

HISTORY OF REDEMPTION

BY

Dave Shirley

Lesson 14 God Speaks Through the Prophets

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Let's pray.

Lord, we do thank You that we have time to just look at Your word and think about the big things You have done throughout history and the times You have acted, but also the times You have spoken, Lord. And we see that You act different ways at different times for reasons. And we speak different ways at different times for reasons. And when we see how You have acted, what You have done, and then how You spoke about it, Lord, it just puts it together for us in a way that is large, I guess; a way that we can step back and see, Lord, what is going on. And so as we look at the prophets and think about them, Lord, the fourth major time that You spoke, help us to just catch all of Your heart and why You spoke then and the way that You spoke then as Your communication to us. Lord, because we know that there is meaning for it, meaning for us in it. So we commit this time to You, in Jesus' name, amen.

The Prophets

The fourth major time God spoke:

Isaiah through Malachi

The New Covenant is proclaimed in this section.

The prophets are the fourth major time God spoke. It covers Isaiah through Malachi. And this is where the new covenant is proclaimed by the prophets. And God has spoken to Abraham. God has spoken to Moses. And God has spoken to David. Now God is going to do a new thing, or speak a new way. And that is, He speaks through the prophets.

So, the question is: Why is He speaking? What is the need? What is the content? What is the method and what is the response? In Luke 24:44 we read, “Everything written about Me [that is, Jesus] in the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” So there are things written in the prophets about Christ. They have to be fulfilled.

In Acts 10:43 we read, “To Him [to Jesus] all the prophets bear witness.” So the prophets are talking about Jesus. And in Revelation 19:10 we read, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” It really is.

Four Major Prophetic Themes

- * **Suffering & Reigning of the Messiah**
- * **The Remnant or “elect Israel”**
- * **The Day of the Lord**
- * **The Kingdom or Millennial Reign**

Now there are four major prophetic themes in the prophets. The first one is this: the suffering and reigning of the Messiah. That is the theme that covers the first and second coming, the suffering and the reigning. Secondly, we read about the remnant or “elect Israel.” That is a theme in the prophets. Thirdly, the day of the Lord is a theme that runs through the prophets. And fourthly, the kingdom or the millennial reign is a theme. Including sometimes the new heaven and earth runs through the prophets. But primarily the kingdom and the millennial reign runs through there. So we have these four major prophetic themes going on during the times of the prophets.

Four Prophetic Points of View:

- * The Prophet's own time**
- * The Captivities and Restoration**
- * The Coming of the Messiah**
- * The Millennium and End Times**

Now, there are four prophetic viewpoints. When a prophet speaks, he is speaking—he is talking and usually what happens is he is speaking to one of four mountaintops. He speaks to these different mountaintops. And the first mountaintop is he speaks to his own time—what is happening right now historically—this is his own time. He is talking at this time. But he also speaks, not only in his own time; he speaks usually about the captivity that is coming, the Babylonian captivity. So he speaks about the captivity. Or, he will go further to the first coming of Christ, which has to do with His suffering usually. And then he will go to the second coming of Christ, to His reigning.

When the prophet speaks, you can discern like Jesus did, even in Psalm 63—Jesus would read a portion of Scripture in the synagogue and He would stop right in the middle of one of our verses. He wouldn't even finish the verse out and He would close the book and He would say, "This day this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears"—that Scripture. But He did not go on and read about the reigning and what was going to happen at the second coming.

And so, whenever you are reading the prophets, you always need to keep in mind the four prophetic viewpoints that prophets are looking at. And certainly that takes revelation of the Holy Spirit to show us what they are talking about. Are they talking about their own time right now? Are they talking about the captivity? Are they talking about the first coming or the second coming? And you can have all of those things thrown together in one big view because God can see it in one big view. And that is one of the dilemmas of reading the prophets and interpreting the prophets. But note that there are these four prophetic viewpoints and you need to be familiar with those when you read the prophets.

The Need

**You can not appreciate the prophets
until you see the need.**

- Moral law is broken
- Ceremonial law is corrupted

They need restoration & reconciliation.

