Casting out in verse 17.

The immediate effect of God's withdrawal from Israel's affairs is to be the fall of the people to their enemies. God is their strength. If He withdraws, their fortresses must inevitably be taken. This is not said in language that is prosaic as this; however, instead Hosea expresses it in terms of the current feast of Israel which they were enjoying.

It may be that Hosea delivered the opening part of this oracle as a sermon at the Feast of Tabernacles. We do not know for sure. But the Feast of Tabernacles was a time of joy, and he was delivering this at a time of joy during the fall. Therefore a coming disaster would have been the last thought to enter anyone's mind. At this point Hosea probably stepped up to demand that the partying stop and to call the people to accountability.

**Hosea 9:1-5** [The translator has labeled this, judgment of Israel's sin]. Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples, for you have played the harlot against your God [another reference back to Gomer]. You have loved for reward on every threshing floor, and the wine press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her. They shall not dwell In the Lord's land, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and shall eat unclean things in Assyria. They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord, nor shall their sacrifices be pleasing to Him. It shall be like bread of mourners to them. All who eat it shall be defiled. For their bread shall be for their life. It shall not come into the house of the Lord. What will you do in the appointed day and in the day of the feast of the Lord?

This message must have been difficult to accept, but it is easy enough to understand. It

is simply that because the people have forsaken God, God has forsaken them. Because God has forsaken them, the blessing that the harvest symbolized would soon come to an end. It is interesting that a lot of our harvest is not going to come out this year because of the drought, bad weather. We are hurting very badly as a nation in the way of what we are able to reap, in the plant sense.

The reason this message is difficult to accept is that the average person does not normally think of a blessing of life as being a direct result of God's favor. People think mechanistically and materially without God entering into much of that thinking at all. Hosea's message is as much for us as it is for the skeptics who are reported by Peter as saying,

**II Peter 3:4** Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

It is not true that all things continue unchanged. Judgments do come in history and beyond that there is the final judgment. The reason things seem mechanical and free from judgment to people is that God is extremely patient.

**II Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

**Deuteronomy 32:35** Vengeance is Mine, and recompense. Their foot shall slip in due time. For the day of their calamity is at hand, and things to come hasten upon them.

He is saying they will come soon enough; God is patient, but the calamity will come soon enough.

The principles, these passages enunciate, are true and Hosea preached the same maintaining that the blessings that Israel enjoyed even in their apostasy were from God, warning that the day of reckoning was at hand.

The second section of Hosea 9 contains a proof of the behavior of the people—that the judgments about which Hosea was speaking were certainly coming. Significantly enough, the proof is in their reception of Hosea. Hosea had spoken of a coming

invasion in clear and passionate terms. He was concerned for the people and sincerely wanted them to repent of sin and return to God.

At first the people neither grieved nor became angry; instead they laughed at him. They laughed at God's prophet, who was telling them the truth, but they could not swallow it. They were skeptics, to say the least. They said he was a fool, crazy. Only after he persisted in his preaching did they become hostile and do him harm.

**Hosea 9:6-10** For indeed they are gone because of destruction. Egypt shall gather them up. Memphis shall bury them. Nettles shall possess their valuables of silver. Thorns shall be in their tents. The days of punishment have come. The days of recompense have come. Israel knows. The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is insane, because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity. The watchman of Ephraim is with my God. But the prophet is a fowler's snare in all his ways, and enmity in the house of his God. They are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity. He will punish their sins. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your fathers as the first fruits on the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves to that shame. They became an abomination like the thing they loved.

We have something similar to this in the book of Amos. He says that when he came preaching against Israel, as Hosea did, he was met at Bethel by Amaziah the official head of the northern kingdoms religious establishment. That was Israel at that time. Amaziah regarded his words as treachery. So he reported them to the king, which caused King Jeroboam of Israel to send Amos away to Judah to prophesy there.

In Hosea's case, there was no official dismissal from the northern kingdom of Israel. Instead they called Hosea a madman, a lunatic; and they said in effect, "Who in his right mind would prophesy judgment like this when we are in the midst of such a booming economy?" This in itself is prove of God's blessings. There are still many in this nation, even with the economy the way we have it, who are still doing quite well.

