

Commentary on Hosea 9 and 10 by Chuck Smith 1.31.24

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January verse **Luke 24:45 (NKJV)** And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

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Chapter 9

Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for you have gone a whoring from your God, you have loved a reward upon every cornfloor. The floor in the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her. They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land: but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria (Hsa 9:1-3).

And so he prophesies and predicts the captivity, being carried away to Assyria, others fleeing to Egypt.

They shall not offer the wine offerings to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners: all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread and for their soul shall not come into the house of the LORD. What will you do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD? For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them [they'll be buried in Memphis]: the pleasant places for their silver [that is, their places were once so beautiful where their treasures were kept], will be covered with nettles: and thorns will fill their houses [their tents]. The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred. The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all of his ways, and hatred in the house of his God. They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore I will remember their iniquity, and will visit their sins (Hsa 9:4-9).

So God is pronouncing His judgment and His indictments against these people. He said,

I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time (Hsa 9:10):

Now here the nation of Israel is liken unto a fig tree. This also is true in Joel, chapter 1, verse 7, and in Jeremiah 23 I believe it is, or twenty-six... twenty-four, in between them. "Your fathers were as the first ripe fig trees at her first time." I do believe that Jesus, in Matthew 24, here is a reference to Israel as a fig tree as in Joel and as in Jeremiah.

God saw them as the grapes of the wilderness. When they first came into the wilderness, found grapes that were there. Oh thirsty people, how great juicy grapes

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taste to a guy who is dying of thirst. And though God found them very refreshing, exciting,

yet they went after Baal-peor (Hsa 9:10),

One of the most immoral of all the pagan gods as far as the worship is concerned.

they separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also unto them when I depart from them! (Hsa 9:10-12)

Woe unto any man when God has departed from his life.

Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. Give them, O LORD: what you will give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers. Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, they shall bring forth, yet I will slay even the beloved fruit of their womb. My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations (Hsa 9:13-17).

And that prophecy has been fulfilled and is being fulfilled at the present time, for they still remain wanderers among the nations.

A testimony of God's Word confirmed by history and confirmed by the world around us. Surely we would be wise to give heed to the Word of God.

Chapter 10

It is God's purpose for our lives that we bring forth fruit. In Isaiah chapter 6 God likens the nation of Israel to a vineyard that was planted with good plants, that was hedged about, but yet failed to bring forth any good fruit. And as a result, the vineyard was let go and ultimately destroyed. Now again, in Joel chapter 10, the Lord uses that allegory of a vineyard and of a fruitless vineyard to speak of the condition of the nation of Israel. It is always God's purpose that His people bring forth fruit. "Bring forth fruit," the Bible says, "meat unto repentance." Show it; let's see the fruit of it. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me brings forth fruit." And He speaks in the fifteenth chapter of John as the church and the purpose of God for the church is that it might bring forth fruit. So Israel, in their failure to bring forth fruit unto righteousness, failed in the purposes that God had ordained and established for them as a nation. And as the result, Israel is soon to be destroyed by their enemies the Assyrians.

So God's complaint against Israel in chapter 10:

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She is an empty vine, they bring forth fruit unto themselves (Hsa 10:1):

In other words, there's no fruit for others. There's nothing fruitful coming from the nation.

according to the multitude of his fruit he increased the altars (Hsa 10:1);

As they were prosperous they only used their prosperity to build altars to false gods.

according to the goodness of the land they had made goodly images (Hsa 10:1).

God had given them a good land; God had given them prosperity. They used their prosperity to build false altars; they worshiped the images.

And their heart [God said] is divided (Hsa 10:2);

And this, of course, is the problem that so many people have, is a divided heart. David prayed, "Unite my heart to serve Thee, O God" (Psalm 86:11). Give me a singleness of heart, God, give me a heart that's really after You--that singleness of purpose to just worship and serve the Lord. The problem with so many people is their heart's divided. But Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Part of me wants to serve the Lord; part of me wants to live after the flesh. Part of me wants to be righteous; part of me wants to indulge. You see, that divided heart. James tells us that kind of a divisive or that attitude is a sign of instability and that we really cannot receive God's best for our lives if we have a divided heart.