Now, what is the need? You really cannot appreciate the prophets until you see the need. They had broken the moral law and they had corrupted the ceremonial law. That is a huge issue because marital problems are one thing. But when your wife comes home and she turns to you as her husband and she says she has fallen in love with another man. That is another problem. Everybody has marital problems. You know, trying to make adjustments and things like that. Issues with money, you know, et cetera, et cetera. But when somebody comes home and says, “I have fallen in love with somebody else besides you” that is huge. “And I have had maybe even sexual intercourse with them.” That

changes everything. That is not just a little marital problem. That is a breaking and severing of relationship.

And that is what is happening; they have broken away from God. They have broken the moral law. They have corrupted the ceremonial law. And it is a huge issue with God.

Isaiah 1:1–4 says,

The vision of Isaiah [which he saw] “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: ‘I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, [They don't know Me] my people do not consider.’ Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward.”

And so, not only does he relate it to the marriage relationship; he relates it with children and their relationship with parents. And he is like, “Whose kids are you?” He says, “You cannot be my kids.” He says, “I cannot imagine what is going on. How can you be turning away backwards like this?”

So the need in the prophets is for restoration and reconciliation. Hosea 3:1 says,

Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.”

So God is calling Hosea, who married Gomer, to love this woman who has gone off with other lovers, because that is what God has had to do. And that is just, that is such a hard thing to do. And I think that is why in Matthew that, you know, even Jesus says when He is talking “except for the cause of fornication” or except for the cause of adultery. They said, “Can a man get writing of divorce?” It is like Jesus said, “No. That is not what God has intended from the beginning. It never was God’s intention.” And then He puts in that little phrase, “You know, except for the cause of adultery.” Why? Because that is so hard as a human being to deal with. It is so hard to get over.

When it speaks in 1 Thessalonians 4:6 about “don’t cross the boundary, don’t defraud your brother in this matter,” the word actually there in the Greek literally means to cross a forbidden boundary. And he is speaking of sexual intercourse. God has set up sexual intercourse for marriage. When it is done in marriage, it pleases God. God is actually happy about it. Because He created it and made it work that way. But when it is not done in the marriage, it has crossed a boundary that God has forbidden. And it causes tremendous harm in the relationship between people. That is just a principle that has been put in by the Creator. And people that disobey it will find all kinds of hurt and pain and suffering emotionally and in many other ways in their life. Because that is just the way it works. Because the manufacturer has made it that way and He has warned us don’t do it. All you are doing is hurting yourself. And then you find out later you really did.

Now, he says to him in Ezekiel 16:8, he says,

When I passed by you and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love. So I spread my wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I sworn an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you and you became mine.

It is like, “I married you,” says the Lord God, “but you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame and poured out your harlotry to everyone passing

by who would have it." In other words, she did not really limit herself. She just said, "Well, whoever." And she gave herself over to many lovers.

And so, how do you restore that? How do you get reconciled to someone in that kind of relationship? Well, when you compare Hosea and Jehovah, you see that Hosea married Gomer but Jehovah married Israel. Well Gomer becomes a harlot. Well, Israel does too. She goes after Baal and she becomes a harlot. Not just Baal but many other idols. Gomer becomes a slave. Well, so did Israel. Israel becomes a slave but Israel is bought back from slavery. Hosea and Gomer are reunited. It is a miracle. But Israel and God are reunited, it says, after many days. I think that is still yet to take place. After many days, it has been a long time but it is going to happen.

So we see the need. The need is for the relationship to be restored, which seems almost impossible. It is like Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 33. You just cannot do it. I do not know how that could ever happen. And God says, "Well, call unto Me and I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things you just do not understand. You do not know. It can be done, Jeremiah" (cf. Jeremiah 33:3). Jeremiah says, "No, it cannot be done. These people are too sinful. They are too, they are just too horrible. It cannot happen." And God says, "Yes, it can. Because nothing is too difficult for Me."

But what is the content? What went wrong? Well, God speaks about the problems of the broken relationship. He speaks about the cause, the consequence, and the solution there. So a deep understanding of sin and its outworking in all of life is given in the prophets. If you really want to understand rebellion and sin, go to the prophets. Because He makes it clear that He was not the cause. This was not God's fault. The relationship broke up, but it was not because of anything God did.

In Micah 6:3 God says, "Hear now what the Lord is saying. Arise, plead your case. My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Answer Me."

