

History & Prophecy #6

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As we continue this series of history of prophecy, there are some very important prophecies that I think that you will be interested in.

In fact, the things that I've been giving you up to this point are like the salad, or the first or second course, but we have to get into some of the more interesting aspects of this, the main course and the desert so that you can really enjoy the prophecies that are here for you. One of the most interesting aspects of all of this is getting directly into the prophets themselves and asking ourselves what do they tell us about what is going to happen in the future?

Hosea

The next prophet in the line of those that we want to talk about is a man named Hosea. He is the first of the minor prophets, now that might come as a little bit of a surprise to some of you since Daniel is at the beginning of the minor prophets, but technically, Daniel is not considered to be one of the minor prophets. He is part of the holy writings which is in a different category in which his book is grouped with the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and so forth, as far as original groupings of the Scripture are concerned.

Hosea is the first of the prophets listed in what is called the minor prophets. They're called minor because all of the books are shorter.

Let's begin in 2 Kings chapter 14.

In the study that we have been doing we have gotten ourselves up through the history of Israel and had seen the division of the ten northern tribes of Israel from the southern tribes and then followed the king list, as it were, through for the ten northern tribes and the successive events that took place. The change in religion, the idolatry and how the first of the prophets came along, Elijah and Elisha, the really powerful prophets, and how that their condemnation is almost exclusively oriented around idolatry. This is the fundamental, the most problematic thing and the thing that made God the most angriest but they don't get around to talking about theft and murder and the violation of the Ten Commandments, except for the first two commandments in the works of Elijah and Elisha, primarily. You get the impression, almost, that in the earliest days of Israel that it was idolatry that was the single biggest problem. In the beginning, in the earliest of times, they had not gone into the wickedness, which would be a hallmark in their later existence as a people. So for the first of the prophets, they concerned themselves with idolatry, the worshiping other gods, the

making of graven images and the effect that that would eventually have on the lives of these people.

Jeroboam Reigns in Israel

In 2 Kings chapter 14 and verse 23 "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, and reigned forty-one years."

This is probably during the 41 year period of time of the absolute peak of Israel's power and prosperity. Their economy was at the very strongest, and their military power was at its greatest. God had in His mercy had allowed them to conquer some territory that had been taken away from them and to be able to restore the kingdom back to where it had been before. It was a time of peace and prosperity, and as things will tend to go in such a time, the people began to forget God, more than they had to this day.

The impression that you get from the prophets, and it is borne out by prophet after prophet, is as you are increased so you sin against God, and that seems to be the pattern again and again and again. People tend more in times of trouble, when things are going wrong, when they are sick, when they're hurting, when things are just not right, that's when they begin to pray. That's when they start thinking about God. That is when they drag the Bible off of the shelf above and blow the dust off, and chokingly go to their chair and sit down and read what might be there. Because when everything is going along well and there is no needs in their life, they think, God, if there is a God, is the way they would put it. They are not really that impressed.

So during this time, Israel was prosperous.

Jeroboam II

2 Kings chapter 14 and verse 24 "Jeroboam did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel to sin."

Remember, we have two Jeroboams here. The first Jeroboam was the one who established the worship of the golden calf, who moved the feast of tabernacles from the 15th day of the seventh month to the 15th day of the eighth month, and he probably didn't even call it the feast of tabernacles, but something quite different. Indications are he may have even changed other holy days as well and he also changed the place where Israel was to worship. Jeroboam the first did all of these things.

This man that we are talking about now is Jeroboam the second and we're told he did not depart from this. This is the same old tired litany that we have been hearing as we have gone through these prophecies, where each king in concession, God says, "Did that which was evil

in the sight of the Lord. He continued in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who did sin, and who made all Israel to sin." His sin was the setting up of calf worship in Bethel and Dan, the changing of the holy days, and the changing of the place and the method of the worship of God.

Worship of the Calf and Baal

Now in their earliest time, as a separate kingdom, Israel did not worship Baal, they worshiped the calf and that was different. That's not quite the same. There is much difference from worshiping Baal and worshiping the calf as there is a difference of being a Methodist or being a Buddhist. These are two quite different religions, the worship of the calf and the worship of Baal.

2 Kings 14:25: "He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher."

This is the famous Jonah, that we all know about, and this is another prophecy that is not written about elsewhere in the Bible. He prophesied that the land would be restored, the coast would be restored at sometime in the future. Jeroboam II carried that out.

This places Jonah earlier than Jeroboam II as you can see.

Verse 26: "The LORD saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter; and whether bond or free, there was no helper for Israel. {27} And the LORD did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash. {28} Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did; his might, how he made war, and how he recaptured for Israel, from Damascus and Hamath, what had belonged to Judah; are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? {29} So Jeroboam rested with his fathers, the kings of Israel. Then Zechariah his son reigned in his place."

Azariah Reigns in Judah

Let's continue in 2 Kings 15:1: "In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. {2} He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. "

Now mind you, we are dealing with a king of a different kingdom. This is the king of Judah, and he reigned for 52 years, and his name was Azariah.

