

# Hosea 12-14 • O Death, where are your plagues?

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Hosea chapter 12, and we're going to finish up our study here. Wednesday nights we are going through the Old Testament chapter by chapter and verse by verse. And then on Sunday morning, we're in the New Testament and we are currently in the second chapter of 1 Peter on Sunday morning.

Let's pray. Father, as we dig into Your scripture tonight and as we complete this study, in Hosea we are desirous of the work of Your spirit in our lives, to bring the Scriptures to a place of understanding and then application. We know, LORD God, it's not just those who hear the Word who are safe and wise and stable, but it is those who are doers of the Word.

And we want to be doers, LORD; but we also recognize in our humanity that we struggle, and we stumble, and we mess up quite a bit. And so we constantly are in need of Your strength to help us to walk out the things that we learn in the scripture. And so, Father, I just want to pray that You would really open our hearts tonight to hear Your voice, and to receive the ministry of Your Holy Spirit to apply the things that we are learning tonight. And these are challenging chapters to be sure, but we pray for grace and understanding. And we thank You Father, in the name of Jesus who is our Savior, amen.

You'll remember that Hosea was that interesting Old Testament prophet whom the LORD told to take an unfaithful wife; told him to marry an unfaithful woman, a woman literally of harlotry. And the reason God did that is so that their marriage relationship would be kind of a tangible illustration of the relationship that God had with Israel because God considered Himself, through the covenant that He established through Moses, to be married to Israel in a very real sense.

It was a very real covenant— like a covenant of marriage, and marriage is a covenant too. And so in order to illustrate this to the people of Israel, Hosea took upon himself an unfaithful woman. And we read and understood how those things played out in the first three chapters of this book.

But in the later chapters of Hosea, God is telling them how their unfaithfulness is going to have very dire and negative consequences. And that is going to come in the form of the nation of Assyria; not to be confused with Syria– but Assyria; whose capital city, by the way, was Nineveh. And that's one of the reasons that Jonah didn't want to go there because he knew that the Assyrians were a wicked people. They were a pagan people. They were an enemy of Israel for the most part. And he didn't want to go to Nineveh and preach any kind of a message of good news or repentance (Book of Jonah). He wanted God just to nuke 'em. That's what would've made him the happiest.

But Assyria did eventually conquer the northern kingdom of Israel and God foretold it. But the reason that Assyria came and conquered the northern kingdom of Israel was because of their rebellion and their refusal to repent. And yet God continued to call out to them, to call out, to continue repeatedly, relentlessly, to call upon them to repent and to turn from their ways.

But He describes their lack of repentance in the opening verses of Chapter 12 by saying, “Ephraim,” and that's a name that He often uses to refer to the northern kingdom of Israel because Ephraim was the largest of the tribes that made up that northern kingdom. He says, “*Ephraim feeds on the wind...*” Interesting sort of a statement, isn't it? “*...and pursues the east wind all day long;*”

In many countries, particularly in the Middle East, the east wind was known as a damaging wind; a destructive wind that would dry out the land and take the crops and so forth. And so it was, it became this synonymous picture of destruction. And so it symbolized in a sense, the direction that Israel was going, particularly as it relates to their foreign policy, because as you notice, it goes on to say, “*they multiply falsehood and violence;*” and He goes on to say, “*they make a covenant with Assyria,*” and carry oil, or rather “*...oil is carried to Egypt.*”

And what that means is they were vacillating. You see, the Egyptians and the Assyrians were constantly threatening to attack Israel. And so Israel determined that the way to resolve that was to make a covenant with them. In other words, to have a peace treaty.

But can I just tell you right now that making a peace treaty with the enemy doesn't work. And it wasn't going to work for Israel, and it doesn't work for us. You can't make a peace treaty with the enemy. The enemy is the enemy. And so God is basically confronting them here, with rather than trusting in the LORD to protect and keep them, when they felt threatened by an enemy, they would try to make a peace treaty with that enemy. And try to, (examples) “Hey, we'll give

you some oil, we'll do this, we'll trade, and we'll give you that and this and we'll make a treaty and we'll, let's just be friends.” And God said that they're multiplying falsehood and violence.

And so He goes on in verse two to say, “*The LORD has an indictment against Judah...*” that's the southern kingdom, “*and will punish Jacob.*” And that's the northern kingdom. But again, and now we're referring to a different name for the northern kingdom, and that is Jacob. And the reason He uses the word, or the name Jacob, is because Jacob was the man who was ultimately renamed Israel.

His first name was Jacob, and then he was renamed Israel. And so now He's going to refer to him as Jacob, but there's a reason He's calling him Jacob, or He's referring to the nation as Jacob, and not Israel— and this is very interesting. You've got to remember Jacob was the name that God— that was given to that man from his birth. And that was tantamount to referring to him as— or I should say it this way, it was like referring to his old nature, the old man.