The Content

**What went wrong?
God speaks about broken
relationship.**

***God makes it clear that He was not the cause.
(Micah 6:3)***

Whenever it is a human relationship, you have a husband and a wife; they go through divorce court. You can pretty much be sure, in any husband and wife relationship, you can at least look for some cause on both parts. Because they are human and there is some sin in both of them. Maybe one is more responsible than another. But you can pretty much be sure that relationships between a man and woman, when the relationship does not work, the fault is with both of them. And it is usually not just one of them.

But when it comes to God, God can stand there in divorce case and say, “I did not do anything wrong. You cannot find anything that I did wrong. I did everything right. And the fault is all with the woman who has turned away from God.”

And so you see this deep understanding of rebellious sin. The principle is this: sin is sure destruction. You can count on it. If you are involved in sin right now, it is sure destruction. You say, “Well, I have not seen destruction yet.” You will. It is sure. It will take place. No policy can out maneuver God. Rebellion is ruin. Sin is sure destruction and the prophets communicate that.

Secondly, the heart of God is wounded by sin. Some of you may have been through a relationship where you really loved someone and they hurt you deeply. They broke off the relationship or maybe they committed adultery with another person, or fornication with another person. And you know the wound and how deep it goes. But judgment is God's strange act and He weeps when He has to judge. As Jesus was weeping over Jerusalem looking forward to what was going to happen, probably when Titus came in AD 70. But it is a strange act. And He is wounded, He is hurt by sin. And I think that is one of the things that He is wanting us to get from reading the prophets is just how hurt God is when I sin and you sin.

As David said after the thing with Bathsheba, it is like it just wham, just smacked David up beside the head. And he said, "Against Thee only and against Thee I have sinned" (Psalm 51:4). It was not like he was leaving out Bathsheba or anything, or Uriah, or anybody else. It is just that he began to realize that his sin now became so real that he realized how it hurt the heart of God and he had sinned against God.

If we could only understand that our sinning against God! It is like if we had this wonderful, loving relationship with Him, or say, someone had a wonderful loving relationship with us and they went out and just went off with another person and began to have sexual intercourse with them. How that would break your heart! How that would hurt you deeply! And that is the way God feels when we sin.

So, thirdly though, he does not leave us there in despair. He says the victory is with God because God can remake it. God can recreate it. God is big enough to restore the relationship. On the human level, we see a lot of relationships just crumble and fall apart because we are human. We do not have the ability but God has the ability to restore things. And He can do it and the prophets make that clear.

So the problem is a broken relationship—its cause, its consequence, its solution. God is not the problem. "My people, what have I done? Have I wearied you? No, answer Me, what have I done?" And they cannot answer anything. He did not do anything.

So they speak against idolatry. And the issue again is that of the heart. Who and what we love being what matters. God wants to know, “Do you love Me? Is that what matters to you, is your love for Me?”

And as the mouthpiece of God, the prophet will do two things. He will forth tell. That is, he will give insight into God’s will. And secondly, he will foretell. That is, he will give insight into God’s overall plan. So a prophet speaks forth telling and foretelling. Forth telling is just insight for today, how we ought to live. And foretelling is how God’s plan is going to unfold. And he does both.

Well, is there any hope for the future? Well, yeah. There is hope in the Messiah. To Him all the prophets bear witness.

The Method

**God speaks through the prophets
(Deuteronomy 18)**

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command Him.”

*** God sovereignly calls the prophet
* God sovereignly gives the abilities**

So the method that God chooses is a new method. It is found in Deuteronomy 18:18 where God said, “I will raise up another prophet [Moses]; He will be a prophet like unto

thee.” And the qualification of the prophet is he has to have a sovereign calling and he has to have God-given abilities. We see that in Deuteronomy 18.

Now there are two types of prophets, the oral and the writing prophets. The oral were guys like Elijah and Elisha. We do not have things from them written down but we know they spoke. And the writing prophets though, started about 90 years after the division of the northern and southern kingdoms. Remember? It was when Rehoboam and Jeroboam were having that big issue after Solomon died. Then the kingdom was divided between north and south. That is when the prophets began to speak because that is when all of the idolatry and the division and the turning away from God began to take place. So they are speaking right after this division. After the glorious kingdom was built in Act Two, they begin to speak.

