

# NOTES ON THE BOOK OF HOSEA

## Chapter 1

### A. Hosea's unfaithful wife pictures unfaithful Israel (1:1-9)

1:1 – Hosea states that what he is writing is God's word (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16). Since the reign of the kings of Judah went on after Jeroboam the king of Israel, it appears that Hosea started out in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and probably migrated to the southern kingdom of Judah. God's word must be faithfully declared whether godly or ungodly rulers are in charge.

1:2 – God told Hosea to take a wife of harlotry. There are three possible meanings to these words:

- (1) Hosea knew she was a harlot and God told Him to go ahead and take her even though He did not approve.
- (2) Hosea did not know she was a harlot but God told him to marry her knowing that she would show her character after the wedding.
- (3) God and Hosea both knew she was a harlot and God was commanding him to do this.

The fact is that we really don't know which of these three ideas are correct. What is clear is that God worked through Hosea's marriage and his children to communicate a message to Hosea and then to God's people who were being spiritually unfaithful to God as Hosea's wife would be physically unfaithful to him. When we are unfaithful to God as in James 4:4, we are guilty of departing from Him (Hebrews 3:12).

1:3-4 – We are not told whether the child was fathered by Hosea or not. What we are told is that this child regardless of his parentage had a purpose and message from God for the people of God. That message is that God is a God of vengeance and will right wrongs. The sin involved Jehu. Jehu had been commanded by God to kill Ahab's sons in 2 Kings 9:6-8. In 2 Kings 10:11 it is clear that Jehu carried out God's orders and in 2 Kings 10:31 God told Jehu that he had done well in what he did to the house of Ahab. A re-reading of 10:11, however, shows us where Jehu went further than God had commanded because he killed all of Ahab's acquaintances (NIV "close friends") and all his great men. This reminds us that God expects exact obedience to His word.

1:5 – The power of the northern kingdom of Israel was broken by the Assyrians in the valley of Jezreel. One of the ways that God disciplines His people is to cause them to lose power (1 Corinthians 11:30-32) and fall before their enemies.

1:6-7 – Again Hosea's wife Gomer became pregnant – whether by Hosea or another man we do not know. What we do know is that the daughter had an important purpose in communicating to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Her name was Lo-ruhamah (which means "unpitied") because God was no longer going to show mercy toward Israel but let his full discipline fall on them. At the same time God was going to show mercy to the southern kingdom of Judah. We are reminded that we need to live for Christ or God may make an example of us to warn other believers. At the same time, it teaches us that if God does show us mercy while letting his full discipline fall on another believer, we have no room for pride and had better take warning (see 1 Corinthians 10:11).

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1:8-9 – In the same way Gomer again became pregnant and gave birth to a son named Lo-Ammi (translated “Not my people”). The message to the northern kingdom of Israel was that they were no longer God’s people. Obviously from verses vv. 10-11 this was to be temporary. We are reminded that those who merely profess Christ but who have not trusted Him will be denied by Christ at the final judgment ( Matthew 10:33; 7:21-23).

### B. Israel to be restored following God’s judgments (1:10-11)

1:10-11 – God promised that the descendents of Israel would be like the sand of the sea at some future point following his severe judgments on them. Even though the people of Israel were disowned as a nation, there would come a time when they will be sons of the living God. This would appear to be related to the return of Christ (Romans 11:25-27). In the present time period in which we live God has applied the same manner of dealing with the Gentile believers as he will apply in the future with Israel when they turn to Christ. Notice the word “as” in Romans 9:25 which introduces the phrases from Hosea in Romans 9:25-26. Notice that the Jewish people of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah will be gathered together as one nation (see also Ezekiel 37:15-22). They will actually appoint for themselves one leader. They will appoint Jesus Christ to rule over them just as their forefathers appointed David to rule over them (see 2 Samuel 2:4; 5:3). Jezreel will become a place of victory instead of a place of defeat and dishonor (Hosea 1:4-5). Christ was anointed by the Father (Psalm 2:2; Psalm 45:7; Luke 4:18 cp. Isaiah 61:1-2; Acts 10:38) at some point during the early part of his public ministry. In the same way David’s anointing by God occurred through the prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:13 even though His anointing and appointment did not come until many years later.

## Chapter 2

### A. Judgment coming on Israel because of idolatry and ingratitude (2:1-13)

2:1 – The Jewish people are to say to one another at the time of this restoration that they are God’s people and that they are under God’s compassionate mercy and love.

2:2 – In the meantime the people as individuals are called upon to contend or bring charges against their mother who pictures the nations of Israel and Judah because the Jews are no longer God’s wife. The challenge to the Jews and to those of us who are believers in the present time is to put away unfaithfulness to God. James 4:4 and Matthew 6:24 remind us of this need.

2:3-4 – The consequences of continued unfaithfulness: nakedness or disgrace, lack of ability to be fruitful and lack of life because of lack of God’s supply, failure to experience God’s compassionate love.

2:5 – God’s reason for severity with His people: unfaithfulness, shameful behavior (Ephesians 5:11, 12). God’s people fail when they depend on the substitutes of God to supply their needs.

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2:6-7 – When God's people pursue a course of unfaithfulness, God so disciplines or judges them so that they cannot find the paths that lead toward these substitutes for God.

At this point God's people begin to realize that they need to return to God because they have it better with Him than with any substitutes.

2:8 – God's people forget God by using blessings provided by God's faithfulness to pursue substitutes and opponents of the true God.

