

Hosea 8-11 • "How can I hand you over, O Israel?"

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Good evening. Good to see you here tonight. We're continuing our study in the book of Hosea (Hoshea) and we are into the minor prophets. We've mentioned in the past that they're not referred to as minor because they are of less importance, but simply because they're just shorter. Although this particular book is 14 chapters, we're not going to finish it tonight. I actually was tempted, but that would've meant doing 7 chapters tonight and I'm not sure we could have taken it.

But anyway, we're going to pick it up in chapter 8. So, Hosea, chapter 8 is where we are. Open your Bible there and as always, let's just open our hearts to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, as we get into the scripture tonight, we want to be people who hear spiritually. Hearing physically is a wonderful thing and we're so thankful for it. But Lord, there's a desperate need in the body of Christ for us to have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. And Lord, that comes from you. That's a work that only you can impart and we pray that you would impart it tonight, even as we spend some time in these scriptures. And Heavenly Father, we look to you to speak to us about the things that are most needful.

And I ask you, my Father, that you would also anoint my heart to share and minister this word as well. Lord, we look to you to empower us, to lay hold of your word and we thank you for it. We thank you for the book Hosea, we thank you for the message. We ask you, Father God, to speak clearly and we ask it in the name of Jesus our Savior, amen. Amen.

Just a reminder that Hosea is written predominantly to the northern kingdom of Israel, which is close, very close to finding the judgment of the Lord right there in their front yard in the form of the Assyrian army which will come and conquer them.

And it was the it was the method of the Assyrians back then when they conquered a nation, to take those people captive and scatter them into the various lands that they had conquered and separate the people.

And many of the people who were living still in the northern kingdom were scattered and many of them were just assimilated into the other gentile nations. But you have to remember something very important about the tribes of Israel and that is that there were a lot of years, there was about 500 plus years between the time that they came into the nation and when Israel fell to the Assyrians.

When you think about that timeframe, just in terms of how long the United States has been a country, it's not very long, I mean, we're about half. We about half of that right now. So double what we've been a nation, and that's how long the Lord bore with the nation of Israel before finally allowing the Assyrians empire to conquer them. But during that 500 year period, you have to know, there was a huge amount of movement within the tribes of Israel.

And what I mean by that is because the northern kingdom became apostate earlier than did the southern kingdom, many of the godly people from the north moved to the south. And so there was ultimately a representation of all the tribes of Israel just in the southern kingdom of Judah when the northern kingdom was invaded and scattered among the people.

And the reason I bring that out is to correct a notion that has found traction in certain sectors of the body of Christ and that is that there are 10 lost tribes. That's been a popular idea among some cult groups. It's even been a somewhat popular idea among some born again believers.

The idea that the top, the 10 tribes of the north, which the north was made up of 10 tribes, somehow, when they were conquered by the Assyrians and then scattered among the nations, they were lost and that there are only 2 tribes remaining to this day. Well, that's just simply not true. And as I said, people migrated into the southern kingdom because it was a godly place for much longer than the northern kingdom.

So the people who were scattered were those upon whom the judgment of the Lord came. But chapter 8 begins by the Lord basically telling the people of the northern kingdom that war is upon them. And He begins by saying, “*Set the trumpet to your lips!...*” And in the Hebrew this is a very simple phrase, it's made up of 3 words. It's just “*trumpet to lips*” and or roughly, that's an idea of it.

But whenever the trumpet or the shofar was called upon to sound in the nation of Israel, it was either to rally the people to worship or it was to sound a cry for war. And it is the latter of those two that is happening here. And God explains why as we keep reading in verse 1. He says, “*...One like a vulture...*”

And your Bible may say “eagle” if you have a different translation, but it says here in the ESV, “*...One like a vulture is over the house of the Lord, ...*” And that makes reference to Assyria and they're being poised to attack. And then the Lord explains why, and the reason is, “*...because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law.*”

I want you to remember that the word “transgressed” means to know what is being expected of you and to violate it anyway. It is knowingly, it is what we refer to as a willful sin, okay. David prayed and said, Lord, keep me from willful sins, then I will be innocent of great transgression. (Psalm 19:13)