Then he's— remember after he wrestled with God? And we'll talk about that here in just a minute. After he wrestled with God; it's all recorded in the Book of Genesis; he was renamed Israel, ‘One who has striven with God,’ or strove with God and overcome. Right?

So he was given that new name, which is that picture of that— if you will— kind of a new nature. But God is referring to the northern kingdom of Israel as Jacob, because He's referring to the old nature; the old, rebellious, manipulative, deceptive nature that Jacob lived by. Jacob was a very deceptive, rebellious, and manipulative man. And it eventually came down to a wrestling match with God, which is what happens when all of us become deceptive and rebellious and manipulative. You're ult— you're ultimately going to wrestle with God and you will lose. You will lose. And it's just one of those things, but we'll talk more about this as we kind of get into this a little bit.

But (still verse 2) He (God) says He will, “*...punish Jacob according to his ways;*” and “*repay him according to his deeds.*” Now, you read that in the Bible. We read that in the Scripture; that God's going to repay Jacob according to his deeds, and we just kind of go, “Okay, yeah right.” But can I submit to you this evening that that is one of the scariest things that you will ever read in the Bible? That God is going to repay you according to your deeds.

Listen, none of us want God to repay us according to our deeds. None of us. Including myself. I do not want God to repay me according to my deeds

because my life has not— you know, before I started walking with the LORD and so forth— hey I was living for myself. And if God repaid me according to my deeds, I wouldn't be here talking to you right now.

But the fact of the matter is we've come to Jesus, haven't we? We've given our heart to Jesus. We've embraced what He did on the cross and what is the reality for us now? Check out this from the Book of Psalms on the screen here from Psalm 103.

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**Psalm 103:10 (ESV)**

*He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

God doesn't do that, does He? Are you glad about that? We ought to, we ought to jump up and down and shout and yell when we read verses like this in the Bible really, truly. Because like I said, what God said to Israel here is one of the scariest things that you'll ever hear God say to anyone, “I'm going to repay you according to your deeds.” But He doesn't do that to us because He repaid His Son on our behalf. Right? He, literally Jesus paid for our deeds. So now He (God) does not deal with us according to our deeds.

So speaking now, continuing on with Jacob. Look what it goes on to say here. Now it begins to talk about Jacob's past. It says (verse 3), “*In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God.*” Now this is where we go back to Genesis in our thoughts, and we begin to remember some of these events from the recorded past in the life of Jacob. It starts off by talking about the fact that he took his brother by the heel. And you'll remember that he had a twin brother named Esau, and while the boys were being born, Esau was born first, but out came Jacob's hand, literally you know, and grabbing at his brother's heel.

Well, that's an interesting figure because in the Middle East, when you were said to grab at someone's heel, that was a figurative way of saying you're a deceiver. That person was called a heel catcher or a heel grabber. And we don't use that term today. We use other terms, but in the Middle East back then, a heel grabber was someone who is a deceptive person, and that literally became his personality. It was a picture, if you will, of his personality. And that's why it says he took his brother by the heel. And then later it says there in verse three, “*...in his manhood he strove with God.*”

And again, this is telling us how Jacob came to that place of wrestling with God. And you'll remember what happened; he (Jacob) decided to go home. He'd been living in Aram and taking care of his father-in-law's sheep for years and years and years. And finally, the LORD moved upon his heart to go back to his homeland, to take his wives and his kids and all of his belongings and to go back. But on his way home, he got word that his brother Jacob (Correction: should have said Esau) was coming out to meet him with 400 men, and that was something that really struck fear into Jacob because you see, Jacob had stolen his brother's birthright before he actually left home, and he knew that his brother wanted to kill him. He was actually comforting himself at that time (considering), Esau was, of killing Jacob, so his mother found out about it and sent him (Jacob) off to go live with her brother Laban.

And he was there for a long, long time. Well, he doesn't know how Esau now feels about him, and so he's just fearful and he separates his family into two groups. And he himself stays in one area and spends the night there, and he's alone, and he's absolutely shaking with fear. And it says that during the night an angel appeared, and he began to wrestle with this angel who was in fact the LORD, and he wrestled all night long with the LORD and you know the story (Genesis 32:22-32).

And it's interesting that it goes on in (Hosea) verse four to say, *“He strove with the angel and prevailed;”* I want you to take note of that. *“he wept...”* Look at that, *“and sought His favor”* and *“He met God at Bethel...”* And Bethel just simply means House of God: ‘Beth’ is house and ‘El’ is God, so Beth-el or Bethel. And it says, *“... and there God spoke with us— the LORD, the God of Hosts, the LORD is His memorial name:”* Yahweh. *“So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.”*

So this is interesting. He's bringing up Jacob's past to give a message to Israel today. And I want to just remind you, Jacob was a piece of work; he really was. And that is why He's (God) referring again to their forefather as Jacob because He's referring to that time in his (Jacob) life when his life was defined by his old nature— the manipulative, deceptive man that Jacob was. And it was, it was, it was a name that illustrated his willful disobedience and rebellion against God.