2:9 – God's disciplinary judgment is God's loving response and attacks such needs as food, drink and clothing.

2:10 – God's disciplinary judgment on His people who become carnal is humiliating loss of testimony and the ugliness of their sin.

2:11 – God's disciplinary judgment attacks the joy and empty religious rituals of His carnal people. This end of the Sabbaths is very significant in relation to Israel. The law is changed and set aside (Hebrews 7:12, 18) for both Jewish and Gentile believers (Romans 7:4-6; 1 Corinthians 9:20-21). As a result we are not commanded to observe Sabbaths (Colossians 2:16-17; Romans 14:5-6). The Sabbath will be reinstituted during the 1000 year kingdom of Christ (Isaiah 56:1-8; Ezekiel 44:15, 24) and during the eternal state in the new heaven and earth in Isaiah 66:22-24.

2:12 – God's disciplinary judgment will actively work against the carnal ones of His people to destroy their livelihood or jobs and will even not restrain such things as wild animals from adding to this destruction.

2:13 – God's discipline punishes the carnal of His people for their pursuit of substitute gods. They pursue these substitute gods by sacrificing to them and making themselves attractive to a world who sacrifices to and serves them. In the process of such a pursuit by carnal believers the true God is forgotten.

### B. God promises future blessings and reconciliation to attract Israel (2:14-23)

2:14 – God promises a future for Israel. He is going to attract this people into the wilderness/desert during the tribulation (Revelation 12:14). There God will speak to the heart of this people. For the believer who goes backward in the Christian life, the principle is that God will bring us to a place of testing and speak to our hearts.

2:15 – God will restore to Israel their vineyards and make the valley of Achor (=trouble) a door of hope. There will be singing which pictures rejoicing for the nation at that time similar to what she experienced when God first called her out as a people from their old life in Egypt. In the same way when believers respond in faith and obedience to God's word during a time of carnality, God is ready to make their trouble a way to experience hope (Romans 5:3-4). The joy of their salvation returns (Psalm 51:12) that they had as a new believer delivered from their old life.

2:16 – When God restores Israel, the nation will call God ishi (=my husband) instead of baali (=my master). God will be seen as a loving husband rather than a harsh overlord. In Baal worship this false god demanded sacrifices of firstborn children to him. When

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the believer today first comes to Christ, he is treated as a son (Galatians 3:26; 4:6) and as a part of the bride of Christ with Christ as the loving husband (2 Corinthians 11:2).

2:17 – The Baals and their worship will be removed from Israel so as to not be mentioned by name. and God will be supreme.

2:18 – Part of the New Covenant will involve the reconciliation of the animal world as in Isaiah 11:6-9 when Israel as a nation enters this covenant. The cross of Christ provided the basis for this reconciliation (Colossians 1:20) and we are now the first fruits of this plan at the present time (James 1:18) in which the creation will participate in more fully at this time (Romans 8:15-22). Also involved in this phase of the reconciliation will be the abolition of war and weapons of war (Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3).

2:19 – 20 – The six characteristics of God's marriage to Israel which characterize Christ's marriage to us the church and which should characterize our engagement and marriages on earth: (1) forever (permanence); (2) righteousness; (3) justice; (4) love or lovingkindness; (5) compassion or mercy; (6) faithfulness. At this time the Jewish people will know the LORD (cp. Jeremiah 31:31-34).

2:21 – 22 - God will reset the weather and climate cycle so that the heavens will be given what is needed to provide rain for the crops, the heavens in turn will give the earth what it needs to produce crops and the earth will give to the crops and their byproducts what they need to grow and be produced. Their production will give Jezreel (restored Israel) what they need. This cycle does not work as it should now because of the curse. The relief of the curse during Christ's 1000 year reign this will remedy this.

2:23 – God will place Israel in the land, have compassion on the nation, He will once again call them His people and they will call God their God. In Romans 9:25-26 God shows that He will have dealt with the saved Gentiles in the same way as He will deal with wayward Israel (Note the word "as"). God will call His people those who were not His people. This will be true of Israel in the 1000 year kingdom and is true of the Gentiles who turn to Christ now. Compare this with Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 11:25-27 to show Israel's entrance into the new covenant in the future. The church consisting of saved Jews and Gentiles presently participates in the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:1-6; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

### Chapter 3: The losses and gains of restoration (3:1-5)

3:1 – God's word to Hosea showing he did not think this up.

Model: God's love for His people despite their unfaithfulness

Application: Love wife despite her unfaithfulness

3:2 – Here we see the costliness of redemption. Also Redemption provides not only for our salvation but for our restoration. Application: Restoration of an unfaithful spouse is costly.

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3:3 – Hosea’s message to his unfaithful wife:

- (1) Confined to him alone.
- (2) No unfaithfulness
- (3) No other men, i.e. no rivals
- (4) She would not be enjoying his love. This pictures the condition of Israel prior to their full restoration in the 1000 year kingdom of Christ. By application it also pictures the fact that sinning believers though loved by God do not enjoy His love (John 15:9-10).

3:4 – Reason for Hosea’s message to Gomer was to teach wayward Israel.:

- (1) Israel would be many days without a king or any type of ruler. This would include the time period from the Babylonian captivity to the present.
- (2) Israel would be many days without a sacrifice since there will be no temple until the tribulation.
- (3). Israel would be without sacred pillars. There related to idol worship (Hosea 10:1-2).
- (4) Israel would be many days without an ephod. Used by the priest to inquire for God’s guidance (1 Samuel 23:9-12). In summary there would be no guidance or a priest from God. Several scriptures show that the Levitical priesthood will be restored during the 1000 kingdom of Christ (Jeremiah 33:20-22; Ezekiel 44:11-15; Malachi 3:1-3).
- (5) Israel would be without household idols such as those mentioned in Genesis 31:19, 34; Judges 17:5; 18:14, 17; 1 Samuel 19:16.