Verse 3: "He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done, {4} except that the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.

Jeroboam II is followed by Zechariah in the north and King Uzziah or Azariah as he is otherwise known in the South in a time of relative prosperity. Jeroboam II reigned for 40 odd years, and Uzziah for 52 years and their reigns are at about the same period of time. And so there's quite a bit of stability, power and prosperity.

Amos and Hosea

Now on the scene walks a man named Amos. He is a prophet of the ten northern tribes. I referred to him in an earlier message as the shepherd prophet.

Also at the same time, comes a man named Hosea. He is the younger contemporary of Amos. Amos was older than him and probably began to prophesy a little before Hosea. Hosea on the other hand was the older contemporary with Isaiah and Micah. These two men prophesied in the South and Amos and Hosea prophesied in the north to different kingdoms and a different place, but still somewhat roughly contemporary, and of course Hosea might have very well have known Jonah in the process of this period of time.

We are at the beginning of Hosea's work in something like 150 to 160 years into the history of the northern kingdom. It is probably in the year 760 to 720 BC, and it was a 40 year period of time. He followed the succession of the prophet Elijah, Elisha, Jonah and Amos and then comes Hosea.

Now Hosea himself is an interesting study, and I want us to go back. because we are at an appropriate time to do this. His work began in the time of Jeroboam II.

Back to the Book of Hosea

Let's turn back to the book of Hosea, and we're going to introduce ourselves to as much as we know about this particular man.

Hosea, chapter 1 and verse one: "The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beerai, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel."

We have him placed in a reasonably close time context. Obviously, he didn't prophesy all the days of Uzziah, but he came on the scene during the 52 year reign of Uzziah. He was a prophet, who had a few things to say to Judah, but he was a Northerner, and he was a part of the ten northern tribes, and his message was primarily to those people.

Verse 2 "The LORD said to Hosea, Go, take to you a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land has committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD."

I think, probably, the commentators of the Bible may have spent more time on that verse than on the entire rest of the book of Hosea, because they found that particular statement rather troubling. Some of them have suggested, what he meant was, that the nation of Israel

was a nation that had gone into whoredoms and idolatry and so forth and he was to take himself a wife of the nation of Israel. The Living Bible says it this way, "The Lord said to Hosea "Go and marry a girl who is a prostitute so that some of her children will be born to you of other men. This will illustrate the way my people have been untrue to me by committing an open adultery against me by worshiping other gods."

I suspect that the translator of the Living Bible is dead right. Perhaps not a professional prostitute but a woman who had had a loose reputation, a woman who had known other men, a woman who was not a virgin, was the one to be Hosea's wife.

Would You Like to be a Prophet?

You know, in a flippant sort of way, I think sometimes, some of us might think that we would like to be a prophet. It would be very exciting to be lying in your bed some night, asleep and hear your name called, like Samuel did. A voice called to Samuel and he woke up and he went in to talk to Eli and ask "Did you call?" Eli said "I didn't call you." Samuel went back to bed. The voice called to Samuel three times.

How would you like to be there some night and hear your name called, "John", or whatever your name is. You sit up in bed and the voice fills the whole room and there is something in you that says "I don't have to ask who that is. I know who that is." And you are suddenly given a message to be carried out to somebody. That would be a real thrill, I guess? It would be a tremendous honor, I suppose? But for Hosea, what he told him to do was to marry a whore. How does that grab you fellas? How would you feel about that? Now I have very little doubt that that is precisely what was involved. The reason being, because just barely marrying some girl who lived in Israel, who was a model of chastity, and a very fine girl and worthy in every way of being a prophet's wife would not have really said much, would it? It would have made no statement whatever and the whole purpose of this entire episode is that Hosea is going to make a statement with his life.

Now, it's one thing for me, if I were a prophet to come in here before you people and say "The Lord appeared to me the other night, and He said "Tell these people that they have all gone into whoredoms and prostitution and playing the harlot and you men are running around with other people's wives and you women are playing the harlot, and they're stealing and lying and some of you have even murdered your neighbors and the Lord is really going to get you for all that."

The emotional impact of coming before you and saying "The Lord appeared to me and He told me to take a wife, a daughter of whoredoms, and I did. I married a woman who was a prostitute and I am a sign and a type to you people from the eternal God that He has married you and you have played the whore against Him."

Do you see the difference between the emotional impact of the message coming from a man who has been sent to carry this out and to actually live it in his life.

Ezekiel the Prophet

Ezekiel was told that as a part of his message and a part of what he was going to do, was that his wife would die. He lost his wife as a part of a prophetic message and God took her life. She died. This man, having lost his wife came forward to preach that the death of his wife had meaning for Israel, and he proceeded to preach that meaning to those people.

So being a prophet is not something to just be tossed off. I think by large you would be far better off to adopt the posture of Jonah in the long run, and say I'm not really eager to be a prophet, in fact I would just as soon not be a prophet, because by the time God chooses someone, there may be things you may be called upon to do that could be very painful, could be incredibly humiliating, and it could cost you those things that are dearest to you. It is like saying to a man that you are going to build a house and you don't sit down and count the cost and make your estimates and plan this thing out and say this is how much it is going to cost. Can you really afford this?

