

## HOSEA

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Hosea chapter 10 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we have seen from our previous studies, Hosea is a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. And as we have seen in the first three chapters of Hosea God used Hosea's life as an object lesson showing the people that they had committed spiritual adultery before the Lord. It was a tough ministry and yet Hosea obeyed all that the Lord told him to do.

Then, beginning in chapter 4 we see that the Lord is speaking directly to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and bringing charges against them. If they missed what the Lord was trying to show them before through the life of Hosea then they will surely see it now.

And I am sure they were aware and they either did not care or they did not see this as a big deal. It reminds me of what is going on today in the church. People don't want to deal with sin in the church, they don't want to deal with false teaching in the church and they kind of close their eyes to it and they don't see it as a big deal. ***IT IS A BIG DEAL!***

And in our study tonight we are going to see God's indictment against His people continue on. They have turned against the Lord, they refused to return to Him, they went after false god's which lead to their out of control, downward spiral away from God and brought about the judgment of God upon them.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Hosea chapter 10, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

**HOSEA 10****VERSES 1-2**

1. God had blessed the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they brought forth an abundance of fruit and instead of bringing glory to God for what He provided for them, they used it for ungodly things! They used these things to worship their gods by instead of the true and living God!

And we truly see the heart of God for His people as Isaiah picks up on this same thought in Isaiah chapter 5 beginning in verse 1. We are told, **“Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: my Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.”** Isaiah 5:1-7.

God planted Israel in good soil to produce good fruit, to bring Him glory, but instead they brought forth wild grapes, or fruit that was of no use.

2. For this nation, I think I can safely say that the majority of people do not see the blessings of God and what God has blessed them with they use to worship their gods by instead of the true and living God. We see the blessings of God used for immoral things. We have not learned the lesson that the Northern Kingdom of Israel went through. And in the end, the judgment of God will come and ultimately we will see it during the Tribulation Period!

But what about us, what about Christians, do we see the blessings of God and use those blessings to honor Him or do we use them to worship the material gods of this world, the false gods by? Paul, in Ephesians 2:10 tells us, **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

God has created us for good works, works that He has prepared for us, and all He asks us to do is to walk by faith, to take those steps, and as we do we bring glory to God! God has blessed us with certain gifts, abilities, resources and His desire is that we would use those blessings He has given us to once again honor Him and minister to the people of this world by edifying the body of Christ or bringing the Gospel message to the lost, whatever the case may be!

Now keep in mind that the good works don't save us. Also keep in mind in the previous verses there in Ephesians Paul said that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone! Good works are just the fruit that is born out of that relationship with the Lord, showing that we are saved, you might say. It is truly a salvation not by works but one that does work! And may we not use the blessings that God has given to us for the worship of material things, these false gods!

3. Is this a big deal? You bet it is because a heart that is not surrendered to the Lord will be like the heart of the people of Israel, **“Their heart is divided.”** And the Hebrew word for **“divided”** not only carries with it this idea of separated but “smooth” or “flattering.” So not only was there this divided heart but it was a smooth and flattering insincere heart!

In other words, think back at the situation that Hosea was in with his adulterous wife Gomer. She may have said that she loved him but her lifestyle said otherwise. And that same thought is here. Just as an unfaithful spouse will say that they love their partner but they are living a lie as they have relationships with other men or women and that was how Israel was towards the Lord!

You see, God wants all of us, not just part of us. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, **“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”**

You have to decide who you are going to serve, you can’t serve two masters because you will be torn in both directions. Many try to do that and they get frustrated, discouraged and instead of turning to the Lord they move away from Him.

For those who have divided hearts, James calls you a double-minded man or unstable. You can’t stand strong in that condition. And for Israel, and for any person or nation that has a divided heart, God will destroy their altars, their places of worship, He will judge them! It is as Clarke wrote, “Now GOD will do in *judgment* what *they* should have done in *contrition* [repentance], ‘break down their altars, and spoil their images.’”