So this idea of transgressing is to know, and it's kind of like, when you have a little child and you tell them, don't do that, don't touch that, and they look at you while they reach over to touch it. Or, have you ever had a child do that slowly kind of reach over and just kind of look at you while I'm reaching out to do exactly what you told me not to do? That's a transgression and we have to deal with those things as parents, and God has to deal with those things with his covenant people because notice He says, you have “*rebelled against my law.*”

They knew the law and yet they rebelled. It was like a rebellious teenager, I'm not going to do what you say, you can't tell me what to do, sort of a thing. And so, God is saying here that because they've rejected the covenant of the Lord, the Assyrian empire literally looms like a vulture to pick clean the bones. That's the idea of the word picture here. And the reason vulture and eagle are both used, people don't realize this sometimes, but vultures are similar to eagles and eagles to vultures in some ways. I didn't realize that. We look at the eagle, of course, the bird here, the national bird of the United States of America, and we think, oh glorious, wonderful. And they are, they're majestic, but they're thieves.

And I learned that firsthand when Sue and I took our youth group, we were youth leaders in a church in Montana and we took them up to Glacier national park during a time when the salmon were running in one of the rivers going through glacier, and the Eagles would perch up in the trees and they could just have dinner anytime they wanted. They just, and they're kind of lazy about it. They just kind of fall out of the tree, it's really amazing to watch and they spread their wings at the last second and glide down over the water and they, and the salmon were so thick you couldn't see the bottom of the river.

And they could just grab a salmon and they'd go up back into the tree to feast on it. Well, what I didn't realize was that there were all these other eagles just waiting and when, and all they had to do was just drop down the same way and

get a salmon. But you know what they did? There'd be like 3 or 4 of them that would meet them in the air and try to steal the salmon away and I thought, that's really interesting. I didn't realize that, it doesn't look that great as the national bird, of the United States. So vulture, eagle, you can go either way anyway.

So God goes on here in verse 2 to say, “²*To me they cry, “My God, we—Israel—know you.”*” So the people are saying to God, we know God, they're claiming to know God. And yet God is saying, telling them throughout the course, frankly of this entire book, that regardless of what they claim, judgment is coming. So even though somebody says they know God, doesn't mean they know God or they're walking with God, right? So you can't go out always with what somebody says.

And so He says in verse 3, “³*Israel has spurned the good; (and because of this, He explains) the enemy shall pursue him.*” It's pretty disheartening when people reject that which is good in favor of that which is evil or destructive. Sometimes people will embrace a destructive lifestyle. And we talk about it in the way of not making good choices, but it basically, what that means is they've chosen wrongly and they've chosen destructive things rather than beneficial things. And that's the way God sees Israel now. You've chosen that which is bad, you've spurned that which is good, and therefore the enemy is going to pursue you.

He goes on in verse 4 to say, “⁴*They made kings, but not through me. They set up princes, but I knew it not. With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.*” God was involved in the selection of the first few kings of Israel. Not that they were all good, but He was involved in that, in those. The kings still had to make their own choices, but eventually the selection of the kings became worldly.

And kings were chosen simply because they were in the lineage of the previous king or because somebody assassinated somebody else. And that was more the case in the northern kingdom of Israel. If you could get a coup going and you could assassinate the king, you could be king. So you got to, all you have to be is a murderer and you could take the throne.

And so, God is giving a commentary here on that process by which new kings came into power. He says they made kings, but they didn't talk to Me and none of these kingdoms, kings were by My selection. And same thing with the princes. He says, “*I knew it not.*” Verse 5, He says, “⁵*I have spurned your calf, O Samaria. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence?*”

You might read verse 5 and think, dude, what did God have against their cattle? No, when God says, I have spurned your calf, he's referring to the image of a calf that had been made. And we're not talking about the one that was made by Aaron, the brother of Moses. We're talking about the one that was made by Jeroboam the first, (Jeroboam I). We call him Jeroboam the first because, not only was he the first king of the divided nation of Israel, but he was, there was a second Jeroboam much later on.

So in order to distinguish the first one, we call him Jeroboam the first. But he had a very interesting sort of a situation. God made him king because Solomon's son, Rehoboam, was kind of an idiot and he divided the kingdom because of his pride and his idiocy, frankly.

And so God tore half the kingdom out of the hands of the descendants of David, and God gave the northern kingdom to a man named Jeroboam and Jeroboam was set up as king and God told Jeroboam, He said, if you'll follow Me, I will establish your kingdom and I will establish you like I established the house of David. I will bless you and, but here's the deal, you must be true to Me, and you must follow My word.