Summary: Israel would be in a position where they could not enjoy God’s blessings and promises. Also they would be in a position where they could not enjoy their unfaithfulness.

3:5 – Israel after the period of time which ends with the Tribulation. Israel will:

- (1) Return to and seek God (Romans 11:25, 26).
- (2) Seek David their king who will be raised from the dead and serve as under-regent for Christ during His 1000 year reign (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34: 23-24; 37:24-25). Jesus Himself will actually sit on the throne of David (Luke 1:31-33) which is called the throne of His glory (Matthew 19:28; 25:31). Revelation makes it clear that the seating of Himself upon His throne is future to the present age as He is not currently seated on His throne (Revelation 3:21).
- (3) Have a proper fear of God.
- (4) Have a proper view of God’s goodness.

The phrase “last days” with reference to Israel has reference not to the present age as for the church. It refers rather to the time of blessing for Israel during the 1000 year reign of Christ.

## Chapter 4

A. God reproves and warns the northern kingdom of Israel (4:1-14)

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4:1 - God's reproof of the northern kingdom of Israel. In order for this to be effective, they and by application we who are believers must hear God's word to have the faith we need (Romans 10:17) and to experience God's blessing (Revelation 1:3). The sins listed are failures to have the following virtues: (1) faithfulness or truth, (2) The Hebrew word "hesed" which is translated mercy, kindness, love, steadfast love, (3) knowledge of God which shows a lack of love for fellow-believers (1 John 4:8) and can only be corrected as we control what outside influences affect our thoughts and as we break with sin.

4:2 - List of sins to be avoided: (1) Swearing or cursing - This involved misusing God's name to call curses down on people with whom they were quarreling. An example of this is Leviticus 24:10-15. We are to treat God's name as holy (Matthew 6:9). (2) deception or lying - see Ephesians 4:24-25, (3) murder (cp. Matthew 5:21, 22; 1 John 3:15); (4) stealing (Ephesians 4:28); (5) adultery (Matthew 5:27-28; Ephesians 5:4); (6) violence (Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:8) and murder in chain sinning (Romans 6:19)

4:3 - The result of such sin is mourning or ungodly sorrow which is more about the consequences than offending God or hurting people (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). Another result is the loss of strength (1 Corinthians 11:30; Proverbs 13:15). Sin affects the entire creation (Romans 8:20-22).

4:4 - This warns the people of Israel and carnal believers today not to try to reprove or find fault with God (Romans 9:20; 1 Corinthians 10:22; Romans 3:4) when His word reproves them. When believers do this, they are like those who contended with the civil authority of the priest (Deuteronomy 17:11, 12 cp. Romans 13:2).

4:5 - The priests are now brought into the reproof. Both they and the prophets are going to stumble under God's discipline or judgment and this will impact the whole nation ("your mother"). Today the parallel is that when God's leaders reject knowledge of God, they not only bring God's discipline and judgment on themselves but on the entire local church (Revelation 2:5).

4:6 - God's people were not getting the word of God from the priest and prophet and were being ruined because of this lack of knowledge of God and His word. This would cause these priests to be rejected along with their children. This would destroy their legacy. This is why spiritual leaders must give out God's word or God's people will turn aside to myths or man-made explanations (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

4:7 - The more the priests increased, the more they sinned. The number of people in the pastorate has increased in recent years yet it has not been positive because so many of them have sinned not to mention brought in destructive heresies. As a result their glory or honor has been turned into shame. This brings disrepute on the cause of Christ (2 Peter 2:1-2).

4:8 - Instead of priests looking at sin to encourage the people to avoid it, they saw the sins of people as an opportunity for more for themselves and actually direct the people's desire toward their sin. We must be very careful when dealing with sinning believers so that we ourselves will not be tempted (Galatians 6:1) by becoming envious (Psalm 73:1-3; Proverbs 24:19-20). Furthermore we must direct our hearts or our desire toward God's values and not man's (Colossians 3:1-2).

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4:9 – There was no difference between the spiritual leaders and the people. Yet spiritual leaders are to be examples to other believers (1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 5:1-3) and not to be enablers and encouragers of their carnality. God will judge and discipline His people whether Israel under the Old Covenant or the church under the New Covenant. Leaders are not exempt (1 Timothy 5:21-25) and shall be judged more strictly (James 3:1).

4:10 – Both the people and their leaders would eat but not have enough. How many carnal believers find their needs met yet they are not satisfied? They lack godliness with contentment (1 Timothy 6:6). Even though, they are involved in prostitution as part of their idol worship and fertility rites, they would not multiply. When we are unfaithful to the Lord we cannot have His blessing. The cause of this is a failure to obey God (Luke 11:28).

4:11–12 - Sexual immorality and alcohol or other chemical stimulants do nothing but destroy spiritual understanding. When this is destroyed, people turn to the occult for guidance (Galatians 5:19-21). This allows demons to move in and lead God's people astray as happens in the church age (1 Timothy 4:1). Then this unfaithfulness both spiritual and bodily causes them to depart from God because of an unalert, unbelieving and disobedient heart (Hebrews 3:12). This is why we must encourage one another so that we are not hardened (Hebrews 3:13).