But he wrestled on that fateful night. And that wrestling, of course, was a picture of how Jacob had been living his life. He had been literally coming against God with all the way he lived and that's like wrestling with God. And it's interesting that it says you know, he prevailed. That's what we're told in verse four, that he prevailed.

And it's hard to look at that and say, 'well how exactly did he prevail?' Because he wrestled all night long and eventually realized he wasn't going to be able to overpower, you know, the LORD. And the LORD just touched him eventually and put his hip out of joint, just with a touch. Wonk! (hand motions— flipping something) His (Jacob's) hip just went out of joint and yet Jacob held onto Him. He held onto the LORD and would not let go. The LORD even said, "Let Me go," and Jacob said, "I'm not going to let You go until You bless me." And he was just tenacious about it. (As if Jacob was speaking) "I will not let go until You bless me," and that tenacity and that desire for blessing with something that ultimately pleased the LORD.

Do you understand? God is pleased by our tenacity when we come to Him and say, "Listen, I've seen You face-to-face and I know there is no blessing outside of You, and I'm not going to leave. I'm not going to leave from this spot until I know that I have Your blessing." It's, it is, it's really an incredible picture. If you want to know more about it, go back to my—our study through Genesis (Genesis 32, Jacob Wrestles with God—Pastor's study; not the Women's study) and you can actually listen to that study over again. It really is a wonderful thing.

But God is speaking to the nation of Israel here. He's likening them to the Jacob of old; rebellious, deceptive, going his own way and literally fighting with God. And yet He's saying to them, and that's what He says in verse six, "*So you, by the help of your God,*" He says, "*return.*"

Do you understand, People, what that word 'return' is? The— what the word repentance means. That is repentance. If you need to understand repentance, it's turning away from your sinful ways and turning toward God, and going toward God, that's what repentance is. And whenever you see that in the Word: return, that is repentance. So He (God) says, "Return. Hold fast to love and justice hold fast." Just like Jacob was holding onto God, "I'm not letting go." He says, I want you to do the same. I want you to hold fast and not let go and wait on the LORD and love justice; love mercy. Hang on to it and say, 'I am not letting go.'

So He's telling them, "You're like Jacob. Now be like Jacob," when he later— after the wrestling match, when he was named Israel. "I'm not going to call you Israel. I'm going to call you Jacob because you're in that place of the old man, the old nature." Israel was the new name that depicted the new man.

So how exactly did Jacob prevail? He prevailed by refusing to let go of God. That's how he prevailed. He humbled himself and said, "I want You. I want You. I've lived a life that's all about me and I want to live my life about You." And you know, we know from reading the rest of the book of Genesis that

Jacob's life wasn't perfect, but it changed. It changed pretty significantly. He still stumbled; he still had challenges, but he was a different man after that. And by the way, he limped the rest of his life. And I know a lot of people who have wrestled with God for the better part of their lives and come out of a wrestling match with a lifelong limp to show that they have literally, you know, striven with God. So don't wrestle with God. Not a good idea.

Verse seven. It says, "*A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress.*" and (verse 8) "*Ephraim,*" Again, that's that other name for Israel, "*has said, "Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin.*" So the LORD is accusing them here of failing to acknowledge their wrongdoing in all of their deeds and trusting rather, in their wealth.

And He says that Ephraim says, "I am rich." And he's confusing his wealth with God's blessing. And do you know we do that? We do that. We do that still today. They did it then; we do it today. We think that if we're doing well, if I'm making money, if I've got the things I need, well God's blessing is upon me.

Not necessarily, you cannot confuse wealth with God's blessing. There's a lot of very ungodly people who have a lot of wealth, so they're not synonymous terms. He says in verse nine, "*I am*" Yahweh, "*the LORD your God from the land of Egypt.*" In other words, the God who set you free from the land of Egypt. And He says, "*I will again*" notice that word "*make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast.*"<sup>10</sup> *I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables.*"

God is telling them that He is the God of their history. He says, "I released you from your bondage in Egypt, and by the way, you lived in tents for that entire 40 years. Oh, and by the way you're so comfortable in your dwellings, you're going back to tents. I just want you to know that. Because of the judgment, you're going to go back to tents. But I am the One." He says, "I am the One who spoke through the prophets. I am the One who multiplied visions. I am the One who gave parables. I am the LORD your God, Who spoke to His people, but you have not listened, and so you're going back to living in tents."