VERSES 3-8

1. What does Hosea mean when it says in verse 3, **“For now they say, ‘We have no king’”**?

Keep in mind as Israel turned from the Lord judgment came upon them. And as these foreign powers came down upon them they put in their vassal King to rule for them, they no longer had their own King.

Even the idols they honored and trusted so much will be taken to foreign lands as treasure to these foreign Kings. And I believe that in the aftermath of all this calamity they will see that they brought this judgment upon themselves and the situation they are in now is hopeless. No man or King can save them at this point.

And the reality is, that is where God wanted them. Not to rely on man or their King but on the King of kings and Lord of lords! If they would only turn to Him. And I think God says that a lot today, ***“If they would only turn to ME!”***

2. Now in verse 4 we see that they broke this covenant that they made with the Lord or really they falsely made this covenant with the Lord because they were probably in trouble and they saw that the Lord could get them out of this situation. But, once they were delivered they went back to their old ways. But God is aware of not only what we do but the thoughts and intents of our heart. So nothing is hidden from Him!

And now, this once fertile land, this land that was nourishing to them, because of their sin, their breaking of the covenant they made with God, God was going to turn the land into a land that will destroy, it will produce poisonous plants like hemlock.

Once again, as you look at our nation, a nation that was founded under God and has now turned from God, this land that produced so much good, now produces so much evil. We are number one in the exporting of pornographic material. We have a huge drug problem. We have a morality problem. Yes, a land that once produced so much good is producing death because we have turned from the Lord!

3. As you read verses 5 and 6 it is kind of funny if it wasn't so sad. Those idols, that golden calf they were worshiping was taken by the enemy and the people mourn and the priests shriek because their god has been taken away.

And, interestingly enough, Beth Aven means "house of idols." It was changed from Bethel or "house of God" because Jeroboam placed a golden calf there in Bethel and in the area of Dan to the north.

Why did he do that? So the children of Israel could worship God there. But God did not honor it, He called it idolatry and He judged them for it. Now one of the tragedies here is the King of Assyria was going to carry their god away captive! It is very sad when they carry your god away. I am so thankful that I have a God who can carry me!

4. Now there are many who read this and they will laugh and mock them for worshiping a god who can be taken away. I think we need to be careful here. How many people see their god's they worship stolen? The car, the stereo, money, material things that we hold on to like they are gods to us, and yet they can be stolen, carried away.

And if your god can be stolen, is that really a god you want to worship? You see, God has placed these lessons in here so that we may learn from them and that we may not have a divided heart. He wants our hearts to be sold out to Him, to the Lord! Think of it this way, if you were arrested for being a Christian is there enough evidence to convict you? Or is your life so divided that no one is sure where you stand, what you believe? Something we need to look at and maybe change!

5. Now according to verse 7 we see that the King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel will be carried away like a twig that is floating in the water, swept away by the current. You see, that twig has no control over where it is going but it is carried by the water, just as the King of Israel had no control of where he was going but will be carried away by the Assyrians.

And not only will the King be taken away, so too will the people and the land will be destroyed. We are told in Deuteronomy 12:2-4 what Israel was to do when they entered the land, it was a warning to them, **“You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things.”**

But Israel refused to do what God instructed them to do, to destroy the high places, the places of pagan worship. And now God is going to use a foreign army to destroy these pagan places of worship, the high places as well as take the people into captivity!

And as the land is left barren those pagan altars that were so busy with worship will be overgrown with thorns and thistles. So much for these false gods!

Let me share this article that gives us some insight into what a false god is and how these false gods are prevalent in our nation today. We are told,

A false god is any god other than God as described in the Bible. This god can be just about anything, from a statue to money to a living person. Anything that is given the highest worship of a person is a false god. Many religions describe many different gods. Buddhism has Buddha and other gods; Islam has Allah; Hinduism has 300 million different gods from which to choose . . .