4:13-14 – Because men are in leadership, direct punishment from God for both spiritual and sexual unfaithfulness falls more on them than it does upon the women although the principle of sowing and reaping would affect both women and men (Galatians 6:7).

### B. Further warning to Israel in regard to Judah (4:15-19)

4:15-19 – There is a double-edged warning to the northern kingdom of Israel not to lead the more spiritually minded southern kingdom of Judah astray. As believers we are to set and follow godly examples (1 Corinthians 11:1). This means the spiritually minded must avoid going to the places where the carnally minded go. The stubbornness of the carnal makes it so that God will not bless them (James 1:25). Spiritually minded believers must avoid carnally minded believers who allowed substitute gods to run their lives. Unfortunately when chemical stimulants run out the immoral and unfaithful behavior associated with them does not run out. The carnal leaders or even counterfeit-believer leaders make their boast in what they should be ashamed of (Philippians 3:17-19). They are unstable in being carried about with the winds of false teaching and carnal living (Ephesians 4:14; Jude 1:11-13). The result is shame for the counterfeit believers and for carnal believers in sacrificing for substitute gods (Mark 8:38; 1 John 2:28).

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### Chapter 5: Sins and judgments on leaders and people of Israel (5:1-15)

5:1 – The disciplinary judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel extended to the leadership and to the people. Mizpah on the east side of the Jordan river and Tabor on the west side of the Jordan river are sites which were being used for idol worship. These actually snared or trapped the people. Idol worship opens the people up to demon influence (1 Corinthians 10:20) which is very enslaving.

5:2 – Those who had revolted against God by resorting to substitute gods go deep into slaughter. There is a tradition that Mizpah which was a fortified overlook was used by the idolaters to attack and kill anyone who went by and was going to Jerusalem to worship the true God. Those outside the church and those within the church who are involved with substitute gods attack those who completely hold to the true God (Galatians 4:29; 5:15).

5:3 – Ephraim as the lead tribe of the northern kingdom is used to represent the whole of the northern kingdom of Israel. Everything the people of Israel did and everything we do is known and seen by God (Proverbs 15:3; 1 John 3:20; Psalm 139:1-12).

Unfaithfulness to God for some type of gain is spiritual prostitution for Israel and for believers living today. It is defiling which means God cannot use us as He would. Note what defiles the believer (Mark 7:20-23; Hebrews 12:15; 13:4; James 3:6).

5:4 – Their deeds do not permit these people to return to fellowship with God because they are under demon influence which is within their midst. This demon specifically promotes spiritually unfaithfulness for some type of earthly or fleshly gain. The last days are characterized by departure from the faith (i.e. the truths of the New Testament 1 Timothy 4:1). Until the influence is dethroned which is driving the deeds there is no way the life can be turned around. James 4:6-8 gives the key to dethroning demon influence along with Acts 19:18-20. These involve surrender of the believer's life to Christ's lordship and the forsaking and destruction of any occult objects the believer possesses. Their deeds show they lack a sanctifying knowledge of God as in 1 Corinthians 15:34. Their need is to shut down the externally produced thoughts which are produced by demon influence. Then they can stop sinning in such obvious ways.

5:5 – The pride of these people shows them guilty. When we are proud (= "I can do it with or without God") God resists us and we cut ourselves off from the grace we need to live the Christian life enjoyably (James 4:6). Because God's grace is not enabling them they stumble in their sin and even lead more spiritually-minded believers astray. This is why we must be a good example (1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8).

5:6 – They tried to seek God by their animal sacrifices just as believers today often try to substitute sacrificial service for obedience to God's word (1 Samuel 15:21-22). See also Isaiah 1:11-16; Micah 6:6-8; Hosea 6:6. A whole-hearted not half-hearted search for God must be made (Jeremiah 29:13) by faith (Hebrews 11:6). When God has withdrawn His fellowship from us as He did these people, we must draw near to God by dealing with outward and inward sin (James 4:8).



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5:7 - Like an unfaithful wife Israel has been unfaithful to God just as believers today who are betrothed to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2-3) sometimes prove to be unfaithful to Christ (James 4:4). The result of this are illegitimate children. For these people these were the children conceived through actual illicit sex relationships associated with their idol worship. We as believers work to bring forth people through the gospel (1 Corinthians 4:14, 15) and many times if believers are worldly, they bring forth spiritual children who are not true believers. The land was a picture of the abundant life for these people and the new moon celebration was a ritual they did. God warns them that he will sweep away their land and warns us that he will sweep away our abundant life with our empty rituals.

5:8 –9 - The alarm was to be sounded clearly, i.e. from the highest point and from Bethel (Bethaven) the center of idol worship (1 Kings 13:28, 29) that when God's disciplinary judgment fell that the northern kingdom, of which Ephraim was the main tribe, would be empty. Emptiness is the price of unfaithfulness to God. The phrase regarding Benjamin appears to be a warning that the same discipline that overtook the northern kingdom would affect the southern kingdom of which Benjamin was a part. Seeing God's discipline fall upon carnal believers is no time for smugness but warning and caution (1 Corinthians 10:12). God's word was sure or certain to them just as it is today.

5:10 – Those who are leaders of God's people, in this case the southern kingdom of Judah, are like people who move boundary stones. This refers to blurring of distinctions between sin and righteousness and distinctions between truth and error (Isaiah 5:20). Like floodwater God's wrath is poured on such leaders. Jesus warned against such leaders in Matthew 24:45-51. Remember not everyone who claims to be the Lord's servant is really a servant of the Lord (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

5:11 – The northern kingdom referred to as Ephraim suffers discipline by being used by others because of their determination to follow man-made commandments to serve idols. Note 1 Kings 14:25-33. Manmade commands to move people to serve a god which is not the God of the Bible will bring any spiritual leader or organization under God's discipline.