Verse 11, "*If there is iniquity in Gilead,*" there shall surely "*they shall surely,*" rather, "*come to nothing: In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls; their altars also are like stone heaps on the furrows of the field.*" And what He's saying there is that everything that they use to worship other gods are going to be destroyed. And that's just the way it goes when we rely on things other than the LORD our God. He's going to strip those things away.

Verse 12, “*Jacob fled to the land of Aram;*” Now he's talking about when Jacob fled from his brother Esau; went to go live with his brother— er his uncle in Aram. And it says, “... *there Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he guarded sheep.*” You'll remember he worked for his uncle so that he could get a wife. “<sup>13</sup> *By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded.*” Or as the New King James says, he cared for them (Correction: NKJV says, "he was preserved."). And he's giving them some history here and we'll talk about why.

But He says in verse 14, “*Ephraim has given bitter provocation; so his LORD will leave his bloodguilt on him and will repay him for his disgraceful deeds.*” And what He's saying in these verses as He continues to draw connections between the history of Israel and their current condition is— He's recalling, their pa— His past goodness to the people of Israel, beginning with the man named Israel.

And going back to those personal experiences, Hosea writes of Israel's humble beginnings you know, but he reminds the people that they also went into slavery in Egypt. But God is the One who raised up a deliverer through Moses. But now Israel has provoked the LORD to anger with her constant idolatry and rebellion. And that's where chapter 12 ends.

We get into chapter 13, and it says, “*When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel,*” and this is a way of saying that God had so blessed Israel that when he moved, when he spoke, when he did something— the nations around trembled. They feared Israel; it was a feared nation.

But look what it goes on to say at the end of verse one, “...*but he incurred guilt through Baal and died.* <sup>2</sup> *And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves metal images, idols skillfully made of their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen.* <sup>3</sup> *It is said of them, ‘Those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!’”*

Now this is a very, this is kind of a difficult statement to understand because it's using some ancient sort of words and phrases here. But God is saying that the people have so polluted themselves by their idol worship, by kissing their idols that were made in the form of a calf. And you'll remember there were two of those that were made in the northern kingdom of Israel.

He says that He's likening them here to those who sacrifice humans, and that's what He says. “It is said of them, those who offer human sacrifice are as those who kiss calves or kiss a golden calf,” if you will, which is what they had. And



by the way, when the Old Testament refers to human sacrifice, it's referring to the worship of the pagan god Molech.

And it wasn't just, it wasn't adults that they sacrificed, it was their children. And it was the most hideous thing that you can imagine because the god Molech was formed by metal. And he had arms outstretched like this. (Pastor stretches out his arms in front of him, as if to receive a baby) And they would heat that—those arms up with the fire to the point where they were glowing molten hot. And they would place their babies in the hands of Molech and they (the babies) would die. And if you can just imagine that. What a horrific thing. And God condemned them for it every single time. But notice He says, that those who kiss calves are likened unto those who literally sacrifice their children. That's how God sees this. We have to understand how reprehensible this idol worship was in the eyes of God.

And therefore He says in verse three, “... *they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away (away early), like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window.*” And every single one of the things He just described are all things that just blow away quickly. And that's what He's saying Israel's going to be like; it's going to come upon them and they're just going to blow away quickly. “<sup>4</sup> *But I,*” He says, “*am (Yahweh) the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but Me, and besides Me there is no Savior.*” This is not the first time God says this, but I want you to take note of the fact that God says to the nation of Israel, “There is no Savior other than Me. I'm it. There, and that's for all time you guys, there's no Savior other than Me.” He also makes the same statement in the book of Isaiah. Let me put this on the screen for you. This is from Isaiah chapter 43. It says, God says,

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**Isaiah 43:10-11 (ESV)**

*"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. ."*  
(Now, I want you to take special note of what He says at the end of this passage.) *Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the LORD, and beside me there is no savior.*”

Now, I want you to stop there for just a moment. Let me ask you a quick question. Are there any other gods? No. According to the LORD God who created the universe, He makes it very clear. “Before Me no god was formed, nor will there be one after Me. There are no other Gods.” He says, “I am the one

God. There aren't two. There aren't three. There aren't 10. There aren't a hundred. There's just one." Okay?

Now I want you to also take notice of the last thing He says from this passage: "*I am the LORD, (I am Yahweh).*" When you see the LORD in all capitals, that's the tetragrammaton. And it's the covenant named Yahweh, or Yehovah. We're not exactly even sure how it's pronounced because all of the vowels aren't in, weren't written in there. But He says, "I am the LORD," and look at this, "*And besides Me, there is no Savior.*"

So, I'm going to ask you now. So how many Gods are there? There's one. How many Saviors are there? One. How do we know Jesus is God? Because the angels came to the shepherds and said, "Behold this day in the city of David, a Savior has been born to you." How many Saviors are there? There's just one. And He is God, the LORD Jesus Christ, born the Savior of the world, Yahweh the Savior of all mankind. There's only one Savior. And Jesus is One with the eternal God, and there's no two ways about it; otherwise, you have a blatant contradiction of scripture, and you don't have a contradiction of scripture. You have a clear revelation of scripture. That's what you have here.