Any god that is different than God Himself is a false god, and there are many in the world today. The list and descriptions of false gods that pervade the world today are nearly endless. As mentioned above, religions of this world follow false gods, but there are also false gods that have little to nothing to do with an organized religion. Money is one of these. There are more millionaires in the world today than there have been in the previous century combined.

Money has always been a false god that people chase after. Power and fame are also false gods of this post-modern era. There are now more CEOs, executives, and celebrities than there were at any time in history combined. Another false god of this information-age is materialism. If the neighbors have the latest fashion or techie toy, then it seems we just have to have them, too, and better.



More and more advertisements in media today are aimed at material desires in one way or another. Further is the growing trend of credit card debt, which, in the technologically advanced nations especially, has skyrocketed in the last 30 years alone. More people are paying down debt from credit cards than ever before. The race to be better than the Jones's is heating up to meltdown proportions.

Sex, as well, is another god of this world that, though having been around for a long time, is more and more popular than ever. Cases of extra-marital affairs, single mothers, couples living together before marriage, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, people having multiple sex partners, people choosing homosexuality, and the break-up of the family are all growing at alarming, even astounding rates and percentages.

As with materialism, advertisements in today's media outlets have focused more and more towards the sensual, these ads directed at younger and younger ages as well. As you can see, false gods of this day and age abound, and it seems that they are everywhere, each calling for people's allegiance and worship. . . .

The United States of America, blessed by God over her short, two centuries plus of history and national life is quickly becoming a place of idolatry, from the worship of the famous and celebrated to money, power, and self-centeredness. None of these false gods, when tough times come, will be around to save, to help, and to rebuild when disaster strikes. Just as the ancient world suffered when false gods were worshipped, so now will false gods of this day and age be found wanting. False gods and idols will not help, and do not offer comfort, when the tough times come. . . .

If you are serving a false god, you are placing yourself, and your present and/or future children at grave risk. Turn from the false gods and idols of this world, and turn to Jesus Christ. Only he can save and give you the peace, assurance, and salvation you desire. Only Jesus can give you the fulfillment in life, and the everlasting peace that your soul craves. You may have peace for a time with your false god, but that peace will fade like dew under a desert sun. Your idol will leave you just as surely as the idols of Rome, Greece, and Egypt left them. Turn to Jesus Christ today!

- <https://www.raptureready.com/soap/L30.html>

You see, God also wants us to deal with those idols in our own life, to remove them, destroy them, to get them out of the way. If we don't He will use others to expose them, even the unsaved because God will do whatever it takes to destroy those false idols in our lives so that He might bring us back to Bethel, back to the house of God and away from Beth Aven, the house of idols!

#### VERSES 9-11

1. Remember back in Hosea 9:9 where we are told, **“They are deeply corrupted, As in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity; He will punish their sins.”** You see, Ephraim was to be a watchman for the nation, protecting them from any danger, but they failed in their position and the nation was captured because of their sin. How bad were they? Worse than the days of Gibeah!

And we dealt with that back in Hosea chapter 9 but God brings Gibeah up once again because it shows how depraved, how wicked they were. And I think the Lord is reminding them of what took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Judges.

There we see a Levite who went after his concubine who had run away to her father's house. And his father-in-law was thankful he came after her and encouraged the man to stay another day, which lasted four days.

And on the fifth day, as evening had come, the man finally left with his concubine. As they journeyed that evening they came to Jebus, later to be called Jerusalem. And his servant wanted to stay there for it was dangerous to travel at night. But the Levite wanted to go on, he wanted to go to a place where there were fellow Jews, so they went to Gibeah.

And as they arrived at Gibeah, ready to sleep out in the street, an old man invited them to stay with him, for it was dangerous to sleep out in the open. As they fellowship in this old man's house some men of the city, we are told that they were "**perverted men**" surrounded the house and demanded that the old man bring out the man who came to stay in his house.

Why did they want this man? The men of the city wanted to have sex with him, to "**know him carnally!**" But the old man begged him not to force him to do this because he was under the protection of his house!