This reaction to the prophets was not at all uncommon. We think of Isaiah early in his career. He seems to have carried on a more or less private ministry. But the time came when he began to speak openly about the decaying religious moral and political condition. At this point the people began to mock him. Isaiah also spoke of impending judgment. Isaiah's answer is that if they will not listen to such plain Hebrew, what we would say, plain English, then God will speak to them in foreign languages, meaning

that he would send foreigners to overrun the country. Still, they did not listen; they considered Isaiah crazy.

Do we have foreign languages in this nation? In the state of California every once in a while some leaders put forth referendums to change the official language of California to Spanish. Thankfully it has been put down every time so far. In Canada, the French Canadians every few years put forth the same thing—to change the language of Quebec and French Canada to French. It is a similar situation happening all over the world, in all Israelite nations.

Why is it people can make such foolish and irresponsible judgments when the prophets and even the Son of God are concerned? It is certainly not that the prophetic message is foolishness, or a problem with the mode in which it was delivered. Considered objectively it is hard to think of any words in history that bare more the marks of being sane and passionate and construction, than the words of a prophet of God. Besides the things they prophesied came true. How can such words be so totally disregarded? Hosea gives the answer in Hosea 9:7.

**Hosea 9:7** The days of punishment have come. The days of recompense have come. Israel knows, the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is insane, because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity [sin separates us from God.].

**Isaiah 59:2** But your iniquities have separated you from your God. And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

When we are separated from God by sin, the spiritual awareness that comes from God will be taken away. Spiritual and moral blindness ensues; the people of Israel had sinned and they had grown spiritually deaf as a result of their transgressions.

The word of God had been spoken to them by the prophets, and the words seem foolish. They had laughed at the messengers; it is a grim picture, very grim. But it is not as grim as it was soon to become, because the word of God was at least still being spoken at that point in Israel's history. The prophets might be laughed at; the word might be disregarded; but as long as the prophets were there, whether they were respected or not, as long as the word of God was spoken, whether listened to or not, as long as those things were present—there was hope.

Hosea's Prophecy (Part Four) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

**Hebrew 4:12** For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart

As long as God speaks, all things are possible, and when God removes Himself, as Hosea says He is about to do, then the word of God is removed, and there is no hope. There is only a famine of the word of God and despair.

**Amos 8:11-12** Behold the days coming, says the Lord God. That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east. They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, But shall not find it.

In our future will there be a time when it is banned to even mention anything from the word of God? Israel had rejected the words of the Lord from Amos. So they would go into exile where there would be no word from the Lord at all. In its absence, they will find that the revelation from God had been their most precious possession. People who had repeatedly rejected God word will suddenly be unable to find God's words at all.

When Israel spurs God's grace, they are left to their own devices. Judgment is dramatic; if the nation does not change it will soon head toward extinction.

**Hosea 9:11** As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, no birth, no pregnancy, and no conception.

What a terrifying thought for any nation! This is describing national barrenness.

**Hosea 9:12-13** Though they bring up their children, yet I will bereave [meaning spiritually and physically orphan them] to the last man. Yes, woe to them when I depart from them. Just as I saw Ephraim like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place, so Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer [those who abort children].

This is a perfect description of what is happening today in Israelitish nations. Listen to these annual U.S. abortion statistics. Primary abortions statistics in the U.S. are

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available from two sources. Privately from the Guttmacher Institute; and publicly from the centers for disease control known as CDC. One a private and one a government institution.

“In 2008 approximately 1.21 million abortions took place in the U.S. 1973-2008, nearly 50 million legal abortions [who knows how many illegal abortions there were] occurred in the U.S.” Nearly half of pregnancies among American women are unintended. About four to ten of these are terminated by abortion. At current rates nearly one third of American women will have an abortion.

On average women give at least three reasons for choosing abortions and every one is selfish. Three quarters say that having a baby would interfere with work, school, or other responsibilities. About three quarters say they cannot afford a child. And one half say, they do not want to be a single parent or are having problems with their husbands. One percent of aborting women report that they were the survivors of rape. This is what Roe versus Wade based everything on—for passing that horrible abortion law.