Verse five. Moving on in the text, "*It was I who knew you in the wilderness,*" talking about when they were traveling from Egypt to the Land of Promise, "*in the land of drought; <sup>6</sup> but when they had grazed, and became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore, they forgot Me.*"

And this is not only a common theme in the book of Hosea, this is a common theme among mankind. We get full; we get happy, we get satisfied, and we forget God. And that's just one of those things. We forget the LORD when our life is going well. And yet when our life is not going well, we turn to the LORD. Right?

It was amazing to me, in— on 9/11 when we suffered that terrorist attack on our own soil; the first time that had happened in that unique and dreadful sort of way; it was crazy how many people came back to church. It was absolutely crazy. I was right here teaching through the Bible during that time and dealing with the people that we had and suddenly after 9/11, our chairs are more full. And I'm thinking to myself, 'What's going on?' Well people got shaken. It shook people to their core and they weren't sure what to think about it. And then, you know, when Desert Storm took place... after that people stuck at church for a period of time, but it wore off.

It wore off after a period of time. And people... they got comfortable again and they're like, "Okay, things have settled down. I don't need to worry about this. I

mean, let's— whatever we do, let's not get too weird about this God thing, right? I mean, if things are going bad we'll run and ask God for help, but for Heaven's sake, let's not go overboard. So we'll just kind of back off here a little bit now and we'll go back to life the way it was.” And it's human nature. Hosea is talking about it right here. It's what still happens today. So what's the result? What are the consequences?

Verse seven. *“So I am to them like a lion, like a leopard; I will lurk beside the way. <sup>8</sup>I will fall upon them...”* That means to pounce upon them, *“like a bear robbed of her cubs.”* You don't want to ever rob a bear, a she bear, of her cubs. *“I will tear open their breast, and there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild beast would rip them open. <sup>9</sup>He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against Me, against your helper.”*

He— that's the Assyrians, *“He destroys you. O Israel,”* that's, He's— God's telling them, *“Do you get it? Your enemy destroys you. But why? Because you have rejected and forsaken your Helper. I am your Helper.”* And He says now, *“Where now is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers—”* that you raised up, *“those of whom you said, ‘Give me a king and princes.’”*

You remember when that happened during the time of Samuel? (1 Samuel 8) The people of Israel said, *“We want a king.”* Samuel was grieved. You remember that? He went to the LORD; he was so grieved. He went to the LORD; he said they want a king; I can't believe they want a king. They've got You and they want a king.”

God said, *“Give ‘em a king. They haven't rejected you, Samuel. They've rejected Me,”* He said, *“but here's what I want you to do. I want you to tell them what it's going to be like with a king. I want you to tell them what the king is going to do to them, what he's going to demand from them. So go ahead and give them a king.”*

But He wasn't happy about it, and that's why He says in (Hosea 13) verse 11, *“I gave you a king in My anger and I took him away in My wrath.”* Do you understand that God will sometimes give us things that He knows that are not the best for us because He will use those things as a discipline— a disciplinary measure in our lives. He says right here, *“I gave them a king in My anger.”*

Well then we would say, *“Well then why'd you do it?”*

(God replies) “Because they needed to learn. They weren't going to have it any other way. They needed to learn. And the only way to let them learn or to get them to learn was to give them what they wanted.”

Verse 12 says, “*The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up;*” and that means I'm not letting it go, “*his sin is kept in store.*”<sup>13</sup> *The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son,*” and that's speaking of like the baby, “*for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb.*” In other words, it's His illustrative picture to describe the difficulty of a woman who is in labor but gives birth to nothing. As the Bible will say elsewhere, “gives birth to the wind” (Isaiah 26:18) You know all the labor that goes along with it and nothing good comes from it.

Verse 14 says, “But now the LORD,” excuse me, I'm sorry. Verse— I was reading somewhere—. Verse 14: “*I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol;*” Sheol is the grave. Wow. Suddenly we're reading verse 14, and we're thinking, “Whoa. Did somebody hit a light switch here?” Notice here how the LORD turns with a word of hope and mercy: “*I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol,*” or the power of the grave. What's, how do you ransom somebody? You pay the ransom price. Right?

What did Jesus say? “*I have not come to be served, but to serve and to give My life as a ransom for many.*” (Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45) Right? (Jesus said) “*I shall redeem them.*” There's another good word— ‘redeem,’ to redeem is to purchase. Do you know that when you go into a store and you give them— you hand the thing that you want to buy to them and they scan it, and then you give them money, you're redeeming. You're redeeming that item.