So Deuteronomy 18:15–22 says,

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, “Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.” And the LORD said to me: “What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which he speaks in My name, I will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, “How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?”--when a prophet speaks

in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

So, in other words, if he is really a prophet of God it will come true all the time, not just some of the time.

Now, there are three kinds of prophets: the exilic, the pre-exilic, and the post-exilic; in other words, before the exile—guys who spoke leading up to the captivity; guys that spoke during the captivity (the exilic prophets); and the guys who spoke after the captivity was over, during the time of restoration, the post-exilic. And so we see the pre-exilic prophets: the first one to speak was Obadiah, then Joel, then Jonah, then Amos and Hosea, then Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah and finally Habakkuk. The exiled prophets, Daniel and Ezekiel, spoke during the time of exile. And then the three afterwards—Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi—spoke during the time of restoration.

So God was warning so much before the actual captivity took place—wasn't He? Look how many prophets spoke before the judgment came. God warned and warned and warned and warned. He said, "Don't do it. I said, don't do it. I thought I said, don't do it. Didn't I tell you not to do it?" And He just spoke over and over and over again, until finally He had to judge. And then these guys wrote during the time of judgment, Daniel and Ezekiel. And then the other three spoke upon restoration.

So the four prophetic viewpoints again are the prophet's own time, the captivity (which was huge), and the first coming of Christ, and then the Second Coming, the millennial and the end times. Those four are the prophetic viewpoints.

The Response Required

**How does God expect His people to respond
to the words of the prophets?**

- *Confession*
- *Repentance*
- *Obedience*

Now, what response does God expect from His speaking through the prophets? It is basically this: First, admit the failure. He says, "I just want you to confess that you did it. Did you commit adultery with that woman? Or did you commit adultery with that man? Did you turn away from Me and do that?" He says, "I want you to admit it." I did it. Confess it. It has to start with confession of sin. Admit it. And they were prideful. They did not want to admit that they were wrong.

Then secondly, He says, there has to be a turning back to the faithful God. "You have got to turn around and face Me. You have got to repent." He said, "That is what I expect. I expect you to admit it. And I expect you to then turn around and come back towards Me."

And then thirdly, He says, "I want you to go on in faith and obedience and walk with Me." I mean, it is amazing that God would even suggest that we could do this. But we can because of the gift of the Holy Spirit. We can repent. We can confess it, repent from it and begin to walk with Him. So that is the response He requires from His speaking. Admit it, turn back, and walk with Him. It just blows my mind that He would even want that.

So, what are you responding to? Well, in Jeremiah 30 it says, “Your wound is incurable. Your injury is serious.” And I would agree, wouldn’t you? I mean, how many of you would think that that is an incurable situation? I mean, in real life—Hosea and Gomer—I mean, here is a man, married to a woman, and this woman has had sexual intercourse with almost every guy in town and then a lot of people out of town that just were passing through. She did not care who it was. And you think that relationship is going to be restored? He says, “Your wound is incurable. It is serious. It is not light. It is serious.”

But he goes on; He does not stop there and says—what? “I will restore you to health. And I will heal you of your wounds.” With man it is impossible, but with God it is possible because all things are possible with God. And that is where Jeremiah kind of blew it in chapter 33. And God corrected him of course in chapter 32, but he was still having trouble when he got on into chapter 33 that with God it is possible. He can do anything. He created everything. But what you are really responding to he sums up in Jeremiah 31:3. “I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Just like Hosea had to draw Gomer back, God has drawn His people back to Him. He has drawn me. He has drawn you. He draws everyone back to Himself. He drew it through the love of Calvary. He drew it through the cross. And if the cross does not draw people back to God, nothing will.

No wonder Paul was so determined to be focused on it, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Because if that does not draw people by the power and dynamic of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing else you can do to draw them. But that is what draws me and that is what draws you, when we see Christ died for us on the cross because of His great love for us. We see the length, the width, the breadth, the height that God went through to draw us back and restore the relationship. He sent His Son to die on the cross. And so God is prophesying that through the prophets.

So what does the new covenant guarantee Israel? Well, in Jeremiah 31:31 He says,

I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah after those days. I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts. For they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest, for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.