The Lord said to the people through Jeremiah the prophet, "And I shall be found of thee in the day that you seek Me with your whole heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). I think David's prayer is one that we can all well emulate when we pray, "O God, just give me a singleness of heart; unite my heart to serve Thee, O God. Take away a divided heart. Let me have a singleness of heart and purpose towards God."

But their heart is divided and,

now they are found faulty: so the LORD will break down their altars, he shall spoil their images. For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD (Hsa 10:2-3);

The Assyrians are gonna come; the cities are gonna be destroyed; their altars are going to be taken away. Actually, the calf that they made as the symbol for their national worship is going to be carried away as a prize by the king of Assyria. And they're gonna realize that this dilemma has come upon them because they did not reverence the Lord, the true God.

They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment is springing up as poisonous hemlock [which is a poisonous weed] in the furrows of the field. (Hsa 10:4)

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So, because they had broken the covenant with God, they were swearing falsely when they made that covenant with God, thus God's judgment is gonna spring up upon them, just like weeds, the poison weed of hemlock just grows up in the fields.

The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because the calves of Bethaven (Hsa 10:5):

Bethaven is a name that was given by God to the city of Bethel where the calf worship was inaugurated and where the calf was set up as a national symbol of worship in the Northern Kingdom. Going back just a little bit in history, when Solomon's son Rehoboam took over at the death of Solomon as the king over all of the land of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, the ten tribes, when he began to seek to exact heavy taxation upon them, rebelled and said, "What do we have to do with the house of David? To thy tents, O Israel." And so Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was left with only two tribes to rule over. The remaining tribes became the Northern Kingdom and they were Israel; the two southern tribes were called Judah. And Jeroboam, who was elected by the people to be the king over Israel, feared that if the people would go back to Jerusalem to worship God, as was required in the law, that when they get back to Jerusalem and they'd see the temple and they'd see the worship and all, that their hearts would be drawn away from loyalty to him and drawn back to Rehoboam and the kingdom of David.

So Jeroboam, in Bethel, had made this image of a calf and he set it up there in Bethel with an altar to it, and he said, "This is the God that brought you out of Egypt. This is the God that you're to worship." And he inaugurated calf worship there in the Northern Kingdom. So, Bethel was the city where calf worship was inaugurated and this Bethaven. *Aven* is the Hebrew word for wickedness; *Beth* is the word for house. So God calls Bethel, which is actually the house of God, "Bethel." El being God. God changed the name and He said, "It's not Bethel; it's Bethaven. It's the house of wickedness." They have taken the house of God and made it really the house of wickedness. And so, "The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of the house of wickedness," rather than the house of God--Bethaven.

for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, for it is departed from it. And it also shall be carried unto Assyria [this calf that was made and was worshiped as the national worship symbol] will be carried as a present to the king Jareb: and Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water. The high places also of [wickedness] Aven, [or of wickedness] the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us (Hsa 10:5-8).

The judgment of God is going to come, the place where they worshipped their pagan gods will be covered with weeds, nettles, and the people for fear of the invasion of the Assyrians will cry to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and to hide them. The Assyrians were historically a very fierce, cruel people. According to the accounts in history, they were so cruel to their captives that many times the city that was surrounded by the Assyrian army, rather than going in captivity to these cruel Assyrians,

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would commit mass suicide. The Assyrians had habits of pulling out the tongues of their captives, of gouging out their eyes, of maiming their bodies, and thus great fear would come upon people who were threatened by destruction or captivity to the Assyrians. And thus, the cry to the mountains to cover us and to the hills fall on us.