And the men of the city finally settled on this man's concubine and they abused her all night long and in the morning they let her go. She was able to make it to the door of the old man's house but there she died! And you think that is bad, it only gets worse.

In Judges 19:28-30 as he picks up his dead concubine and places her on his donkey, “... So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place. When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. And so it was that all who saw it said, ‘No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!’”

Now this Levite was able to rally the other tribes of Israel against Benjamin, almost completely wiping them out because of their wicked actions and the people of Benjamin would not turn these men who did this in. Thus, they all were judged in this, they all were held accountable for what these men did. Yes, in Judges chapter 20 Israel stood against these sins of unrighteousness but now God is going to come against all of Israel for her unrighteousness!

You see, things got so bad in the Northern Kingdom of Israel that God is saying that they are not only as bad as the people who were in Gibeah but they have not learned any of the lessons, they are continuing in the sins of Gibeah! Thus, the judgment of God would come upon them.

And this judgment was according to God’s timetable, He will judge the Northern Kingdom of Israel for their two transgressions. What are those two transgressions?

In Jeremiah 2:13 we are told, “‘Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be very desolate,’ says the LORD. ‘For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water.’” In other words, they have turned from the living God and gone after idols.

And look at how God puts these words here in Jeremiah chapter 2. We see God call out to the heavens and He tells them to be astonished at what has taken place, what His people have done and He has two powerful rebukes for them. God's first rebuke against them is they have turned from Him, the fountain of living waters.

Jesus said in John 7:37-38, “... **‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’**”

You see, moving water that is found in streams and rivers is cool, fresh, it is satisfying, and it is pure! As we come to Jesus and allow His Spirit to fill us and overflow us, we too will be satisfied. But when you turn from the Lord that void must be filled with something and that is the second point that the Lord is making against them.

This second rebuke has to do with cisterns, broken cisterns. Keep in mind that a cistern is nothing more than a storage tank to hold rain water that had been cut out of the rock. And you could spend months cutting this out with a hammer and chisel. Then when the rain would come you would check out your cistern to see if it could hold water. Sometimes a crack would develop which would cause the water to drain out and made the cistern worthless. But instead of just letting all the work go to waste they would cut shelves into the walls of this cistern and use it as a burial spot for the dead.

And think about it. Even if those cisterns did hold water, it was never cool, refreshing, satisfying, it was never pure! W. H. Thomson put it this way, “The best cisterns, even those in solid rock, are strangely liable to crack . . . , and if by constant care they are made to hold, yet the water collected from clay roofs or from marly [which is a crumbly mixture of clays, calcium and magnesium carbonates, and remnants of shells that is sometimes found under desert sands and used as fertilizer for lime-deficient soils.] soil has the colour of weak soapsuds, the taste of earth or the stable, is full of worms, and in the hour of greatest need it utterly fails.” And yet that is what God’s people went after!

What does this mean to us spiritually speaking? I think that the waters that God has for us, that pure water is not only speaking of Him but His Word. And as a person moves away from God’s Word they will carve out for themselves a belief system that fits them. And anytime a person does so it will be polluted, foul tasting, full of garbage and always empty or non-satisfying!

And eventually all systems will become a tomb in which you will be buried in. Think of the millions and millions of people that have rejected the pure waters, the living waters of God, who have rejected His Word and gone after systems such as material things or religious practices, the world’s philosophy and they have become buried in it!

Paul warns us in Colossians 2:8-10, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”** May we not forget that!

2. In verse 9 we are told that “**Ephraim is a trained heifer That loves to thresh grain.**” The idea here is that Israel loved to thresh the grain for the work was easy and they weren’t muzzled, so they were free to eat. That is what God gave to them, He blessed them not only physically, but spiritually also.