5:12 – God's judgment and discipline works slowly and surely like a moth on clothes or rotteness, i.e. decay, in the bones.

5:13 – Carnal believers and counterfeit believers tend to look to the world and its important people to deal with the consequences of their sinful choices. Too late many times they find out that nothing can be done or offered by the world.

5:14 – God's judgment and discipline are like a lion coming on an individual. It is sudden and overpowering. When it falls, there is no deliverance from it.

5:15 – God withdraws His special presence from Israel and will not give it to them until they acknowledge their guilt and seek God's face (relationship and fellowship). This will not happen until the end of the tribulation period. When we sin God does not restore fellowship until we confess our sins and seek Him.

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### Chapter 6

#### A. Mercy offered by God (6:1-3)

6:1–2 - The invitation is for Israel and by application carnal believers today to return to the Lord. When this happens, God puts lives in order and helps repair the damage. Just as Israel will be revived and restored, God helps believers to enter in to the fullness of the life of Christ. This is abundant life which we experience when we surrender our lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ on a moment by moment basis.

6:3 – The challenge is to press on to acknowledge or know the Lord. For Israel this would be their restoration as a nation. For believers it is a challenge to know the Lord fully as in Philippians 3:10-14. In this scenario God comes to His people just like the rain He provides for the land. Christ will come to His people Israel at His second coming (Zech 12:8-10; Romans 11:25-27). For those of us who are Christ's in this age of grace, Christ will come personally for us (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

#### B. Mercy not shown by God's people (6:4-11)

6:4 – The loyalty of both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah was very superficial and temporary like early morning fog and dew. Such is the case of the counterfeit believer today (2 Peter 2:20-23; Jude 1:12).

6:5 – God's word delivered a death and destruction sentence for Israel (Zechariah 1:2-6). God's word warns of the second death for counterfeit believers (Revelation 20:14-15) and of severe discipline and even premature physical death for carnal believers (1 Corinthians 11:30-32).

6:6 – The reason God's judgment fell on Israel is that they went through the motions of obedience but lacked the basics of showing mercy to one another and knowing God (Jeremiah 9:23-24). Jesus gave examples of their lack of interest in mercy which we see among those who profess the name of Christ today. Matthew 9:13 speaks of those who condemn those who try to reach the lost and Matthew 12:7 speaks of those who condemn people who disobey tradition even though these people obey scripture. Knowing God has to do with salvation (John 17:3) and with growing in that knowledge (Colossians 1:10) and in knowing Him closely for Christian living (1 Corinthians 15:34).

6:7 – The people of Israel had broken God's covenant made with them through Moses (see Exodus 19:5-8) just like Adam broke the covenant that God made with Him in Genesis 2:16-17. We as believers living today need to be mindful to avoid imitating evil but to imitate good (3 John 1:11).

6:8-9 – Gilead (Ramoah-Gilead – 1 Kings 22:3) and Shechem were cities of refuge. God's purpose for these cities was to provide protection for those who killed unintentionally and punishment for those who killed someone intentionally. (Joshua 20:1-9; Numbers 35:9-18). Unfortunately these cities had become places where just the opposite was

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happening. Even the priests were getting in on the killing. Believers are never to be involved in murder (1 Peter 4:15; 1 John 3:15; Matthew 5:21-22) in any form.

6:10 –11 - The spiritual adultery or unfaithfulness had defiled the people of God just as such unfaithfulness would defile us today (James 4:4). There is a warning for Judah that a harvest has been appointed for her. While Judah and Israel will be restored, the last phrase of the verse about restoring the Jews belongs as the NIV has it with the first verse of chapter 7. So the warning to Judah is that a harvest of judgment awaits her (see Jeremiah 51:33 and Joel 3:12-14 where harvest is used to picture judgment).

### Chapter 7: The crimes and consequences of Israel (7:1-16)

7:1 – When God would heal or restore His people Israel then their guilt is exposed.

Various types of theft are happening: dishonest business practices, burglary, forceful robbery. Believers are warned against this (Ephesians 4:25, 28).

7:2 – Failure to deal with what is happening in their heart or thought life (Matthew 15:18- 19). They fail to internalize the fact that God knows everything (1 John 3:20) and is present everywhere (Proverbs 15:3).

7:3 – Their motive is wrong. It is to please men (Galatians 1:10). Their actions are not consistent with what God expects of His people when they lie (Ephesians 4:15, 25).

7:4 – There was a strong passion to be unfaithful to God (spiritual adultery – James 4:4).

7:5-7 – Because of the sin of the land, they could not keep their leaders (Proverbs 28:2).

This principle works itself out in churches where there is not a commitment to doing what God's word says. 2 Kings 15:8-31 shows the pattern of rulers being murdered.

There was a pattern of drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18) totally unfitting for God's holy people. When booze is in charge the Holy Spirit is not. The main rulers were involved with the actions of scoffers. Scoffers are people who have no use for God nor His word. Psalm 1:1 counsels the believer to avoid these scoffers and Jude 1:18-21 counsels the believer to grow in faith, to pray led by the Holy Spirit, and to live in God's love by obeying His word (John 15:9-10).