Hosea prays for Israel and debates with himself what he could ask for, amid the peoples determined wickedness against God's judgments.

**Hosea 9:14** Give them O Lord, what will You give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

Why in the world would he ask for such a horrible thing? Because the alternative is even more horrible. Hosea again emphasis this curse by describing national barrenness, childlessness. Barrenness in the Bible is an image of lifelessness, where God's redemptive blessing is absent.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God cursed the blessed fertility of His creation. After that the soil of the garden produced thorns and thistles requiring laborious toil to yield food. Human fertility was cursed as childbearing became a painful and life threatening event. In the Bible, fruitful land and fertile women are images of blessedness of life, as God had originally intended it. The opposite of these—desolate land and barren land—are biblical representations of the consequences of sin. This is what we see here in Hosea.

As the Israelites continued in their national and personal sins, the barrenness, abortion, and orphans increased exponentially. In the covenant with ancient Israel, God pronounced blessing for covenant obedience, in terms of fertility, and curse for covenant disobedience, in terms of barrenness.

Deuteronomy 28 explains this in detail. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea personified the unfaithfulness of God's people using images of Zion as a barren woman who prostitutes her sexuality, thus frustrating her fertility.

In Isaiah's prophesy, the promise that God will restore the blessedness of life is expressed, through transforming the imagery of the barren land and the barren woman. In the day of restoration and renewal, the desolate land will burst into bloom and the barren woman will sing and rejoice because of an unexpected and abundant fertility. We will expand this thought to childlessness in general.

Hosea is both general and specific in what he mentions as the curse for national and personal sin. According to Hope Yen of the Associated Press, June 25, 2010, childlessness is up in the U.S. "Figures show that all women between ages 40-44, about 18 percent, or 1.9 million, were childless, in 2008. The numbers coincide with broader U.S. trends of delayed marriage and increased opportunity for women who now outnumber men in the work force, and have drawn even with them an advanced degrees, after reaching a high of 3.7 children per woman during the baby boom. The U.S. fertility rate dropped to a historic low of 1.7, during the mid-1970's, and stands at about 2."

It takes 2.2 to 2.5 births to sustain a population. That means that the Israelites have been declining and very rapidly. 50 million aborted in the last 40 years or so. According to the article *Childless by Choice*, by Joseph Chamie and Barry Mirkin, for Yale Global, March 2, 2012, "Childlessness rates are strongly connected to woman's educational levels. Women with university education for example are more likely to be childless than those with secondary education. In addition young women who are highly educated are more likely to choose employment and postpone family building. Another contributing factor to high rates of childlessness among highly educated women is the reluctance to marry a less educated man."

The last part of chapter 9 is the prayer of Hosea. Beginning in verse 14, it is interesting because it is broken off after the first phrase due to the fact that although Hosea earnestly wants to pray for the people, he finds that he does not know what to ask for.

**Hosea 9:14** Give them O Lord, What will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

He begins his prayer well, "Give them O Lord," but he breaks off because he does not seem to know what he should ask God to give them. He even asks, "What would you

give them?" At last, the only thing he could think of is childlessness in order that the mistreatment of the children and the misery of the Day of Judgment would be as limited as possible. So he concludes, "Give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that are dry." Do things get lower than that? How depressing.

There is a prayer in the book of Exodus that also breaks off in the middle. It is the prayer of Moses. Under his direction, the people who had left Egypt had come to Mt Sinai where God was to give them the law, and Moses had been called into the Mountain to receive it. Moses spent 40 days on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments. As you remember over the weeks that followed the people who were left in the valley grew increasingly sinful and impatient. Before long they began to remember the worship of Apis, the bull and Hathor, the cow that they had known in Egypt. They approached Aaron to pressure him into making a golden calf, and so he did.

On the Mountain God was still speaking to Moses, but He knew what was going on in the valley and angrily interrupted the giving of the law to send Moses back down to the children of Israel. How ironic that while God was giving The Commandments, the people were breaking them!