But they turned from this and were yoked to sin. Thus, the Lord would put them to hard work, which speaks of their captivity. Rebellion is a hard road to travel, especially when God wants to place His yoke upon you, which is easy and His work, His burden is light. You look at people that are running from God and there is no joy in their life, and God is calling to them to come back, to enter into that joy once again. Rebellion and stubbornness go hand-in-hand!

3. As we read on there is this admonishing to return to the Lord, don’t continue to go down that path of destruction. Listen to what we are told.

#### VERSE 12

1. Here in verse 12 is the admonishing of God to do the right thing, to turn back to Him and the evidence for that turning back is seen in how you live out your life. Then, as we get to verse 13 we see what they were really like and it is not good.

But here is a principle that Paul spoke of in Galatians 6:7-8, “**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.**” Who are you sowing too is the question we need to answer for our own lives because whatever you sow to that is what you will reap!

Paul goes on to say, “**And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**” Don’t lose heart, stay focused, do good and you will reap the blessings of God in your life!

And that is what we are seeing here in Hosea. God is calling Israel to return to Him, to break up the hard ground of their hearts and allow the seed of God to take root and grow in them once again. And as they allow that their life will be fruitful once again.

As I have said, it is easy to become cold, jaded, harsh towards the people of this world. And if we do we are hardening our hearts to the things of God and then what comes flowing from our lives is anger, bitterness, jealousy, the works of the flesh. But I thought you were talking about becoming hard, jaded, cold towards people. I was and the reason we are is because our relationship with God is off center and we need to return to Him.

We need to allow the refreshing and softening rain of the Holy Spirit to fall upon our hard hearts and allow God’s Word, the seed, to take root and grow so that we once again may produce fruit in our lives.

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 9:10-11 and this is from The Amplified Bible, “**And [God] Who provides seed for the sower and bread for eating will also provide and multiply your [resources for] sowing and increase the fruits of your righteousness [which manifests itself in active goodness, kindness and charity]. Thus you will be enriched in all things and in every way, so that you can be generous, and [your generosity as it is] administered by us will bring forth thanksgiving to God.**”



In his translation of the New Testament, J. B. Phillips translates this verse like this, he puts it into practice you might say. He wrote, “He who gives the seed to the sower and turns that seed into bread to eat, will give you the seed of generosity to sow and, for harvest, the satisfying bread of good deeds done. The more you are enriched by God the more scope there will be for generous giving, and your gifts, administered through us, will mean that many will thank God.”

2. So God called for them to be righteous, extend mercy, to break up the fallow or hard ground of their hearts as they seek the Lord and He sends the refreshing rains into their lives. That is what they were called to do and this is what they were doing! Listen to what verse 13 says.

### VERSE 13

1. God had warned them and instead of listening they were doing their own thing. Instead of sowing in righteousness they were plowing in wickedness! Instead of reaping in mercy they were reaping iniquity. Instead of breaking up the fallow ground of their hearts they were eating the fruit of lies and maybe it made them feel better but the words they were believing were nothing more than lies.

How can they do this? How can they turn so far from the Lord? It is very simple.

**“Because you have trusted in your own way, In the multitude of your mighty men.”**

That is the problem of people in every generation. They reject the truths of God and they trust in what they believe is right in their own hearts. If you believe that way listen carefully to what Proverbs 14:12 says, **“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”** You see, life or death, truth or lies, God or self, the choice is yours! And the choice you make will be seen in how you treat others, that is how it will be manifested!

2. Now we will read of what will happen to those who refuse to turn back to the Lord, those who are going to trust in themselves, what they believe to be right and trust in man to save them instead of the living God!

#### VERSES 14-15

1. Make no mistake about it, ruin always comes when we trust in our own way instead of God's way, and that ruin was about to come upon Israel. Shalman is the abbreviated form of Shalmaneser the King of Assyria.

When Shalmaneser and the Assyrians came down upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel they began to attack the northern cities of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Beth Arbel which is in the area of Naphtali. And they will then come down and conquer the whole Northern Kingdom. And their destruction will be horrible, as any war is. Women and children will be crushed and cut in pieces!