So they are guaranteed a new heart and the foundation is none other than the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because Zechariah 9:11 says, “By the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” It is the blood that brings them out of this waterless pit. And we know that blood points forward to the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. And it is only when they, after God calls out a people from among the Gentiles and then turns to them and shows them the blood of the covenant, then they are called out of that waterless pit because of the blood of Calvary. And they return to the Lord.

And so it guarantees them a new heart. And that is the character of the new covenant. Isaiah says they broke the everlasting covenant. But Isaiah 61:8 says, “I will make an everlasting covenant.” Jeremiah says, “The city shall not be plucked up or overthrown anymore forever. They will ask for the way to Zion. They will come that they may join themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.”

So this is an everlasting covenant of pure grace apart from human agencies and is solely unconditional. God is going to do it. He is going to put a new heart. He is going to put His Spirit within them. He is going to call them back. God does it. He draws them with everlasting love. Only He could do that. It is pretty amazing.

Now, when will it be fulfilled? It appears from Romans that it is going to follow the return of Jesus Christ at His *parousia*, the second coming.

And so, all Israel shall be saved as it is written: “There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away

ungodliness from Jacob. For this is My covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins. (cf. Romans 11:26-27)

It will happen. God will draw them and He will take away their sins. Romans 11:26.

So what is the relation of the church to the new covenant? Well Hebrews 8:8-10 says,

Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will affect a new covenant. Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers [their fathers being the Jews] for they did not continue in My covenant. After those days, says the Lord, I will put My laws into their minds and I will write them upon their hearts.

Well, what days is He talking about? Well, He is talking about the days that James talked about in Acts 15:15-18. James answered,

Listen to me. God first concerned Himself about taking out from among the Gentiles a people. With this the words of the prophets agree. After these things [That is, after calling out a people for God's name] After these things I will return and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which is fallen, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, says the Lord who makes these things known from of old.

So God was letting it be known and James saw it. And he stood up at the church council and said, "I got it! I understand it." God is calling out Gentiles. When He is finished with it, He is going to turn back to the people of Israel and He is going to put His law in their mind and in their heart. He is going to write it. He is going to draw them and they are never going to turn away from Him again because it is going to be a work of God's Spirit and not by might or power of men. And James got it and he stood up and said, "I got it!"

And he explained it at the first church council. And I do not know why people have had such problems since then.

So what is the eschatology of the new covenant? Well, Israel must be first restored to the land that God promised them. Secondly, Israel has to experience a national conversion, the regeneration of a new heart. That will happen. Thirdly, it has to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That will happen. And it has to receive the promised material blessings from the hand of the king. That will happen when He returns.

So, the conclusion is this: the Messiah must personally come back to effect their salvation, restoration, and blessing.

So turn in your Bibles, if you would for a moment, to the book of Hosea because perhaps Hosea is the most classic of all. And I wish we had time to just go through more of it. But we do not. But we will do what we can.

We see the all-conquering, undying love of God through Hosea because he has to choose this woman to be his wife. And, you know, these things were written for our admonition upon whom the end of the world has come. That is what Romans 15:4 tells us. These things of old time have an application to the last days. And you know the story of the prodigal son or the loving father. This is the story of the prodigal wife or the loving husband. And God is calling His people back and it is amazing when you see what happens.

In chapter 3—Well, he says in verse 2 of chapter 1. Let's read that one.

When the Lord spoke first through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea: Go take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord.

I mean, they had never learned from Ahab's sin, so God says, "I am going to give you another way to approach this. I am actually going to have you, my prophet"—and can you imagine what people thought when God's prophet marries this woman? Wow! That would be tough. Can you imagine a pastor having a wife like this? How long would he last at his church?

But he says in spite of it, verse 10 of chapter 1. "Yet"—and what does yet mean? That means God still has a plan for you.

Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sands of the sea which cannot be measured or numbered. It will come about that in the place where it is said to them: You are not My people, it will be said to them: You are the sons of the Living God.

God is just so great!

Well, she goes off. She goes off with her lovers. In chapter 2 she comes kind of to her senses for a while. And she says there in verse 7, "she will pursue her lovers but she will not overtake them. And she will seek them but will not find them." Then she will say, "I will go back to my husband, my first husband, for it was better for me then than now." "Of course she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, the oil. I was the one that was lavishing all this stuff on her."

And so it is interesting how she gets out there, and she finds out that what she thought she wanted was not all that great. And she says, "I was better off with my first husband. If he will still take me, I will go back."