Fortunately for you and I, God knows whether we have the resources to follow through and be able to survive as a prophet.

That may be a perfectly good reason why none of us are prophets, in that God has looked down here and either hasn't needed a prophet, which is frankly most likely of all, or He hasn't found anybody that He feels could bridge the gap. It is not really finding somebody worthy of being a prophet, because there isn't any of those. You are not going to depend on your worthiness or your ability or your holiness to become a prophet. It is going to depend on whether God decides to use you as a prophet and what He wants done and when He wants it done and maybe whether you can stand the gap. For your will and your desires and your fears and your hopes do get bound up in whatever else it is that God may want you to do.

Hosea Marries Gomer

Hosea 1:3: "He went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son."

We are not really told of where she conceived it. We assume his firstborn son was his own.

The LORD said: "Call his name Jezreel."

Jezreel is a place, unlike some of the other names that are given to children in a prophets, this name is a place name.

And he continues: "For in a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, And will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel."

Now that is a very specific prophecy at this point in time. If you will recall, we have a man named Jehu, who became king in Israel who was anointed by God to be king, and was

commissioned with responsibility of destroying the remainder of Ahab's house, which he did. But he carried it out with such vigor and went so far beyond what God told him to do that he became an absolute bloody feign in the process of it all. And now God says to a man at a given point in time, you are going to have a son and the name of his son was to be Jezreel and every time you call his name it'll be a living witness to everybody that I am going to avenge what happened in Jezreel upon the entire house of this king. Now this was no end time prophecy. That particular statement has to do with the given king and a given place and at a given time.

Historical Context

You have to keep that in mind as you go along that these prophecies arose out of a specific historical context. Now that does not mean that they had no end time application. Don't ever make that mistake either, because often times, these kings of old were types of something that was to take place in the end time and there are hints and suggestions of end time applications in all the prophets. Actually fewer in Hosea than most, for Hosea's prophecies seem to be very focused toward Israel of his time and in his day. And yet the overtones are still there, the hints are still there, and the warnings are still there.

He goes on to say in Hosea 1:6 "His wife conceived again, and bore a daughter. Then God said to him: "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah."

Now basically in Hebrew that word means "not having obtained mercy". It is a complicated word and is quicker say than in Hebrew. This is a strange name for a girl to have a carry around.

So God says, "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, But I will utterly take them away. "

These are two prophecies, one, I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel, it is not going to continue as a separate kingdom and two, I am going to utterly take away the house of Israel, all of them. Here are two different prophecies and combined in the name of two different children.

Verse 7 "Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, Will save them by the LORD their God, And will not save them by bow, Nor by sword or battle, By horses or horsemen."

That also places this prophecy in a strong historical context, because it is made before the sins of Judah had come sufficient for God to discuss the final destruction of Judah as a people. Right?

For Him to say "I'm not going to do this to Judah", we all know He did, so at this time, when this prophecy was given, Judah had not gone this far. And of course in the days of Uzziah was a time of reform and a time in getting back to God. He was a good king. He exercised

good leadership in the South. It was going to be considerably later that the other words would be said concerning other kings and later generations of the house of Judah.

Verse 8 "Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. {9} Then God said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi."

This name means 'not my people.'

Continuing in verse 9: "For you are not My people, And I will not be your God."

Now this sounds like what God is saying is that He is reaching out and speaking to the Israelites and saying "You may be Israelites but you are not my people, and I'm not going to claim you at all and I am not going to be your God.

Apostle Paul

Interestingly enough, though, the ninth chapter of Romans, Paul reaches back into Hosea and pulls out this concept of 'not my people' as referring to Gentiles, and as a prophecy of the fact that God would eventually call the Gentiles.

Now I wouldn't have jumped to the conclusion just reading along here in Hosea, but I have to respect Paul's interpretation of the Scriptures for indeed what God may have been doing in naming this other son, Lo-Ammi, He could've been saying this son stands for the Gentiles. Let's keep that in mind as a possibility for if we are dealing with this then we are indeed looking along way into the future at this moment in time and with the prophecy of this boy, for this prophecy does not begin to be fulfilled until the Ministry of Saul (Paul) of Tarsus.

Keep that in mind.

Hosea 1:10 "Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people.' "

Now this tends to support the idea that 'not my people' means Israel are not my people.

But we still contend with Paul's interpretation.

"There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.'"

Now remember Paul says that "Israel is cut off like the branches of the wild olive tree so that the Gentiles who are not God's people could be grafted in" (Romans 11:17).

Then he says to the Gentile Christians "Now, if you could be grafted in like wild olive branches can't Israelites who were cut off be grafted back in." So this seems to imply that not

only the Gentiles are brought in, but the Israelites are brought back and that could be the intent of this.

Israel and Judah Together

Hosea 1:11 "Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel Shall be gathered together, And appoint for themselves one head; And they shall come up out of the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel!"