Notice how anger works its way up to murder (cp. Matthew 5:21-22). Notice that none of the plotters or the rulers they plotted against were calling on God and the outcome in their land (James 4:1-2). In the same way the outcome is the same way in local churches.

7:8-10 – Notice that the problem was unequal yoking (2 Corinthians 6:14). This mixing has an evil effect on morality (1 Corinthians 15:33). There was a lack of balance. God's desire is not only that we be mature as in James 1:4 but that we be complete or balanced. 2 Peter 1:5-8 shows the need to grow in certain character qualities. When we are unfaithful to God and entangled with the world, these qualities easily get out of balance. There was a loss of power due to their trusting in their own strength (Ephesians 6:10) and due to discipline from God (1 Corinthians 11:30-32). There was a total lack of discernment (1 John 4:1 cp. Philippians 1:9) and a hardening of the heart (Hebrews 3:12-13). When we don't obey what we know, we are living in the dark 1 John 1:6). Because of pride, they had not returned to God (James 4:6). Their need was to humble themselves and surrender to God (James 4:6, 7). There is a failure to return to God by

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applying 1 John 1:9 and Proverbs 28:13) and to seek God in simple obedient faith (Hebrews 11:6; 10:22-25). Isaiah 55:6-9 tells how we seek God by turning loose of our ways and our thoughts and depending on and living by the ways and thoughts of God which are not only different but higher or greater than our ways or thoughts.

7:11- Like a bird flying back and forth these people of God are like those today who are carried about by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). They are unstable in all their ways (James 1:8). They lack direction in their lives because they do not seek it by faith (James 1:5-7).

7:12 – When believers become insensitive to God's discipline, they end up snared and in bondage (Proverbs 5:22). God promised He would discipline these people as had been declared to them from His word. In the same way God disciplines His people today (Hebrews 12:5).

7:13 – There is a warning of judgment. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). They strayed from God and face ruin because in their going astray, they have rebelled against God.

7:13c-16a – God's desire is to set His people free from their sin and its bondage. Unfortunately their behavior does not permit Him to do so. They malign or speak lies of God. Believers today often malign God by saying His word does not really mean what it says. Their prayers and meeting together are not a heartfelt need for God Himself but a desire for what God can give them (James 4:3). They come together for the worse and not for the better (1 Corinthians 11:17). As a result they turn away from God even though their own rebelliousness brought them to their present state of ruin (Proverbs 19:3). God strengthened them in the past and blessed them but instead they used their advantage to plan evil against God. We are commanded to turn upward (Colossians 3:1-2) but these people were turning everywhere but to God. They are like an unreliable bow which cannot hit the target which is to lay hold of God's purpose for them (Philippians 3:10-12; Ephesians 2:10).

7:16b, c – Consequences of an insolent tongue, i.e. a tongue that speaks disrespectfully of God's authority and His word.

(1) loss of leadership

(2) loss of testimony in Egypt which pictures the world.

### **Chapter 8: God uses the enemies of His people to judge and discipline them. (8:1-14)**

8:1 – God uses the enemy to discipline His wayward people. Notice how God used Satan to discipline or train Peter in Luke 22:31-32. Assyria would come against the northern kingdom of Israel like a vulture. A covenant is an arrangement where God's people have certain responsibilities and God has certain responsibilities. To transgress God's covenant means that we as believers fail to uphold our responsibilities. To be under God's authority is to be under His law or commandments. When we rebel against God's word we are rebelling against God Himself.

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8:2 – Counterfeit believers profess to know God for salvation but lack the reality (Titus 1:15-16). Carnal believers profess to know God for holiness of life yet lack the reality (1 Corinthians 15:34).

8:3 – When God's people reject what is good, they open themselves up to pursuit by the 3-fold enemy of Satan, the world and the flesh/sinful nature. Note Micah 6:8; Nehemiah 9:13; Psalm 119:39

8:4 – The people of the northern kingdom had set up their kings by their own standards and had not consulted God. The equivalent today is those churches that do not use God's word as their standard for appointing leaders. Instead of using their money for God's program, God's people had given it for substitute gods. 2 Timothy 3:1-4 talks about 4 loves: God, pleasure, self, money. Only God is the proper love. The others are substitutes or idols. Other times people support works that give to God-dishonoring causes. There are churches that give to revolutionaries or to organizations that are openly helping people who want to maintain sinful lifestyles.

8:5 – Nothing invites God's opposition like substitute gods. God is a jealous god (Exodus 34:14) which means that He wants and desires our exclusive devotion. God's people like many today were incapable of innocence. Christ is the model (Hebrews 7:26) and we are to be innocent in what is evil (Romans 16:19).

8:6-7 – God promises judgment on their substitute god (calf). In the same way God will deal severely with substitute gods in our lives. Remember if it is something made by people, it is definitely not the God of the Bible and is not worthy of our devotion. Look at Jeremiah's contrast between substitute gods and the true God (Jeremiah 10:6-12). In forming substitute gods, people sow or plant the wind and reap or receive something powerfully destructive which is illustrated by the whirlwind (tornado). There is lack of fruitfulness when God's people are involved with substitute gods. Idolatry is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-20) which hinders the production of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Many times when believers are carnal, any fruit they produce ends up being used by the enemy.

8:8 – When God's people are consumed by their enemies (in our time: the world, the flesh and the devil), we end up losing our distinctiveness in the world (Matthew 5:13). They are described here as a vessel in which no delights instead of being a vessel for honor sanctified useful to the master and prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 2:21).