And God says (verse 14 continued), “*I shall redeem them from Death,*” and then begins to ask the question, “*O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol,*” (or the grave) “*where is your sting?*” And if you are hearing words that sound very familiar, it's because the apostle Paul quoted them in the New Testament when he was writing to the church in Corinth about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the fact that we have been ransomed from the grave. And this is it on the screen from 1 Corinthians chapter 15. It says:

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### **1 Corinthians 15:53-55 (ESV)**

*For this perishable body, (this body that we're living in right now) must put on the imperishable, (that which cannot perish) and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts*

*on immortality, then (circle that word) shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”*

Paul quoting from this very passage in Hosea. But God is prophesying through Hosea of a time when He is going to ransom and redeem people from the power of the grave. When is that going to happen? Well, it started with Jesus who came to give His life as a ransom. But Paul says here very clearly that all of it is going to finally come to pass, when this mortal body puts on immortality; when this perishable body (points to himself), yours too, (points to congregation) puts on the imperishable. Then, he says, what has been said will come to pass. So, there are words in Isaiah (Correction: meant to say Hosea) that have not yet come to pass. They will come to pass. You can be sure of it. But they have not yet come to pass, as Paul says, then will come to pass.

Now the last part of verse 14 goes with verse 15, and they shouldn't have put a verse in between there, because it says here in the last part of verse 14, *“Compassion is hidden from my eyes. <sup>15</sup> Though he may flourish among his brothers, the east wind, and you'll remember that's that destructive wind, the wind of the LORD, shall come, rising from the wilderness, and his fountain shall dry up; his spring shall be parched; That's what the east wind does. it shall strip his treasury of every precious thing. <sup>16</sup> Samaria shall bear her guilt, You'll remember Samaria was the city of the northern kingdom of Israel, because she has rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword; their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open.”*

God is warning them of the brutality that awaits them if they refuse to repent— from the nation of Assyria. And I say, “If they refuse to repent,” I mean, it's— He (God) knows that they're not going to repent as a nation. And this is coming. It's coming. And by the way, it happened. It happened just like the LORD said that it would happen. You know what the sad part of it is about the whole thing. It all could have been avoided. It, all of it, could have been avoided.

You read about the brutality here? Ripping open pregnant women. Are you kidding me? How horrific can you get? How brutal and cruel? But the— but again, when you think about how this can all be avoided, the message here is clear. Rebellion brings consequences.

Rebellion brings consequences. We can't get away from that. We can't ignore it. We can't say, “Well, it's not that big of a deal.” It's that big of a deal. We look at passages like this where God talks about what Assyria was going to do to Israel, and we're like, “How could God allow that to happen? How could a God of love

allow those things to take place? Why didn't He save His people from that kind of brutality?"

Well, the fact of the matter is, He did save them for hundreds and hundreds of years from that kind of brutality, but eventually He gave them over to it. And the reason is because the people had completely rejected God and His protective covering over their lives. And we can do the same; we can walk out from under God's protective banner. Make sure you don't do it.

And the message here is true. You can't walk out from under God's protective banner without dealing with the consequences. There are consequences. When we reject God, rebel against God and basically say to God, "I don't want You in my life. I don't want You in my heart. I don't want You in my mind, I don't want You in my schools. I don't want You in my businesses. I don't want You in my nation. I don't want You." There will be consequences. I'm sorry. God will bear with that for a long time. But ultimately there will be payment. And that's just the fact of the matter.

Now, I'm very happy to tell you as we get into chapter 14, that as we come to this chapter, we find that things end on somewhat of an up note, and I like that, but you know....

This last chapter is a reminder that repentance can bring life. It's good to know that judgment and destruction wasn't God's last word through Isaiah, or through Hosea, rather. Judgment would come for the nation, but God continued to call people, even though He called to the nation of Israel as a whole.

There comes a point where God knew that the nation would not come. You know? And that often happens just that way. When Jesus came and preached to the nation of Israel, there came a point where He knew the nation was not going to turn to their Messiah. The nation, the leaders of the people, who represented the people; they had rejected Him and He knew that. And yet, He still called out and said (John 7:37, Revelation 22:17), "*Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the waters of life.*" So what is He doing? He's speaking now to individuals. The nation is not going to come. God knows that here too. He knows the nation of Israel is not going to come, but there still may be some people who He can reach.

And you know, I've got to tell you something in all honesty, I feel like that's where we're at here in the United States of America. I just do. I'm, and if you disagree with me, that's okay; we can still have fellowship. But I don't see a national returning any longer. I do see, I do see, revival going on in individual

hearts though. And that's, I believe that's where we're at. I believe we're at the same place that God was, with speaking through Hosea. The nation isn't going to come, but I can still call forth people. Jesus (speaking), "I know that the nation as a whole is not going to turn to their Messiah, but I could still call out to people." Today we're calling out individuals. You know?