Now this is a very important verse and it hearkens all the way down to the time of Israel and Nehemiah, and it also may hearken all the way to the end time.

For in truth, when Israel came back from the land of Babylon, it was primarily very nearly exclusively Judah that came back. There were relatively few Israelites anywhere to be found. They had already been scattered to the far ends of the pagan empire. But nevertheless, they were there and there were people, I have no doubt, of Ephraim and Manasseh and others.

Paul himself, was a Benjamite and he knew what he was. There were others, other than of Judah, who came back into Israel out of the land of Babylon.

Zerubbabel

They appointed themselves one king. They were a united kingdom at that point in time, and that one head was named Zerubbabel. But when you look at Zerubbabel, you suddenly realize that Zerubbabel in the prophecies concerning him in Haggai, is a very strong type of guess who? Jesus Christ. No, not some latter-day prophet, but Jesus Christ.

So Zerubbabel then, in that type, looks clear ahead to the time of Christ. Jesus Christ being established as the one king from the house of David, who brings all these people, Israel and Judah, back out of captivity and reunites them in the land.

Now keep in mind that what happened under Zerubbabel was a type or a model of what is yet to happen again in the future.

You would not construe this from Hosea alone. In Hosea alone, you would read along and say that just must refer to the return of Ezra and Nehemiah and to Zerubbabel being the head over Israel at that time, and what they're going to do.

But this strange mystical person Zerubbabel, you know from other prophecies is typical of Christ.

You also know from Isaiah that there are prophecies when the stick of Judah and the stick of Israel is going to be brought back together and is going to be bound up and made one and Isaiah's prophecies are inescapably end time prophecies.

End Time Prophecies

What you're reading here in Hosea, chapter 1 verse 11 is not a prophecy of the end time. It is a prophecy of what was to happen under Zerubbabel, which was a type of the end time. These are two different things and we must keep that in mind.

Throughout Hosea's prophecies there will be numerous references to the end time, but they are almost exclusively indirect references through types or models. Others of the prophets will do quite differently. Other prophets would make their prophecies directed so strongly at the end time that they're absolutely inescapable.

But you will remember that when we started out on this quest in this series of articles, I cited Isaiah 41:22, a scripture where God says "Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and understand the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come."

The clue is given in Isaiah, that the way to understand the ultimate of prophecy is to understand the first fulfillment of what took place. That is where we are right now. We're looking clearly at Israel, where they were, what they were doing and what their attitudes were.

Lessons of History

It is a funny thing that just as things happen in patterns in nature, so history tends to come around in patterns, and if we find ourselves in the 21st century repeating the pattern again, we would have to be fools not to realize that the latter part of that pattern is going to come through just as we have re-created the first part of, that just as we have sinned the same sins and just as we have worshiped the same idols, just as we've gone the same way, God's reaction will once again be the same.

As someone said, "If you cannot learn the lessons of history then you are condemned to repeat it." Then it would be foolish of us not to at least try to learn the lessons of history.

Can You Relate to This?

Hosea 2:1 "Say to your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah." In this particular case, the negative is dropped off of both those names. Did you notice that?

One of them was Lo Ammi and Lo Ruhamah which means 'not my people' and 'not having obtained mercy'. Now the names are shifted to 'my people' and 'having obtained mercy'.

Verse 2 "Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; {3} Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a

wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. {4} I will not have mercy upon her children; for they are the children of whoredoms."

The Living Bible basically says they're not my children, they are somebody else's children, why should I have mercy upon them?

Verse 5 "For their mother has played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink."

Interesting. Can you at all relate to this? Can you relate to this man Hosea and realize how you would feel if your wife had left you and slept around, and how you would react to that situation? Can you comprehend what it means to God for Israel to have left him and to have slept around? For that is the closest analogy that He can draw to make you understand how He felt, when our forefathers did what they did, and I suppose when you and I do what we have done.

For we as Christians, enter into a covenant with Christ. We are to be a part of the bride of Christ. Could we ever leave Him in the same way? Feeling the same way, the same response?

Israel and the Church

One thing that I want you to bear in mind as we go through these prophecies, for some reason, the New Testament writers make the equation between Israel of old, and the church. The church is almost referred to, and we come to refer to the church in a sense as spiritual Israel. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and he said that "all these things happened to Israel and are written down as examples for our sake, from whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11) and that there may be some serious and very stern warnings to the church to be found in some of these things that God said to Israel.

In this thing of having a prophet to go through the agony of having his wife sleep around on him in order that he might understand and to be able to convey adequately and to be able to stand before the people as a spokesman in the place of God or as a type of God and say to them "This is how it is. What my wife has done to me is what you people have done to God, and His reaction, while His ways are higher than mine, His love is greater than mine, His compassion is greater than mine, and one thing you want to bear in mind, His anger is also greater than anything I could muster."

Her Feast Days

Hosea 2:6 "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and I will make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. {7} And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go

and return to my first husband; for it was better then than it is now. {8} For she forgot that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. {9} Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. {10} And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of my hand. {11} I will also cause all her mirth, her partying, to cease, Her feast days, Her New Moons, Her Sabbaths; All her solemn feasts."