Moses went down to deal with the sin as best he knew how and in anger he first smashed the stone tablets of the law that God had given him. Now he entered the camp, rebuked Aaron publicly, and called for all who still remained on the Lords side to come and stand beside him.

The tribe of Levi responded and Moses commanded them to go into the camp with drawn swords to kill those who led the rebellion. He called on the rest to reconsecrate themselves to God. From a human point of view, Moses had dealt with the sin; the leaders were punished and the loyalty of the people was at least temporarily reclaimed, but Moses did not only stand in a special relationship with the people, he also stood in a special relationship with God.

God still waited in wrath on the mountain. What was Moses to do? He knew something of the uncompromising righteousness of God. God had said, "You shall have no other God's before Me," and He promised to punish the iniquity of the fathers and upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me. The limited judgment Moses had begun may not be enough to satisfy the Holiness of God. (We do not know what was going through his mind, possibly something of this sort.)

On the mountain, Moses said that the people were God's people, and he knew that they were his people, too. He loved them, and he thought of a way that might possibly divert

the just wrath of God. He remembered the sacrifices of the Hebrew patriarchs and the sacrifice of the Passover. Certainly God had shown by these sacrifices that he was prepared to accept an innocent substitute in the place of the just death of the sinner.

When Moses began to speak to God again, it must have been in great anguish, because this is the prayer in which, like the prayer of Hosea, the sentence breaks off without ending. This is indicated by a dash in the New King James version, ESV, NIV, and other translations of the Bible. The prayer is a strangled cry, a gasping sob, welling up from the heart of a man who is asking for the salvation of the people he had come to love.

**Exodus 32:31-32** Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Oh, these people have sinned a great sin and have made for themselves a god of gold. Yet now if You will forgive their sin. But if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

Something like this happened in the experience of Hosea; he also knew that God was the God of righteousness, and that he had been given a message of judgment by Him. But Hosea also loved his people, and it is this that causes him hardly to know what to pray. "Give them O Lord...what will you give?" If they will not repent there is nothing for them but God's judgment. Here is the way the chapter ends, God reiterates the judgment and rejects Israel for her sin. And Hosea yields to God's pronouncement.

**Hosea 9:15-17** All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them. Because of the evil of their deeds I will drive them from My house. I will love them no more. All their princes are rebellious. Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up. They shall bear no fruit. Yes, were they to bear children, I would kill the beloved fruit of their womb [this is a merciful act by God, not a hateful one—to spare them for what Israel was going to have to go through. Then Hosea concurs sadly...] My God will cast them away, because they did not obey Him. And they shall be wanderers among the nations [National captivity].

Is this the end, the final word for the people of Israel at this point in their history? In their case it was. The judgment prophesied by Hosea and the other prophets came. In verse 15, "I will love them no more" is a national judgment which did not preclude mercy to individuals and has a definite time element in mind. The people were carried away into slavery, displaced from their homes; they lost everything.

As we know from history, God eventually gathered the Israelites together in nations, but that is something for another day. Eventually God will take Israel back into full fellowship. In the same prophecy, Hosea 14:4 predicts, "I will heal their back sliding, I will love them freely." The word of God to the prophets ceased, until the fresh out pouring of Revelation of the New Covenant was revealed and established by Jesus Christ. But what was true for that generation is now becoming true for this generation, and we have the word of God. Where the word exists, there is hope. Go back to Moses at the finest moment of his life recorded in Exodus 32.

Moses offered himself for his people who were sinners, but the offer was no good because

Moses himself was a sinner. He was actually a murderer and sinner, so he could not die for another one's sins, let alone for an entire people. Still there was One who could die and who did.

**Romans 5:7-10** For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; Yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Much more than having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more for having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

This is how it is for those who live in this present day of God's grace. God is in His Holy mountain and while He is there, the Israelites are in the dark valley of this world breaking His commandments and turning their backs on the very one who has given them the potential for life and who sustains them on this earth.

In the day of Israel's repentance, God will turn from His anger and demonstrate His love by healing her. At that time God's blessing will return to Israel. Like dew it will cause the nation to blossom like a lily. Which was renowned for its beauty, and Israel will never forget God again.