We pray. We pray for our national leaders. We pray that God would give them wisdom. We pray that God would give them Godly counsel. We pray for them—because we're told to pray for them. And I don't mean to be a Debbie Downer about this whole thing, but I don't see a national repentance coming. I just don't see it. There may be things like we saw on 9/11 where people get lathered up for a little bit of time and come back to church, but they cool quickly. Those things might happen again, but we are talking to people now.

And the exciting thing is that God is talking to people. God is talking to individuals. You know, the pandemic was a terrible, awful, horrific thing, and yet God used it to reach many people. That's just the— and because God does that. God does that. He used crises, uses crises, and difficult times, painful times to bring people to a knowledge of the truth. And He has done that in the last two years.

I have gotten so many letters, emails, cards in the mail from people who testify to what the LORD has done in their life in the last two years alone, because they got scared half out of their wits, you know. It's one of the reasons my study and revelation just blew up online: everybody wanted to know, "Is this it?"

Well, they wanted to know if that was it at 9/11 too. But people were asking questions and they were wondering, and there was a— there has been a return to the LORD. And God has done a good work through the pain, through the difficulty, through the hardship, through the grief. God has done a work.

This is not a long chapter (chapter 14). It just simply says in verse one "*Return, O Israel,*" And again, that word return, that's the essence of repentance, "*to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.*" (God speaking) "It's not because you didn't have good leaders in place. It wasn't because you didn't make the right decisions as a national (nation); it was because of your iniquity."

And notice what He says, "*Take with you words and return to the Lord;*" And then He goes on to even tell them what to say. He gives them a word of confession and repentance. But I want you to notice, He says, "*Take with you words.*"

Have you ever? Can I ask you a question? And this is a personal question. Have you ever taken, to the LORD, your words of confession? Have you ever come to the LORD with your words and said, “I confess my sin,” with your words? I mean, there's something that can be very healing about that. And so He's (God) telling them to do that, to literally confess with their mouth. And He says, “*2 Say to him....*” Here are— the words of repentance are given... “*Take away all iniquity;*’ this is the first thing that they're to cry out to the LORD, “Take away our sin,” they're saying, ‘*accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips; Assyria shall not save us;*’”

I think God wanted to hear them say that. Do you? Do, isn't it? You see, this is what they had been turning to. They'd been turning to Assyria. Assyria was threatening them with invasion. So what did they do? They turned to Assyria. They try to make a peace treaty with them, and God says, “You need to say with your mouth, ‘*Assyria will not save us.*’ It's not going to work.”

And you need to— and we need to do the same thing today. The things that we would rely on apart from the LORD and say, “That's not going to do it, that's not going to save me. That's not going to solve this issue. You know? Getting a divorce is not going to solve my issue. Getting a raise at work is not going to solve all my problems. Going and doing ‘this’ is not going to solve everything. I'm going to look to the LORD for healing and restoration.”

That's what God is telling them to do in this prayer of confession. He goes on; look at— it says, “*...we will not ride on horses.*” What does that mean? They can't ride on horseback any longer?

Horses were considered at that time to be the power of your military prowess. I mean, that was it. If you had a lot of horses, you could win a lot of battles. Chariots were even better, but horses were powerful. That's why God told the kings of Israel, “Don't amass a lot of horses. You can't; don't do that.” Solomon completely blew that one off and did it anyway. (God said) “Don't amass a lot of horses because.... Why? Because eventually you'll put your hope in those horses, and you'll stop trusting in Me.”

And so they were to say, in this prayer of return (verse 3 continues), “*We will not ride on horses, and we will say, no more, ‘Our God’ to the work of our hands.*” Or in other words, “to the things we've made with our hands, “*In you the orphan finds mercy.*” Not in these pagan gods; not in the works of our hands; so on and so on. This is what He wants them to say. God is calling on them to renounce.



People? Have you ever done that? Have you ever renounced what you put your hope in before; the things that you rested in, that comforted you, that gave you pleasure; that gave you hope? Have you ever spoken to the LORD and just renounced those? (Said to God) “I renounce my hope in anything but You, and I'm going to list the things that I once trusted in and hoped in, and all the things that I thought were to my favor; I renounce them.”