Now keep in mind that this is not said of Judah who is keeping the feast of tabernacles but to Israel, who was keeping something quite different. The point of this is that all the celebrations are finished and the ones He happens to mention is her feast days, New Moons and Sabbaths, and solemn feasts."

It has nothing to do with abolition of the worship of God or the holy days of God or anything of the sort. It has to do with the abolition of their festivities, because He said "I will cause all her mirth to cease."

How Would God Feel?

Hosea 2:12 "And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, Of which she has said, 'These are my wages that my lovers have given me.' So I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field shall eat them. "

It's hard to imagine how God would feel having poured out His rain in due season, having seen to it that your crops bore good fruit, and then seeing His people go out and burn incense and give thanks before a golden calf and saying "This is the God who gave me all these beautiful things that I have around me here. This Baal, this idol, that I have set up here. This is the one that made all of these trees to grow, the Sun God, and I worship the sun that is rising."

It wasn't Baal or some dumb idol or something that they made with their own hands that gave them these things. God gave them to them. You can begin to understand the reason for God's anger.

He then says "I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field shall eat them. {13} I will visit upon her the feast days of Baalim wherein she burned incense to them."

This gives you the strongest clue yet to what these feast days, all of these holy days that Israel was observing was all about. They were not God's Holy Days. They were the feast days of the sun god that He said He was going to visit upon her.

"Wherein she burned incense to them, She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, And went after her lovers; But forgot Me," says the LORD. {14} "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfortably to her. {15} I will give her

her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. {16} And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that you shall call me Ishi, or my husband; and you shall call me no more Baali (which means my Lord). "

Baal

Some people have made a big deal out of the word 'baal' but the word simply means 'my lord'. What He is saying is that there is going to be a totally different relationship between us at this point in time. It doesn't really have that much to do with the concept of sacred names.

Hosea 2:17 "For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

New Covenant with Israel

Hosea 2:18 "In that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. {19} And I will betroth you unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. {20} I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness: and you shall know the LORD."

Now, what is interesting about this is that this speaks in terms of a time of the creation of the new covenant with Israel. She broke the old one and went off and played the harlot. He says I am going to punish you for this and I will reach out and get you and bring you back and enter into a new arrangement with you. You're going to be mine and you're going to love me and I'm going to love you.

I Will Sow a Crop of Israelites

Hosea 2:22 "The earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. {23} And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, You are my people; and they shall say, You are my God."

Now the Hebrew in this particular segment, is rather obscure as we read along. The Living Bible has an interesting statement on this, it says "At that time, I will sow a crop of Israelites, and raise them for myself." This is verse 23. "I will pity those who are not pitied and say to those who are not my people, now you are my people. And they will reply, you are my God."

Now as I have said, there's often a dreamlike quality to prophecy and it sometimes moves back and forth in context, and in space and time and changes character like a dream will do without any warning whatsoever.

Paul points to the Gentiles with this 'not as my people' phrase. The impression that you get with the translation of the Living Bible is "At that time I will sow a crop of Israelites", is almost a reference it seems to the reaching out to the Gentiles and making Israelites out of Gentiles. For indeed as Paul says "They are not all Israel who are of Israel" (Romans 9:6), "Circumcision is not that of the flesh, it's a matter of the heart" (Romans 2:28-29), and he makes a very strong point out of the fact that all Christians in the spirit, that is in type or in the models of the Bible, symbolically are the true Israel of God. He seems to see in Hosea, as does the Living Bible, a statement that "I'm going to sow a whole new crop of 'quote' Israelites." 'end quote.' The Gentiles are to become the Israel of God.

Go Love Her Again

Hosea 3:1 "Then said the LORD to me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel."

God told Hosea, his wife having gone out, had an affair, played around on him, and He said "Go love her again, go get her, bring her back and make her your wife again, because this is what I am doing with Israel.

Verse 2: "So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer and a half of barley."

I guess she had actually sold herself and actually belonged to somebody else, so he gets his money and his barley, and he goes down and buys back his wife.

Verse 3 "I said unto her, You shall abide with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, and you shall not be for another man: and I will also be for you. {4} For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim."

This basically means being totally without leadership, without a husband, without love, without lovers, without a religion. The ephod was the thing by which the priests inquired of God. It was the breast plate of the priest which told them 'yes' or 'no' when they asked questions of God. There will not be any images of pagan idols, there will not be an ephod of the true God, there will not be any teraphim or any kind of images. They're going to be absolutely totally abstinent for some period of time. The implication is that this will be during a period of captivity

Hosea 3:5 "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days."

Now, all this was said to a prophet living in a specific historical time and dealing with the people who were living at that time.

Where Are We?