And isn't that the way sin is? We see something. We think we want it. We go after it. We get it. And the sin itself teaches us and chastises us and whips us. And, in a sense, sin is used that way to train us how bad it is. And we don't want anything to do with it. We

want to get back with God, the true lover of our heart and our life. And we see that sin is against love. God loves us completely and totally and we have rejected His love. And that is what is so awful about the sin. And that is what the prophets are communicating. It is horrible.

But the sin teaches. It does me. When I have gotten off into sin and I have realized, gosh, that is not what I wanted. I just thought I wanted that. That is terrible. And it separates me from God.

And so she is led back. And what he says in chapter 2 there, I love verse 14. I mean, he is going to punish her for all the Baals. In verse 13 it says, “I will punish her for the days of the Baals,”—when she was offering sacrifice and all that stuff. Hosea 2:14-15 says,

Behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness
and speak kindly to her. Then I will give her vineyards
from there and the valley of Achor as a door of hope and
she will sing there as in the days of her youth; as in the
days when she came up from the land of Egypt.

Wow, that is so neat. And it says she will call him, *Ishi*, or her husband, her beloved one. So God can actually restore this thing. Now it seems impossible because you could not restore it. If you went through a relationship like this, you would not be able to restore it. But God is going to bring them back into reconciliation. She is even going to be singing. She is going to be so happy because she realizes that God still loves her in spite of what she did. She is restored and it is just, man, it is a beautiful thing. When she puts sin away and she returns to the Lord.

And the Lord responds in Hosea 2:21,

And it will come about in that day that I will respond,
declares the Lord. I will respond to the heaven. They will

respond to the earth. And the earth will respond to the grain. And they will respond to Jezreel. And I will sow her for myself in the land and have compassion on her.

I mean, God responds. When you put away sin, when you admit your failure and you put away sin, and you turn back to God, God responds. Isn't that amazing? Every time, He is just waiting to respond.

And yet some people will continue on in that bad relationship that is never going to get them anywhere. They just think it is. And all the time God is standing there waiting, saying, "Why don't you turn away from it and come back to Me? I will respond. I am waiting for you."

And so, the Lord has a case. He has a controversy against her. And it is a huge case. And in Hosea 4:17, He summarizes the case He has against her. And He says, "Ephraim is joined to idols; Let them alone." That is the problem; there has been a joining. It says that "a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife" (cf. Genesis 2:24). We know what that is talking about, don't we? Joined, made one, one flesh. Joined in that boundary that is supposed to be kept for marriage. And she has been joined to idols. So let her alone. And that is the problem.

And it even says—it is sad because you get to the point there in Hosea 5:3–4. He says,

I know Ephraim and Israel is not hidden from me, for now
Ephraim you have played the harlot. Israel has defiled
itself. Their deeds will not allow them to return to their
God; For a spirit of harlotry is within them and they do not
know the Lord.

And how true that is, that we get to the point when we join idolatry or we join in the wrong relationship, we get to the point that we cannot return. And our deeds keep us from

returning to God unless God somehow miraculously gives us repentance so that we can get out of it. And it is sad.

Verse 11 explains it. Ephraim was oppressed, crushed and in judgment. Why?—because she was determined to follow man's command. And what does God say He will do? In Hosea 5:15 He says, "Then I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face." It is kind of like, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed until the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). But God says, "If you want to grieve Me, My response to that will be I will just return to My place and I will wait until you change." This is because God is patient.

And so, that is what God does. But He says, "In their affliction then they are going to earnestly seek Him." And so the sin is going to teach them and they are going to get afflicted.

Hosea 6:1 is pleading. He says,

Come let us return to the Lord. [He is pleading with the people, the whole nation.] Come, let's get back to the Lord, nation; For He has torn us but He is going to heal us. He has wounded us. He is going to bandage us up. He will revive us after two days. He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. (cf. Hosea 6:1-3)

He says, "Forget the past, press on." Just like in Philippians 3:13-14, "Forget what lies behind and press on." God is there for you. His going forth is certain, certain as the dawn. And He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth and there will be a fresh start.