Why? Because of their great wickedness and their refusal to repent! Because, **“You have plowed and plotted wickedness, you have reaped the [willful] injustice [of oppressors], you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your [own] way and your chariots, in the multitude of your mighty men.”** Hosea 12:13. The Amplified Bible.

2. As we move into chapter 11 we will see God's great love for His people, the Jews and specifically here the Northern Kingdom of Israel!

**HOSEA 11****VERSES 1-2**

1. God brought this people out from Egypt, from bondage. And we see the love that God has for His people. But it was not long before they refused to heed the words of the prophets and they ran to the false god's instead, made sacrifices to them and burned incense to them. The gods called to them and they went after them instead of listening to the voice of God, who loves them!

2. Now these words, "**And out of Egypt I called My son**" is speaking of not only Israel being called out of Egypt, but Jesus Christ. Some may see that as a stretch but it is not a stretch, not at all.

The Lord shows us this link as we are told in Matthew 2:13-15, "**Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.' When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son.'**"

Our Savior, our Great High Priest came out of the world and thus, He knows all that we go through because He experienced it and yet, without sin!

VERSES 3-4

1. Notice the picture God is painting for us here. He is telling us that He loved Israel, trained them up as you would train up a young child. He taught them to walk by holding onto them.

I remember with my children as I was showing them how to walk I would hold onto their hands or under their arms and guide them, teaching them to walk, and that is what God is doing here. When they fell, when they stumbled, God, like a loving Father, picked them up and healed them.

God also placed His yoke upon them as they grew so that He could guide them gently. He fed them nourishing food. It is as Deuteronomy 1:30-31 tells us, **“The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ‘and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.’”**

Then what is the problem? They turned from the Lord! Listen to what we are told in Isaiah 1:2-3, **“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: ‘I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not consider.’”**

It truly is an amazing thing to turn from the Lord who brought these people into existence, but people have not learned this lesson and they continue to do the same thing today.

VERSES 5-7

1. God is warning them that they would go into captivity but not down in Egypt as they were before. Now they would go into captivity by the hands of the Assyrians. And again God points out the reason for this, **“Because they refused to repent.”**

It was not that God did not give them a chance to return to Him, He did but it was their refusal to get right with God that brought them into captivity! And the lesson is simple, listen to the Lord but instead they listened to the counsel of men, their own counsel and it led to destruction.

Listen to what Proverbs 3:5-6 instructs us to do, **“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”**

There is wisdom trusting in the Lord and not yourself. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever been wrong before? Of course you have. Now let me ask you another question. Has the Lord ever been wrong? Of course He hasn't! Then why are you trusting in yourself when you have been wrong when you can trust in the Lord who is never wrong?

2. In verse 7 it almost seems like they got right with the Lord for it says, **“Though they call to the Most High.”** But it was not true because it then says, **“None at all exalt Him.”** In other words, there was no relationship with God. They called upon God but it was never manifested in their lives, the things they did and the things they said! It was just lip service you might say!

And yes the prophets tried to lead the people to God but they refused to go. As the Lord says, “**My people are bent on backsliding.**” Think of backsliding this way. Picture a cow that you are trying to get up a ramp and into the truck. And as you push and push this cow is refusing to move.

Inch by inch you go but all of a sudden he slides back down and the process starts all over again. It is very hard to gain ground when you place your feet on the slippery ground of this world instead of the Rock, Jesus Christ!

3. Once again, as we read on, we will see the heart of God come shining through. It is amazing the love that God has for His people!

#### VERSES 8-9

1. Here we see that God does not want to give up Ephraim. He doesn't want to hand Israel over to the Assyrians. He doesn't want to destroy them like He destroyed Admah and Zeboiim, cities that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now I don't know about you, but I read all the wickedness that Israel has done, I see all the wickedness in America and I am ready to launch a nuclear attack and wipe them out! Aren't you glad that I am not God! And for that matter, I am glad you are not god as well. Our God is so loving and compassionate towards us and He does not give to us what we fully deserve!