Let's go back to Second Kings 15 just to keep ourselves in mind of where we are in all of this. Now this is a people who had heard Elijah, had seen Elijah, and a lot of these people were the direct descendants of, and knew by word-of-mouth of the events of Mount Carmel, when Elijah took them all up on top of Mount Carmel. All the prophets of Baal were up there and they set these two altars up and they cut their animals up and put them on the altar. They dug ditches around the altars with the whole rigmarole to do the test as to who is God, and who is not God and when the people saw fire come down from heaven and consume Elijah's offering from his altar, these people having seen all these things, experienced all these things, who actually said "The Lord He is God" were still part of the same organization that was seeking his head in a matter of days thereafter. These were the people who had worshiped the calf, and then worshiped Baal and then pursued every other kind of religion that had come along that might have caught their fancy,

Now all of these things that you are reading, this entire analogy of prostitution, whoredoms, illegitimate children, of a woman running off from her husband and him going and having to buy her back, all of this, the image of it in Hosea, of his life, is nothing more than a statement of what God's relationship to Israel had been during this period of time and how He felt about the nation of Israel during this period time, and what He was going to do where Israel was concerned during this time.

Azariah's reign Ends

Let's continue on in II Kings 15 to keep our perspective of where we are before we go back to the book of Hosea.

We're told in verse five that Azariah was smitten by leprosy {6} "The rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"

A lot of these details are in the book Chronicles, rather than in the book of Kings.

Verse 7 "So Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead."

A Hazardous Job

2 Kings 15:8 "In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months. {9} And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. {10} And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. {11} And the

rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel."

Verse 13: "Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria. { 14 } For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead."

It seems to appear that one of the most hazardous occupations you could have was to be a king of Israel at this time because of the climate of violence.

2 Kings 15:15 "The rest of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. { 16 } Then Menahem smote Tiphshah, and all that were therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not to him, therefore he smote it; and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up. { 17 } In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, and reigned ten years in Samaria. { 18 } And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

How Do You Return To God?

It's almost as though the fundamental evil of the whole thing, was that evil that set them off on a course where they now are, in an incredible climate of violence. It mentions that he ripped up women and children, but a big part of it seems to boil down to a matter of the distortion of the religion of God, a turning of the hearts of these people away from God, and taking away from them the only path of return.

The mistakes that we make, the little corruptions that we get into, the things that we steal, they can be restored, we can repair them. If we lie or cheat or commit adultery, we can get on our knees, and beg for God's forgiveness and we can return to God.

But, whenever you deceive people about who God is, when we think that God is over here and God is over there, and we try to return to God, we keep going in the wrong direction. What I am saying is, that whenever you pervert God's religion, you block people from being able to find their way back to God. You take repentance away from them. You take away the chance of putting it right. Lying is a terrible thing to do, but from lying, you can find your way back to God. But when you have deserted and worshiped a different god, what are you going to return to?

A couple times you will find Hosea making a statement that they will try to retrace their steps, but where can they go? They could go back to a calf or to Baal, or to Molech or some other god from the Gentiles. But you see God wasn't there for them to go back to. For once you have deserted Him, once you have deserted His way, once you have rejected His method

of worship, once you refuse to go to the place where He tells you to go, once you decide to worship on different days from what He told you to worship on, and then you turn around looking for Him and say "Lord," and He's not there.

Why should we be surprised? Why should it be a shock to people to find that God is not there when they are not doing anything that He tells them to do, when they turned away from those things that reveals the knowledge of God to them, when they no longer accept the things that actually lay out God's plan and His purpose and where He's going to be in a week or month or year from now.

Gone Hunting

When you go hunting in the mountains somebody may drop you off on the high ground at a given place and tell you to make your way down to the bottom at a certain place and that they will be at the bottom of that notch, at five o'clock this afternoon to pick you up. Now if you are three hours late and not there on time why should you be surprised if you were left all night.

You see, there is so much of God's Word, so much of His law, which fits nicely in the category of telling you and I where He is going to be and at what time. Now if we don't pay attention to that or we don't believe what He says, then the chances are we are going to get where we are at that time and He is not going to be there.

Whenever you turn away from the true religion and the way that God specifies to worship, you're going to lose track of the true God, and where He is, what He is doing, what He stands for, His relationship to you, what He wants from you, what He will do for you. The whole relationship goes to pot, in fact, it ceases to exist.

So these men again and again carried on in the same steps of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who did sin and made Israel to sin.

Menahem Reigns in Israel

2 Kings 15:19 "Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. {20} And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land. {21} "And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? {22} And Menahem slept with his fathers."

This is the one man from among the last kings of Israel, who did not die by an assassin.

Pekahiah Reigns in Israel

2 Kings 15:23 "In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years. {24} And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. {25} But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieah, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room."

Another assassination, and so it goes.

Finally, in verse 30 "Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. {31} And the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. {32} In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign. {33} Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. {34} And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. {35} Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD."

Then comes king Ahaz and in II Kings 16 is the account of his reign and the things that he did.

Hoshea Reigns in Israel

2 Kings 17:1 "In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. {2} And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him. {3} Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents." He just subjugated the land to the king of Assyria during his time.

Verse 4 "And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. {5} Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years."