But he lays out their problem. In Hosea 6:4 he shows that it is all superficial. He says, "For your loyalty is like a morning cloud and the dew which goes away early." He says, "You come in and you say you are going to return to Me, but you really don't return. It is not a true repentance." It is like a Josiah revival. It was not real revival. You are like a morning cloud, like a mist. There it is. It looks like it is going to happen and then all of a sudden, it just dissipates and I do not know where the cloud went. There is no substance to it. You do not have real heart repentance.

In chapter 7 verse 4 he says, "They are all adulterers, like an oven heated by the baker." So he says, "That is the problem."

In Hosea 7:8, Ephraim mixes or joins himself with the nations. So, there is not this complete separation that God expects from them. Didn't He tell them to stay away from the nations? Yeah. What do they do? They go join the nations. Doesn't He tell us to stay away from the world and that friendship with the world is enmity with Him? Then what do we do? We go join the world and we join ourselves to the world and the world system, and the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. And we are doing the same thing they did. There is no real repentance. And there is not a complete separation from these things in our heart like there ought to be.

And God says, "I see it." He says, "Ephraim has become a cake half turned." You know, half baked, not turned. You know, just a one sided relationship. There is sanctification but just on one side. And you know how that is. You have eaten something where they cooked it on one side and didn't cook it on the other side. It is not complete, is it? It is just partial in its sanctification. The fire has not touched all of their life because they won't let God touch it. They are lukewarm. They are half baked.

Verse 9 says, "Strangers devour your strength. He does not even know it. Gray hairs are sprinkled on him. He does not even know it." And that is the saddest thing of all. There is an unconscious deterioration taking place. They do not realize how sin is affecting them and this is the deception of sin.

It is like a person growing old, like me, and getting gray hair. But I know I have got gray hair because I have looked in the mirror and I see it. And other people tell me about it. But this is a person that it is like they are getting old and getting gray but they do not even see it. They do not see the gray. They do not know they are getting old and dying. And that is the way sin is. It deceives you and you do not think you are dying from it. And you do not think you are deteriorating from it, but you are. And you do not realize it and you wake up at the point of death! And sometimes it is too late. And we read that even in the New Testament about someone who commits a sin leading unto death. Paul says, “I do not say that you pray for them” (cf. 1 John 5:16).

So, I mean, this is what is going on here. And it is horrible.

Verse 14, look what God says, “They do not cry to Me from”—where?—“from their heart. When they wail on their beds for the sake of”—they are wailing on their beds. They are sorry about what has happened, but they are not crying to Me from their heart. They are just sorry about the consequences of sin. They are not sorry. There is no true repentance in their heart. Man, it is just amazing what goes on there?

So He says in verse 11 there of chapter 7, “So Ephraim has become like a silly dove without sense.” And what is a silly dove without sense? I see Christians like that. Have you ever been out in a park where there is a bunch of doves or pigeons and watched kids or maybe yourself? Have you had bread or things like that to throw to them? And where do they go? Where does the flock of pigeons go? They just go wherever you throw the bread, don’t they? Sort of like the ducks in the pond over there. You just throw it out, they run here. You throw it over there, they run there. And there are pigeons just all over the place depending on who is throwing the stuff out. And that is the way God’s people were and still are. Somebody can throw out all this false food and they will just run after it. Then they will run over here and they will run over there. We see that even today. They don’t want to endure sound doctrine, but with itching ears they just want to run. Someone is throwing some food out, whoosh, over there they go. Somebody else throws

some more out, whoosh, over there we go. They are like silly doves, just running to and fro, not even knowing what they are doing. And God is standing there for them.

So there is no pleasure for them.

In chapter 8, He says, verse 8, “Israel is swallowed up. They are now among the nations like a vessel in which no one delights, has no pleasure.”

And again in verse 13, “As for My sacrificial gifts, they sacrifice the flesh and eat it, but the Lord has taken no delight in them. The Lord has no pleasure in them.” Man, isn’t that sad? It is because they do not have a true faith to delight in the Lord and expect Him. And they do not bring any pleasure to God. And that is the worst thing about my sin is that it separates me from God to the point He has no pleasure in me. And that is the saddest thing of all. The God, who created me and loved me and died for me, has no pleasure in me.

Have you ever seen a marriage relationship where the people do not have any pleasure in each other? Isn’t that sad? They do not even like each other. There is just no pleasure.