Well, the problem was, you see, when Jeroboam became king of the northern kingdom of Israel, now you've got this southern kingdom of Judah whose capital remember is Jerusalem. What was in Jerusalem? The temple. There was no temple in the northern kingdom. So Jeroboam started thinking about it, and he thought, when the people go to worship the Lord, they're going to go down to the southern kingdom, because that's where the temple is, and that's where God has commanded them to go to worship and I'm going to lose these people.

Let me show you, this is actually written in first Kings. We'll put it up on the slide. It says,

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1 Kings 12:26-29 (ESV)

And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

So that the people didn't have to travel very far to go worship these new pagan idols. But what was the whole reason that Jeroboam did it? Its fear, its fear. He thought about it, he contemplated the idea of the people going down and reconnecting with Rehoboam, king Rehoboam and what did he say? What did he think in his heart? They're going to kill me. God established Rehoboam as king over the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

God established him, and yet Rehoboam could not put his faith in God to trust Him to keep him safe. He said, no, these people are going to kill me. So because of fear. So what does that tell you about fear? It's an enemy, isn't it?

When we start listening to fear, listen, here's the deal. You cannot listen to fear and have faith at the same time, you can't. They're mutually exclusive. You cannot fear man and have faith in God at the same time, one will cancel out the other. One is very positive, one is extremely negative. Fear will become, if you listen to it, a task master. It will dominate you, it will manipulate you, it will control your life.

And I and the thing you have to understand about fear, I'm not telling you that to bring any kind of condemnation upon you, fear is a universal element. We've all dealt with it at some time in our lives. Even people of great faith in the Bible have their moments with fear. I think of king David, what an incredible man, gave into fear on a couple of occasions. At one point came gave into fear so much that he went to go live along the Philistines.

But fear can and will control you if you give into it. And that's what happened to Jeroboam, that's why he created these calves and that's why God says to the northern kingdom, *"I have spurned your calf."* And this is a response to the fact that Israel had spurned the law and their covenant God. And so God comes back and says, I've, you have rejected Me, you've rejected my law, I reject your God.

And then concerning that calf, He goes on to say in verse 6, *"⁶For it is from Israel; (it's not from the Lord) a craftsman made it; it is not God. The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces. ⁷For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; it shall yield no flour; if it were to yield, strangers would devour it."*

And this is God's way of telling him that their disobedience and rebellion will have an impact even on their agricultural productivity. The land will not produce its yield. Verse 8 says, *"⁸ Israel is swallowed up; already they are among the nations as a useless vessel."* In other words, they become, they've

just, they've become so assimilated into the ways of the world, you can't even tell any difference between them and the world.

“⁹For they have gone up to Assyria, a wild donkey wandering alone; Ephraim has hired lovers. ¹⁰ Though they hire allies among the nations, I will soon gather them up. And the king and princes shall soon writhe because of the tribute.” Meaning the tribute they will be forced to pay leading up to the time of their conquering.

“¹¹Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning, they have become to him altars for sinning.” Isn't that a fascinating statement? I just think that's really interesting, because they have multiplied altars to sacrifice their pagan offerings. He says, they have become to Him, *“altars for sinning.”* They have literally become those altars for sinning.

I'm reminded by of the fact that Jesus didn't just come to bear our sin. The Bible says He was made sin for us. (2 Corinthians 5:21) Isn't that amazing? We don't even know what that means fully, we really don't. We read it in the Bible, He was made sin, He was made to be sin on our behalf. It's a very similar language that is being used here as in verse 11.

Verse 12 says, *“¹²Were I to write for him my laws by the ten thousands, they would be regarded as a strange thing. ¹³As for my sacrificial offerings, they sacrifice meat and eat it, but the Lord does not accept them. Now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins; they shall return to Egypt.”*

Meaning, in other words, they will return to bondage. *“¹⁴For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces, and Judah has multiplied fortified cities; so I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour her strongholds.”*

This is an interesting verse that God uses to end this chapter. He says, Israel has *“built palaces,”* Palaces, what were they? What were palaces for? Well, they were essentially to glorify the leaders of men. What were fortified cities used for? To protect them from their enemies. And what God is really saying in this final verse is that they've become so worldly and so focused on their own self-sufficient needs, they've forgotten their God.