8:9 – Example of God's people turning to the world: When God's people find themselves under discipline and turn to the world for solutions, they fail to exercise self-control. Self-control is set forth in such passages as Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Timothy 1:7 and 1 Peter 5:8. Ephraim the major tribe of Israel is used to represent the nation as a whole. They use what God has given them to obtain by payment help from the world of the unsaved.

8:10 – When believers sell out to the world system, they become part of a group that begins to decline. The burden or oppression for the people of Israel came from the king of Assyria and for believers today it comes from the ruler of this world who is Satan himself. (John 14:30).

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8:11 – Ephraim representative of all the northern kingdom of Israel had increased its sin offering alters. Sin offerings were only to be made at Jerusalem at the temple (Deuteronomy 12:10-14). By doing this they were increasing their sin and making these alters of sin. The equivalent today is those believers who try to use ways other than Christ to deal with sin in their lives. The same Christ who took the penalty of our sin whom we received by faith is sufficient to handle the sins and problems of our life after salvation (Colossians 2:6-7).

8:12 – God's people at that time did this despite the fact that God had written for them the many things of His word or law. In the same way believers today often disregard the many things of God's word which would direct their lives. God's word is treated as a strange doctrine or a doctrine of another kind.

8:13 – Since their sacrifice and service were not occurring in the scripturally prescribed manner, God was not pleased with their sacrifices and service. God responded to them as he will to us with a judgment of discipline because such behavior brings guilt and is sinful. When believers at that time and in our time live in such a way, they return to the bondage of their old life (John 8:34; Romans 6:15-16). Egypt pictures that old life of bondage to sin which we had before we trusted Christ.

8:14 – When believers forget God who is their creator both physically (Genesis 1:26=27) and spiritually (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10), they become caught up in materialism (cp. Luke 12:15; 1 Timothy 6:17) and seeking for security (Matthew 6:31-33) instead of putting God and His work first, God many times disciplines them by destroying their wealth and source of security. Remember God's warning to the Hebrew Christians in Hebrews 12:25-29.

### **Chapter 9: The price of disloyalty to God (9:1-17)**

9:1 – God's people are cautioned against being conformed to the world (Romans 12:2) especially in the matter of the wrong type of joy (Job 20:5; Proverbs 24:17-18). They have enjoyed committing spiritual adultery against God and the temporary pleasure that it brought (Hebrews 11:25).

9:2 – When believers fail to be faithful to God, they suffer the loss of blessing (Jeremiah 5:25).

9:3 – The land was the place of blessing where God's people under the Old Testament produced physical fruit. God's people under the New Testament produce spiritual fruit by abiding or remaining in Christ. Because of disobedience the people of God cannot remain in the place of blessing and suffer the resulting discipline from God by bondage to the old pre-salvation life or from the world.

9:4 – When God's people fail to abide in the place of blessing (Land=O.T.; Christ=N.T.), their service, offerings and sacrifices will not please God. Their sacrifices and service would be like bread offered to the Lord. It could not be offered because of its association with dead people from a house of mourners. It would be good only to meet their own immediate physical needs.

9:5 – Acceptable service and sacrifice is not possible when God's people are out of the place of blessing.

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9:6 – Those who escaped dying as a result of their sin would face the prospect of dying outside of the place of blessing. Their material blessings by being lost would prove to be a curse, i.e. under a sentence of God's judgment, and would not be a blessing. This is an example of God turning our blessings into a cursing (Malachi 2:2).

9:7-8 - God's people were facing discipline because of multiplied sins and intense hostility to God and His word. Prophets were considered fools by these people and men who spoke by God's direction were considered insane. We live in such a time today when increasing numbers of God's people are turning away from the truth of God's word and turning aside to man-made explanations (2 Timothy 4:2-4). The prophet faced snares or entrapment along with hostility from those who opposed him among the carnal and counterfeits of God's people. Yet those who are prophets are like God in their role to guard the people of God as watchmen (Ezekiel 3:17-21). Spiritual leaders are to guard the flock of God (Acts 20:28).

9:9 – These people of God like the people of God today had gone deep in corruption because they were imitating the people of God in the days of Gibeah who tolerated and defended homosexuals among them (cp. Judges 19 and 20 with 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). When believers sin in this manner, they face disciplinary judgment from God. It may not fall quickly, but it is certain.

9:10 – Israel in its early history like many believers when they first come to Christ produced fruit pleasing to God. There was a crisis event that propelled Israel in a direction contrary to God's word. This happens with individual believers and local churches. This event happened in Numbers 25:1-9 because of Balaam's counsel (Numbers 31:16). Substitute gods are set before the believer and sexual immorality is used as an accompanying enticement to get God's people in the church to go astray (Revelation 2:14). Just as the people of Israel devoted themselves to shame so counterfeit believers often lure carnal believers into their value system (Philippians 3:19) and the solution to avoid this is to follow godly examples (Philippians 3:17-18). When believers' first love shifts to substitute gods, they become as detestable to God as those substitutes. Revelation 2:4-5 cautions us to recover our first love by doing those things that we did when we first came to Christ.

9:11 – When believers like Ephraim (who stands for the whole northern kingdom) go deep into sin, their glory is gone. It becomes their shame (Philippians 3:19). Notice their inability to reproduce physically was taken away. In the same way when we follow in their footsteps by not abiding in Christ, we fail to produce fruit (John 15:4-5) which includes reproducing ourselves through sharing the gospel with the unsaved (Romans 1:13 cp. 1 Corinthians 4:14-15).