Now if you are not married, what happens when you get to that point? Bye-bye. You are just with someone and you get to that point, you are just like, “I will catch you later.”
There is no pleasure here.

But it is so sad to see a situation where God has no pleasure in me because of a lack of true repentance, a lack of true commitment to Him.

So, I mean, He says—what is His answer? Hosea 10:12 says,

Sow, with a view to righteousness. Reap in accordance with kindness. Break up your fallow ground for it is time to

seek the Lord until He comes and rains righteousness on you.

God says, “Repent. Break it up, because I can do it.”

And don't you love God's heart? Hosea 11:8. Man that just kills me! God is crying out and He says in Hosea 11:8,

How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? [You know, that was one of the cities in the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah back in Genesis 14 that, when He poured His wrath, they just got burned up. He says], I cannot do that to you. How can I treat you like Zeboiim? How can I do that? My heart is turned over within Me.

Have you ever had your heart just turn upside down and turn over and over because of a broken relationship? Have you ever hurt that much where you just felt like you are twisted and your heart is turned upside down? That is God. God says, “My heart is turned over within me. It is like I love you so much, but you do not want anything to do with Me. All of My compassions are kindled. I will not execute My fierce anger. I will not destroy Ephraim again; for I am God and not man. The Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath” (cf. Hosea 11:9).

Whew, thank God we are not destined to wrath! But even here you can see His love, can't you? Even in the Old Testament you see what He says in the New Testament. He has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation. And it is just, oh man, quite amazing. And He is the Savior. He is going to do it.

Chapter 13:4, He says so.

Yet I have been the Lord your God since the land of Egypt.
[I have always been there for you.] And you were not to know any God except Me, for there is no savior besides Me.

He says, “Where are you going to get deliverance? It is not going to happen unless I give it to you.”

And then He concludes in Hosea 14:1-2. I love this. The remedy is found here and the need of grace is really felt here.

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. You stumble because of your iniquity. Take words with you. Return to the Lord. Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity.” [Do you see the need for grace is being felt here?] Receive us graciously that we may present the fruit of our lips.

In other words, they sensed the need to speak to God and they know they can. And so they are going to repent and they are going to confess it.

And then, what do we see? They renounce it and then He says,

Assyria will not save us. We are not going to trust—we are not going to ride on horses. We are not going to say again ‘Our god,’ To the work of our hands; For in thee the orphan finds mercy. [You know, we are not going to trust our own hand. But God will restore them.] I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, For My anger is turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel. [There will be a freshness, there will be a new start.] I will restore them and I will start again. He will blossom like the lily. [This is

just a whole new day.] And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon. His shoots will sprout. His beauty will be like the olive tree. His fragrance is like the cedars of Lebanon. Those who live in his shadow will again raise grain and they will blossom like the vine. His renown will be like the vine of Lebanon. (cf. Hosea 14:3-7)

Literally, his scent; it is the word used in viticulture for bouquet. When you open a bottle of wine, they smell the bouquet. And if you are a wine taster, you know, that is the first thing they do. They smell it and go—there is a certain bouquet about the wine. And that is the word that is used here. It says that his renown, his bouquet will be like the wine of Lebanon. It will be so choice.

O Ephraim, from Me...comes your fruit. [So they will be fruitful.] Whoever is wise, let him understand these things. Whoever is discerning, let him know these things. For the ways of the Lord are right and the righteous will walk in them. But transgressors will stumble in them. (Hosea 14:8-9)

Boy, that is the blessed man in the Psalms that walks in the right way, isn't it? Or the wicked man that does not.

Lord, we just thank You that through the prophets You spoke and shared Your heart. And I just pray that when we see this in this section of Scripture from Isaiah to Malachi, as all of them spoke to Israel and Judah and shared Your heart on the matter that You want reconciliation. You do not care what they have done; You are still there for them. Lord, I just pray for everyone here, myself included, we do not want to be deceived by sin because You are not

mocked. We want to confess it, get rid of it, and stay in the greatest relationship with You, the greatest person, who has the greatest love towards us. So keep drawing us by Your loving kindness, Lord, but don't let us deteriorate unconsciously. For Your glory, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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And our mailing address is:
Blue Letter Bible
22431 Antonio Parkway, Suite B160-618
Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 USA