Back to the Book of Hosea

This brings us to the end of Hosea's ministry. But before we go on in Kings, I would like to go back to the book of Hosea and let's consider some of the prophecies that were being made

to Israel during the time that we have just read over. We went over a 40 year period very rapidly to give you an overview of the passage of time and to see what people were doing

Reading now from the Living Bible: Chapter 4 of Hosea. "Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel! The LORD has filed a lawsuit against you, listing the following charges: "There is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of God in your land. {2} You swear and lie and kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence everywhere, with one murder after another. {3} That is why your land is not producing. It is filled with sadness, and all living things grow sick and die. Even the animals, birds, and fish have begun to disappear."

What a sobering thing to say and powerful it is said to Israel at this time.

Now remember the earlier prophets did not give this type of indictment. Their references were to harlotry but by that they wouldn't mean the violation of the seventh commandment. They meant harlotry against God, and meant setting up idols and worshiping Baal, Molech and Dagon or some other god, rather than worshiping the true God. But by this time, the degeneration, that is natural, automatic and was bound to happen when people reject God as their leader, when they reject His standards, when they start playing games with His law and they toss it aside, sooner or later, it's going to happen. Blood touches blood. In other words there are so many people dying from murders that the blood from this murder runs out and touches the blood that is running from that murder and what the prophets are saying is murder upon murder upon murder. It is a land of violence, corruption, of swearing and lying and killing, stealing and adultery.

Don't Point Your Finger

Hosea 4:4 "Don't point your finger at someone else and try to pass the blame! Look, priests, I am pointing my finger at you! {5} As a sentence for your crimes, you priests will stumble in broad daylight, as you might at night, and so will your false prophets too. I will destroy your mother, Israel. {6} My people are being destroyed because they don't know me. It is all your fault, you priests, for you yourselves refuse to know me. Therefore I refuse to recognize you as my priests." Why? "Since you have forgotten my laws, I will forget to bless your children. {7} The more my people multiply, the more they sin against me. They have exchanged the glory of God for the disgrace of idols. {8} "The priests rejoice in the sins of the people, they lap it up and lick their lips for more. {9} 'Like priests, like people'--since the priests are wicked, the people are wicked, too. Therefore I will punish both priests and people for all their wicked deeds. {10} They will eat and still be hungry. Though they do a big business as prostitutes, they will have no children, for they have deserted Me and turned to other gods."

This is some of the most powerful literature ever penned by the hand of man apart from anything else that you may understand about it as you read through it.

Priests That Are Not God's Priests

You know when I read this and think about it, some things you need to bear in mind, these priests that Jeroboam had made, were made priests of the lowest of the people. But as we go along in this it is true in Judah, as well as is it is in Israel, God does not immediately brush these priests as they are of a totally different religion. The wording of this is that He almost accepts, as it were, that these priests were His own priests. God made the Levites His priests. But the distinction here, a true or false priest is not made in this situation and I oftentimes have the uncanny feeling as I read through some of these prophecies directed at Israel that they are intended every bit as much for the church as they are for Israel.

Now when God comes along here and says, "Don't point your finger at someone else and try to pass the blame to him from you." I can almost visualize a preacher standing in the pulpit with his finger extended toward the congregation and indicting the congregation for their sins and seeing God say to the preacher "Don't point your finger, I'm talking to you and not to them." And those of us who are in the ministry bear a heavy responsibility for our example, for this warning is for us.

One of the most stunning things I've ever read in my life came to me one day as I was making my way through the 23rd chapter of Jeremiah and I had never seen it before, where God was indicting a man He'd never sent. He was condemning the false prophets, and He said "I never sent these men and yet they went and preached." But then He made a very interesting and a very profound and important statement and He said "But if these men that I didn't send, I didn't tell them anything, they went and said the Lord said, if these men had caused My people to hear my words then even they would have turned them away from the evil way of their doing." The Bible is strong enough to convert even in the hands of a false prophet or a corrupt ministry. As long as he speaks the word and all the scriptures keep coming, back in the mind for the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword. God says "My word will not return to me void. It will accomplish what I sent it to do" (Isaiah 55:11).

If there's anything that will make a preacher, it is the Bible. For without it I would not have anything to say. I have no message from God to you but this. He didn't speak to me last night in my dream. I didn't get any vision from God.

I have no message for you but the Bible. If I had something else, it would be nothing else than what I had, and I'd be speaking out of my heart, whatever might be there.

It is here in the Bible, that you will find out whether or not the truth is being said. This is shocking in a way that God says to the ministry, "Take your finger down and don't point it at anyone else." He said to these priests and as a type they stand for any and all priests from ministers who have ever walked the face of this earth and saying "Don't you point the finger at anybody else. I'm pointing my finger at you, because of the way that you have led these people."

Perhaps the worst thing of all is the substitution of our own ideas, and our own thoughts, and our own ways and our own laws, and our own commandments and our own traditions in the place of the word of God.

Idolatry

It is idolatry, you know, when you begin to obey a priest or a minister be he a son of Levi or be he Aaron himself. When he takes you away from the word of God, you are an idolater. You have placed Aaron, or the priest, or the minister in the place of God. And when the time comes to return, where shall you return? Your god cannot save or rescue you. Your god cannot feed you in a time of famine. Your god may die on you and leave you hanging out to dry.