And as you read of this love all we can truly say is that God's love for us is very stubborn, He doesn't give up, and I thank God for that! God wants to forgive and He is looking for any reason to pour out His mercy.

One of the best examples of God's stubborn love for us is Hell. Let me explain. The longer I am a Christian the more I am realizing that Hell is one of the hardest places to go to. But, if you try hard enough, if you harden your heart to God's calling, if you are stubborn enough, you will get there. But you can't blame God, for He has done everything possible to draw you to Him and by your rejection you have entered eternity apart from Him where you wanted to go, you made it!

2. Now here is a problem for us. God is holy, He is righteous and thus, how can He love us that much, how can He love sinful people like He does? Let me share this story and you will see how He does it. We are told,

The story is told of a man in World War II gunned down by the Nazis outside of Paris. Two of his friends picked up his body after the skirmish was over and walked half a mile to a small church outside the village. They knocked on the door and asked the priest if they could bury their friend.

"Was he Catholic?" the priest asked.

"No, he was a Methodist," they said.

"You can't bury him in our cemetery," the priest said. "But you can bury him outside the fence."

So his two friends did just that.

A couple of weeks later, these same two friends, marching back through the area wanted to pay their respects at the grave of their friend. They went to the church and walked along the fence but couldn't find the grave. So they knocked at the door of the church and said, "We're confused. We buried our friend a couple of weeks ago, but we can't find his grave."

The priest answered, “That night, after you left, I couldn’t sleep a wink. So the next day I got up and moved the fence. He’s inside now.”

- Source Unknown

That is what the Lord did for us, He, in a sense, moved the fence so we would be included, we would be with Him. What is that fence? It is the cross of Calvary where Jesus paid in full the penalty for our sins and thus, we can enter into a relationship with the Father through Him. The fence has been moved!

And like I have said, God never fully gives us what we deserve. He is compassionate, merciful, He is gracious towards us. And here we see that God will not completely destroy them. Now you might say that this is not fair, and God’s response to you is, “I Am God!” I guess He can do that if He wants and we should thank Him that He doesn’t wipe us out, that He doesn’t fully give us what we deserve!

#### VERSES 10-12

1. Yes, God did pour out His judgment upon them, not to destroy them but to restore them. Thus, as He roars His children come running home to Him! Out of the blackness of this judgment the love of God comes bursting on the scene like a brilliant light!

And as the Lord calls them they don’t take their time coming home. They run as fast as they can. You see, God was going to bring them back in the land and He accomplished His purpose in them, they were restored. We will see this once again, for God will use the judgment of the Tribulation Period to restore His people, the Jews back to Him and He will place them back into the land once again, never to be removed, we call that the Millennial Kingdom!



2. In the midst of Israel turning from the Lord we are told, **“But Judah still walks with God, Even with the Holy One who is faithful.”** Hosea 11:12. And so, at this point in time Israel is about to fall to the Assyrians.

But, in the Southern Kingdom of Judah things are better under the leadership of the godly King, Hezekiah. But that would change as Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, comes to the throne. And he was truly a wicked King that led the nation away from God.

We read in II Chronicles 33:1-9, **“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, ‘In Jerusalem shall My name be forever.’ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, ‘In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; and I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers - only if they are careful to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.’ So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations**

**whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.**” Manasseh sent the nation of Judah on a downward spiral away from God from which they never fully recovered from.

3. I hope you take with you that God is a righteous judge and He will judge the wicked. But not only that, I pray you take with you the love that God has for you. Look at the Northern Kingdom of Israel, their backsliding and then even her sister the Southern Kingdom of Judah and how God restored them. His love is everlasting towards His people.

Let me leave you with this as Paul tells us in II Thessalonians 2:16-17, **“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”** What a comfort that should be for us, the love of God towards us!