Now this, of course, brings into mind Revelation chapter 6 when the sixth seal is open and the judgments of God are now being poured out upon the earth. And during the time of the sixth seal there will be cataclysmic judgments from the heavens, meteorite showers, the stars falling from heaven as a fig tree shakes its untimely figs in a wind and the sun is dark and the moon turned to blood and all. "At that time," the Bible says, "that the people, the inhabitants of the earth will cry unto the rocks and the mountains and say, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the lamb. For the day of His wrath has come and who shall be able to stand?'" So here again is as God's judgments are being poured out that endeavor to somehow to try to hide from the judgments of God, but when God begins His work of judgment people will find that there is no hiding place.

O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah ([Hsa 10:9](#)):

Now going back in their history, Gibeah was that city in Benjamin where this man was returning, I think, from Bethlehem and he stopped in Gibeah. And the men of the city came and they sought that the host would turn him over to them for homosexual purposes. Much as Sodom and Gomorrah, it's an account there in the Old Testament of the... it's in Judges, and the tribe of Benjamin and the strife that came because of this, the battle where the Benjamites were finally subdued. And every man of the other tribe swore that they would not give their daughters to the Benjamites for wives. And the tribe of Benjamin was almost eradicated as a result of this sin and they were defeated there in Gibeah. And so the Lord says, "Look, you've sinned from the days of Gibeah." This is when they had first come into the land before they actually had any kings in the time of the judges, this horrible sin of the tribe of Benjamin in Gibeah.

there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them. It is my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows. And Ephraim is as a heifer that is taught, [a trained heifer, actually] that loves to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break up his clods ([Hsa 10:9-11](#)).

And then the Lord says to the people,

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy ([Hsa 10:12](#));

Every man's life is sowing. The Lord, though, here declares, "Sow to yourselves." Not only do I sow, but I am also sowing unto myself. Our minds are like computers, they're being programmed daily by the things that I'm putting into them, and as a computer, what is put in is what will come out. And thus, we need to be careful what we put into our minds. If I put corruption in my mind, corruption is gonna come out. Paul said in

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Galatians, "Be not deceived, for God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that he shall also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Now he's talking about what you're sowing into your mind. "And if you sow to your flesh then of your flesh you're going reap corruption, but if you sow to the Spirit then of the Spirit you will reap life everlasting." It's important what you sow into your mind. It is good that you're here tonight. It is good that you are sowing the Word of God to your spirit because you will then reap of the Spirit.

There are so many enticements and opportunities for us to sow to our flesh. In fact, it's all around us. You have to sort of put a shield over your mind. Daily in our contact with this world, which is so degraded, all of these degrading influences around us. The use of sex and the exploitation of the female body in advertising and all, it's just awfully hard to escape. And you have to just pray, Oh God, somehow wash my mind clean of that which you are exposed to--not willingly, not deliberately, but it's just there. For if I sow to my flesh then I'm gonna reap of my flesh.

But the Lord said, Sow to yourself in righteousness, and then you will reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground (Hsa 10:12):

The fallow ground is the ground that is become hardened because of the lack of cultivation. The soil has not been broken up, not been loosened, and thus by the rains and all the soil has become compacted. And becoming compacted, becomes very hard so that the seed cannot really take root. So God is saying, "Break up the fallow ground within your heart so that the seed, the Word of God can begin to take root in your life."

for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and rains righteousness upon you (Hsa 10:12).

Surely it is time for us as a nation to seek the Lord. Our nation is in dire peril. The very things that brought the downfall of Israel and later of Judah are manifestly evident in our nation today. Our nation is on the verge of extermination. We, as Israel, started out as one nation under God, but we, as Israel, have turned from the true and the living God. In the national life, through the edicts of the courts and the legislation that is come forth from the judicial bodies of legislature, God has gradually been eliminated and ruled out of our public life, out of the school curriculums. And God who made us strong has been rejected in a national way. And we are just as Israel; we cannot survive without a dependency upon God.

God said, You've plowed wickedness, and you've reaped iniquity; you have eaten the fruit of lies: and because you did trust in our ways, in the multitude of your mighty men. Therefore shall a tumult arise among the people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle: and the mother was dashed in pieces with her children [or the pregnant women were ripped up]. And so shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off (Hsa 10:13-15).