They don't look to me, they don't glorify me, and they don't look to me for protection. They look to their own leaders and they glorify their leaders. They look to their own protection through their fortified cities, and they trust in their own military equipment to keep them safe. And that is the essence of what is being said there.

Chapter 9, and so He says, *“¹Rejoice not, O Israel! Exult not like the peoples; for you have played the whore, forsaking your God. You have loved a prostitute's wages on all threshing floors.”* And the reference to threshing floors was simply where they used to go up. Because threshing floors were built on the tops of hills and they were built that way because you wanted to catch the wind when you threshed. And so they used threshing floors also as places to offer sacrifices to pagan gods and that's the reference there.

But noticed that He tells them again, that they've *“played the whore”* and they love to prostitutes wages. Again, these are references to their spiritual adultery, worshiping other gods rather than the Lord their God.

So what is going to be the result? He says in verse 2, *“² Threshing floor and wine vat shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail them. ³ They shall not remain in the land of the Lord, but Ephraim (and again, that's another name for Israel) shall return to Egypt, (or bondage if you will) and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria.*

⁴ They shall not pour drink offerings of wine to the Lord, and their sacrifices shall not please him. It shall be like mourners' bread to them; all who eat of it shall be defiled; for their bread shall be for their hunger only; (and not for the Lord) it shall not come to the house of the Lord. ⁵ What will you do on the day of the appointed festival, and on the day of the feast of the Lord?

⁶ For behold, they are going away from destruction; (in other words, they think that they're living in safety, but He says,) but Egypt shall gather them; Memphis shall bury them. (and He's talking about the attacks of the Egyptians prior to the Assyrian empire coming and finally conquering them) Nettles shall possess their precious things of silver; thorns shall be in their tents. ⁷ The days of punishment have come; the days of recompense have come; Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool; the man of the spirit is mad, (and that literally means crazy) because of your great iniquity and great hatred.

⁸ The prophet is the watchman of Ephraim with my God; yet a fowler's (or a bird's trap) snare is on all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God. ⁹ They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah: he will remember their iniquity; he will punish their sins.

¹⁰ Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to the thing of shame, and became detestable like the thing they loved.

¹¹ Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a bird—no birth, no pregnancy, no conception! ¹² Even if they bring up children, I will bereave them till none is left. Woe to them when I depart from them!”

And what you need to know about the Lord saying that there will be “*no birth, no pregnancy, no conception,*” is that it was a very common practice among the Israelites at that time because they'd become so pagan that they worshiped these various gods of fertility and they believed that by the worship of these gods of fertility, that they would be made fertile as a people, not only themselves, but their lands, right?

So agriculturally, physically, biologically, they believed truly that the worship of these pagan gods would have an effect on their fertility. And so God is saying to them, it is not going to, it's not going to happen. Their crops are going to fail and whatever crops they can manage to pull out of the ground, I'm going to have enemies come in and steal them away. And their people will not be able to bear children, they will not be fertile, if you will. And anyone who does have children will be bereaved of that child until he says none is left.

Verse 13, *“¹³ Ephraim, as I have seen, was like a young palm planted in a meadow; but Ephraim must lead his children out to slaughter. ¹⁴ Give them, O Lord—what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.*

¹⁵ Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal; there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels. ¹⁶ Ephraim is stricken; their root is dried up; they shall bear no fruit. Even though they give birth, I will put their beloved children to death. ¹⁷ My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations.”

Wow, these are challenging chapters to read through, let alone, even study. But you can hear the broken heart of the Lord. And by the way, before we finish the book Hosea, you will get a clearer picture of just how this situation broke His heart. And there's a lot of judgment being spoken here, but it's the judgment that comes from a sorrowful heart, a pained heart.

Chapter 10, *“¹ Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars.”* So we've talked about in the fact that in previous studies, that it seems that the more God's people are blessed, the more quickly they seem to fall away. The more they are harassed, the more they turn to the Lord. And we see that, we see that. We've seen it in our own culture, we've seen it in our own time.