You know we've been reading in our staff meeting on Tuesday mornings, a book called The Pursuit of God by AW Tozer. And there's a chapter in there called ‘The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing.’ And it's a neat chapter because he talks about how when the tribes of Israel were being allotted their land in the area of promise, the land that God had promised them, He said to the tribe of Levi, “You get no land— but what you get is Me. I am your inheritance.” And Tozer brought out the fact that they had everything. Because they had God, they had everything. They had nothing of this world's belongings from that standpoint of the inheritance of the land. But they had everything because they had God, the blessedness of possessing nothing and yet at the same time possessing God and possessing all things. It really is a beautiful picture. Look how Paul says it from Philippians chapter three on the screen. He says:

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### **Philippians 3:3-8 (ESV)**

*For we are the circumcision, who worship by the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. (In fact, he says) If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, (I'll just tell you right now) I have more: (I mean, think about it) circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, (I was) a Pharisee; as to zeal, (Man I tell you, I was) a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law. (I'll tell you, I was) blameless. But (listen) whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of (just simply) knowing Christ Jesus, my LORD. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things (and I don't care.) I count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.*

Isn't that wild? The blessedness of renouncing all those things that I once thought were to my favor, right?

Verse four (Hosea 14), look what God says. Look what God says, this is a promise. He says, “*I will heal their apostasy.*” Some Bibles put waywardness in there. This is talking about backsliding. God says, “I'm going to heal their

backsliding. He says, I will, *“I will love them freely, for My anger has turned from them. <sup>5</sup> I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; <sup>6</sup> his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. <sup>7</sup> They shall return...”* Again, that's repentance; turning to the LORD. *“... and dwell beneath My shadow;”* That speaks of God's protective covering. They will come under My protective covering and dwell there, *“... they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. <sup>8</sup> O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; from Me comes your fruit.”*

Oh, I love that God is saying, “Listen, it's all Me. These idols— they're nothing in your life. And I am going to bless you, and I'm going to bring you to a place where idols are no longer a part of your existence.” And some of these blessings have yet to happen, but they will. They will. Then Hosea ends in this last verse of the final chapter with a final statement.

And I think it's kind of important to see this. He (God) says, *“Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Let him sit down, think about it, ponder it, and understand what I'm saying here, “whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them....”*

(Pastor doesn't read the last line, but describes it, *“...but transgressors stumble in them”*.) But you know what? People who are transgressors, and again, that word transgressor means someone who knows what is right and they violate it anyway. They know what to do and they say, “Forget it. I'm not doing it.” That's a transgressor. What's going to be their lot?

He (God) says, “They're just going to stumble. They're going to stumble in My ways. The ways of the LORD are going to be a stumbling block to them.” What did we talk about in 1 Peter, just this last Sunday? Jesus is the stumbling stone. People stumble over it. He's the rock of offense.

So, there we go with the book of Hosea. And what do we learn from this? You know, I always like to bring up this passage in Romans whenever we're doing an Old Testament study and it's appropriate anytime, but it says:

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### **Romans 15:4 (ESV)**

*For whatever was written in former days was (And Paul is writing there about the Old Testament. He says, these things were) written for our instruction, that*

*through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

So, you see what was given to us or what is given to us. In the book of Hosea is written for our instruction. We're to learn and understand the things that we need to know from this, that the rebellion causes heartache and destruction.

Repentance, coming back to the LORD; returning to the LORD, brings life and refreshing. These are the things that we learned. They're basic things, but we learn them nonetheless because we see them illustrated here in these books of the Old Testament. And we learn a great deal about God Himself and what we find out here concerning the ways of the LORD in verse nine, this last verse of the chapter, is that the ways of the LORD are right.

And do you know that's an important thing that a lot of people don't understand. The ways of the LORD are right. There's a lot of people who judge God. I don't know if that surprises you to hear that, but people judge God all the time and they'll bring up things and they probably have brought up things to you at work; they'll talk about things that God has allowed or whatever, or done and even things that He said to do in the Old Testament; like when Joshua was told to go in and conquer the peoples of the Canaanites; the men, women and children. And they'll go, "Who in the world? You believe in a God that would do something like that?"

Well, you know, we believe that the LORD's ways are right. God has the right to judge. God has that right. He is the judge of all the earth. He can do what He wants to do. But in the end, it is going to be revealed; and even those who are detractors today, and say, "Your God is cruel. Your God does this; your God does that..."

One day. One day is coming. There is a day coming when they will stand before God and they will confess, "The ways of the LORD were right. I was wrong." And every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father. There's a day coming.

Aren't you glad that we have the opportunity today to make that statement? And say, "LORD Your ways are right. I'm going to trust You even if I don't understand You, even if I don't understand everything that You've done. And by the way, I don't. I trust You. I'm— I choose to trust You."

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You for the ministry of Your Word through the book of Hosea. This is a challenging book because there are

confrontational words throughout. And yet, LORD, You ended this wonderful prophecy with a word of hope, a word of love, and a word of mercy.

Help us to learn what we need to learn from it, understand what we need to understand, and apply what we need to apply. And help us, Father God, not to be stiff necked– but to be humble always, to trust in You, to put our hope in You, and to have complete confidence always in the work that Jesus Christ our Savior finished on the cross when He bore our sin and paid our price.

We constantly look to You in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King, amen.