The priests rejoice in the sins of the people. They lick their lips for more.

Wine, Women and Song

Hosea 4:11 ""Wine, women and song have robbed my people of their brains. {12} They are asking a piece of wood to tell them what to do! "Divine Truth" comes to them through tea leaves!" This is so profound. He is saying my people has lost their minds. They actually take a piece of wood or divining rod or a Ouija board and they're asking these things to tell them what to do. They made them with their own hands. They made them with their own fingers. They actually shaped the tea leaves in the bottom of the cup themselves, and someone looks in there and says "You are going to meet a tall dark stranger. You should do this or you should do that." They look to stupidity. Wine, women and song. They robbed my people of their brains. How much better can you say it.

Continuing in verse 12: "Longing after idols has made them foolish. They have played the harlot serving other gods, deserting me. {13} They sacrifice to idols on the tops of the mountains; they go up to the hills to burn incense in the pleasant shade of oaks and poplars and terebinth trees." There your daughters turn to prostitution and your brides commit adultery. {14} But why should I punish them for you men are doing the same thing, sinning with harlots and temple prostitutes. Fools! Your doom is sealed, for your refuse to understand." {15} But though Israel is a prostitute, may Judah stay far from such a life. O Judah do not join with those who insincerely worship me at Gilgal and at Bethel. Their worship is mere pretense {16} Don't be like Israel, stubborn as a heifer, resisting the Lord's attempts to lead her in the green pastures. {17} Stay away from her, for she is wedded to idolatry. {18} The men of Israel finish up their drinking bouts, and off they go to find some whores. Their love for shame is greater than for honor. {19} Therefore a mighty wind shall sweep them away; They shall die in shame, because they sacrifice to idols."

What a tragic thing. Time will not permit me to go through Hosea verse by verse. Let's go Hosea chapter 5 and verse 14. "I will tear Ephraim and Judah as a lion rips apart his prey. I will carry them off and chase all rescuers away. {15} I will abandon them and return to my

home until they admit their guilt and look to me for help again, for as soon as trouble comes, they will search for me and say:"

Don't Forget God

Hosea 6:1 "Come, let us return to the Lord; it is he who has torn us - he will heal us. He has wounded us. He will bind us up. {2} In just a couple of days, or three at the most, he will set us on our feet again, to live in his kindness! {3} Oh that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know him, and he will respond to us as surely as the coming of dawn or the rain of early spring. {4} Oh Ephraim and Judah, what am I going to do with you? For your love vanishes like the morning clouds, and it disappears like the dew."

What is He saying? He is saying "I know what is going to happen. You're going to get in trouble, then you are going to repent, and then you're going to expect me to pop you out of this in two or three days. You're going to get real good all of a sudden, you'll be so righteous, and you'll try to get your life all straightened out. You will walk down this way, and you'll say "It is so good to know the Lord." Your goodness will be gone by the time the sun comes up, that's just how good you are.

That is something that you really have to be very careful about, the frivolous attitude, that if I can just get this straightened out, then after two or three days I can get out from under this and things will be okay again.

Do you know how we tend to do as human beings? We tend as persons, to run the same cycles that Israel ran through out the period of the judges. Whenever things go well for us, we forget God, we run off and do the things we want to do and we carry on our lives, business as usual, and once in a while think of God. Then we get into trouble and we make all kinds of resolutions. We get on our knees and pray and our tears roll down our face and we think it is going to be all better tomorrow. God hears us and he delivers us out of our troubles, and then we forget God again, and then we get into trouble again, we cry, we pray, God hears us and forgives us and He gets us out of trouble, and then we forget God again.

Do you realize what you have found in your lifetime? Whenever you have lived this kind of an up-and-down existence, going in and out with God, with Him blessing you and you forgetting him and you get into trouble, and you call on him when you're in trouble. You've found the perfect reason why God should leave you forever in trouble. For His relationship with you will forever more will be better the worst things are for you. Do you think you could ever come to grips with that?

Some of us may have found, I may have put my finger right there on the reason, why some of us manage to spend most of our lives with things going wrong and not being able to ever quite get it right because we haven't learned how to stay close to God when things are right. That may be the hardest challenge, that a man of God, or a woman of God, will ever face in all their life.

Can I serve God when things are right? Well, I am going to leave you with that thought. The rest of the book of Hosea requires very little in the way of interpretation. It is just simply chronicling of what they did and what God was going to do because of it and it really falls out into four main themes, and you'll see it very clearly as you read through the book. Israel's idolatry. Israel's wickedness. Israel's captivity and Israel's restoration. It is a historical event. You can go back to where we broke off in the book of Kings and you can read carefully and understand precisely what took place in the events that followed. You'll begin to realize as you follow on through the history of Israel and Judah that the ultimate fulfillment of Hosea's prophecies has not yet taken place. Only a type took place when Judah, and a handful of Israelites returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple in troubled times under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, Zerubbabel and Haggai.

You'll know it more when we come to some of the other prophets later on.

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