We know, we know how this thing works, but God says in verse 2, *“² Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. The Lord will break down their altars and destroy their pillars. ³“For now they will say: “We have no king, for we do not fear the Lord; and a king—what could he do for us?”*

⁴ They utter mere words; with empty oaths they make covenants; so judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field. ⁵ The inhabitants of Samaria tremble for the calf of Beth-aven. Its people mourn for it, and so do its idolatrous priests—those who rejoiced over it and over its glory—for it has departed from them. ⁶ The thing itself shall be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king. Ephraim shall be put to shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his idol.”

And God specifically says here in verse 6, He tells them that Assyria will conquer them, and Assyria, the Assyrian army will carry away their treasures, including their god. And you know when your god gets captured by your enemy, it's time to find a new god, yeah. If your god can be captured by an enemy, yeah, I would strongly encourage you to find a new god. How about the one true God?

Verse 7: *“⁷Samaria's king shall perish like a twig on the face of the waters.*

⁸ The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. Thorn and thistle shall grow up on their altars, and they shall say to the mountains, “Cover us,”

and to the hills, “Fall on us.”” And that, those statements “cover us” and “fall on us,” those are cries of utter despair, and that's what God is saying here, that when the judgment of the Lord takes place, they will be in utter despair and they will ask to die.

What's interesting about this is that Jesus actually quoted this phrase as a cry of despair that would go up in the nation of Israel in A.D. 70, when He foretold the judgment that would come upon the nation of Israel, and you'll remember when He spoke that He spoke it while He was on the Via Dolorosa (the way of suffering) while He was carrying his cross. It says that the women that were there were weeping as He walked along that road, carrying His cross and Jesus stopped long enough to say, women don't weep for me, if they do this while the tree is green, imagine what they'll do when it's dry. (Luke 23:27-31) And that's when He went on to talk and quote from this, He about the great despair that would come upon the nation of Israel not terribly many years from that time when in A.D. 70, Rome itself would come and conquer Jerusalem.

Verse 9, *“⁹From the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, O Israel; there they have continued. Shall not the war against the unjust overtake them in Gibeah?”* Now you need to know what He’s talking about when He refers to here as *“the days of Gibeah.”* This looks back to that terrible event that we hate reading about even that is recorded for us in the Book of Judges when great judgment fell upon the tribe of Benjamin for their great sin. (Judges 19:20-21) And God is saying that sin that took place in Gibeah became the pattern of wickedness that they never turned away from as far as the people in the Northern, the kingdom go.

And now he is promising another terrible defeat like that, that took place for the tribe of Benjamin, but now will be set out for the entire kingdom, the northern kingdom. And God says, *“¹⁰ When I please, I will discipline them, and nations shall be gathered against them when they are bound up for their double iniquity.”*

Now, I need to stop you there for a moment and tell you that beginning here in verse 11, through the end of this chapter, the Lord is going to use illustrations that were very common to the agricultural community. So those, and because farming was the way of taking care of your family and community, everyone was very, aware of these illustrations, these terms, so you'll see these as we go.

Verse 11 says, *“¹¹Ephraim was a trained calf that loved to thresh, and I spared her fair neck; but I will put Ephraim to the yoke; Judah must plow; Jacob (and that's another name for Israel or the northern kingdom) must harrow for himself. ¹² Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*

¹³ You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors, ¹⁴ therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle; mothers were dashed in pieces with their children.

¹⁵ Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great evil. At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.”

Now let's talk about this a little bit. The statement that He makes here about Ephraim being a trained calf is another reference to Israel's beginnings.

And He says here that He “*spared him*”, he “*loved to thresh*”, but He spared Israel from the yoke of slavery from other nations and that means the Lord kept those other nations at bay for a long period of time.

But Israel abused that freedom and that protection and did not look to the Lord as the source of that protection. And so, God tells them that they've now plowed iniquity and they've reaped injustice, and therefore He tells them the time has come to harness them. He can no longer allow them to run free. And so this is the time of judgment. Now, this picture that He's giving here agriculturally using cattle and that sort of thing is connected to what we read.

For those of you that were here in the first 3 chapters of Hosea, you'll remember that God told Hosea to go and restrain his wife so she could no longer commit adultery. And that's what is connecting here to what God is saying related to Israel. God is going to restrain Israel in such a way that they can no longer be unfaithful to Him, and yet this restraining work of the Lord will be accomplished in the day of battle.

Chapter 11, and this is the last chapter that we're going to cover here tonight. It says, “*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*” Now obviously what the Lord is talking about here, is He's recollecting the fact that Israel had been in slavery in the land of Egypt, and through the ministry of Moses, God called His nation out of Egypt and out of that bondage. And again, I want you to keep in mind that was 500 years prior to the events of Hosea.

But this verse is also quoted in the book of Matthew in connection with a very different bringing out of Egypt. And let me show you the passage from Matthew chapter 2. It says,

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Matthew 2:13-15 (ESV)

Now when they had departed, (and now this is Joseph and Mary) behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. (notice this) This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

So, an interesting usage of this reference from Hosea by Matthew in his gospel record related to Jesus Christ.

And yet God goes on to say in verse 2, “² *The more they were called, (He says, I called my people out of Egypt, but the more they were called,) the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.*

³ *Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. ⁴ I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.*

⁵ *They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. ⁶ The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels. ⁷ My people (God says) are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all.”*

But I want you to, I want you to hear in this next verse, verse 8, the sorrow of the Lord. I want you to hear this. God says, “⁸ *How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim?”*

And by the way, those are 2 cities that were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah when the judgment of the Lord fell. And I want you to know something about Sodom and Gomorrah, and Admah and Zeboiim. They were destroyed completely, and what that means is there was a total destruction.

And what God is saying here in His sorrow is, how can I treat you like that? He knows that judgment must come, and yet He says, how can I treat you like those places? In fact, He says here at the end of verse 8, “... *My heart recoils within me; (even at the thought) my compassion grows warm and tender.*”

This is crazy when you think about this. This is the God who has borne for hundreds of years with this rebellious, wicked nation, and yet God says, “*my compassion grows warm and tender.*” And so what does He say? Look at verse 9, this is interesting, He says, “⁹ *I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.*”

And what the Lord is saying here, He's not reneging, He's not going back on what He said about judgment. He's saying, I will not destroy you like Sodom

and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim. In other words, I'm not going to take you off the face of the earth, I'm not going to do that. I couldn't do it. My heart literally recoils at the thought of destroying you forever.

And so God is promising as He goes on here. Look at verse 10. This is really amazing. *¹⁰They shall go after the Lord; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west; ¹¹ they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the Lord.*

This is amazing. God says here, I will not destroy my people, they will one day return to their homeland, although they will find it much changed, much altered by the time they come back. There will be no northern kingdom any longer, there will, that will be taken over. That will still be taken over by the gentiles and that the capital city of Samaria that once made up the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, will be named for that entire region. By the time Jesus comes along, that whole region will be called Samaria and will be despised by the Jews. And yet God says, I will return them, I will call for them. I *“will roar like a lion,”* and they will return.

And then the final verse of the chapter, God ends by saying, *¹² Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.*” And this is this picture that we get that, judgment came first to the northern kingdom. The southern kingdom had some good kings and when the good kings came into power, the nation flourished for the most part. How many good kings were there in the northern kingdom of Israel? Zero, not one.

So, that's why Israel was conquered first. So that's where we're going to stop for tonight and we're going to take the last 3 chapters of Hosea next time.

Father, thank you again for the Word that you've given. And sometimes, Lord, when we go through books like Hosea, it can be challenging reading because there's just, there's so much prophetic doom. But Lord, I can see that you were giving anyone who remained any final chance to get out before the roof caved in. And, Lord, I am quite certain that many people did, they headed the warning, but for those who didn't, judgment came. And Lord, I just pray that you'd help us to remember that because we need to always be softhearted and teachable. And I pray, Father, that we would be. Keep us teachable Lord, keep us longing for your voice.

Keep us desiring to hear from you. Make us sensitive, tender, teachable, instructable. I remember, Lord, that David, even though he made many mistakes in life, when he was confronted with his sin, he owned up to it. He didn't try to shirk the responsibility or blame someone else, he was quick to embrace his own failures. And Lord, I believe that's what made him a man after your own heart. And I pray, my Father, that we would be the same. Help us to be tenderhearted and sensitive and responsive to your voice. Jesus, don't let our hearts become hardened. Don't let us grow a callous on our hearts, Lord, so that we can no longer hear or sense or feel the direction of your Spirit. Forgive us for pride, keep us humble. We look to you, Father, and we trust you. In Jesus' precious name we pray, amen.