9:12 – Even the production of the carnal and counterfeit believers was gone. Like the Pharisees in Matthew 23:15, their converts are counterfeits. There was a warning that they would lose God's presence. Under the New Covenant, we do not lose God's presence (Matthew 28:20; John 14:17). However, we can lose the fellowship along with the joy and peace that it brings.

9:13 – Despite great natural and circumstantial advantages, the northern kingdom would see the death of their children. We who are believers are warned against squandering all that God has given us (1 Corinthians 10:1-12).

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9:14 – Hosea, seeing that His message from God is being rejected, asks God to give them what He will. Not only would their ability to reproduce be gone. Also their ability to sustain what they have reproduced would be gone. The equivalent is the Christian today who sees, that not only is his ability to reproduce through evangelism gone but also his ability to disciple is gone as well.

9:15 – Because Ephraim had turned Gilgal from a place of service, devotion and dependence on God into a place of unfaithfulness to God, God came to hate them. This does not mean that God was no longer concerned about them. What it does mean is that Israel was no longer His primary love. Note this usage in Matthew 6:24 concerning our love or hatred of God. God was no longer going to consider the northern kingdom of Israel as a part of His people (see Romans 11:17-20) because of their sinful deeds. Believers today can fail to abide in God's love (John 15:9-10) by being disobedient to His commands. All their leaders were in rebellion against God and they were following their leaders instead of God (Acts 5:29).

9:16 – Ephraim like many believers today suffers greatly from God's discipline. As Ephraim's source of sustenance was drying up so our sustenance from Christ our root dries up when we fail to abide in Him by keeping His commands. Their fruit was their physical children which would be taken away. The fruit of incorrigible believers today will be burned at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

9:17 – The northern kingdom was facing being cast away from God's fellowship because they had not even given God and His word a good hearing. They would be wanderers among the nations. When believers today fail to hear God's word, they will not develop faith (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 3:7, 12) and will be unable to please God (Hebrews 11:6) and unable to produce good works of love (Galatians 5:6). The result will be falling from their stability or steadfastness (not their salvation) as taught in 2 Peter 3:17.

### **Chapter 10: Sins of and judgments on the Northern kingdom of Israel**

10:1 – Outwardly the nation appeared to be prosperous like a spreading vine. What they produced was for themselves rather than for God's purposes. The more that God helped them to produce fruit and gave them rich land, the more they used it to make sacrifices for substitute gods and to build structures to consult and honor these substitute gods. God is not pleased when His blessings are misused.

10:2 – Their heart is deceitful or faithless (Hebrew, chalaq – smooth or slippery). They were going to have to face their guilt. Each believer must face his guilt and confess his sins to God (1 John 1:9) or suffer discipline (1 Corinthians 11:31-32). Any thing that we use to show sacrifice and devotion to substitute gods will be destroyed by God when He judges us (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

10:3 – The failure to fear God cost the northern kingdom their kings. There was really nothing a human ruler could do for them. Their real need was spiritual not political. When we as believers fail to fear God, we lose needed leadership for our lives.

10:4 – Failing to keep our word is a serious sin with God (Ephesians 4:25). Not keeping out word or breaking contracts brings God's judgment or discipline. There were judgments (better "lawsuits") springing up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field. As believers we are not to be taking one another to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).



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10:5 – The people of Israel would mourn over the calf of Bethel (1 Kings 12:25-30). They are like believers today who fail to mourn for their own sin (James 4:8-9) and for the sin of other believers (1 Corinthians 5:2). They are more concerned about false substitutes they have found for God than the grief that they have caused Him.

10:6 – The powerlessness of this false substitute for God is shown by the fact that the enemy will be able to take it away and use it for their own enrichment. This shows the complete phoniness of counterfeit religion and the result is disgrace and shame. This shame for will come about because God's people choose to follow their own counsel (see 1 Kings 12:25-30) instead of letting God's word be their counsel (Psalm 119:24). Our God cannot be used or controlled by our enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil.

10:7 – This emphasizes that just as a stick is powerless but taken wherever water carries it, so the northern kingdom of Israel would be taken into captivity totally unable to resist the Assyrians. When we become incorrigible (= fail to respond to God's discipline), he intensifies the discipline to put our lives out of control. The ability to control ourselves is part of the result of being controlled by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 22-23).

10:8 – The places where sacrifices were made to these substitutes for God would be destroyed and placed under God's curse as pictured by the thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:18). The people who were involved with these substitute gods will want to be hidden from God and His judgment by hills and mountains falling on them (cp. Isaiah 2:19-20 with Revelation 6:15-17).

10:9 – The people of God had been involved in serious sin since the days of Gibeah (Judges 19 – 21). The people there had given themselves over to sexual immorality which included homosexuality. A large number of God's people had not obviously come to a saving knowledge of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) at that time and in the time of Hosea. The phrase, "There they stand" or "There they remain" emphasizes that the people of Hosea's day still had this problem. Once again the evildoers of Israel would find themselves defeated at Gibeah. God will deal with counterfeit believers in eternal judgment (Matthew 24:45-51) and with carnal believers in severe discipline (1 Corinthians 11:30-32).

10:10 – God's judgment – eternal and disciplinary:

(1) falls when God chooses. Notice it is "when" and not "if." God will judge counterfeit believers and will discipline carnal believers. There will be no escape.

(2) It consisted of the nations led by Assyria being gathered against them. God chooses the method of discipline.

(3) It would fall on them because of their double guilt or double sin (see also Isaiah 40:2; Jeremiah 16:18). Israel was God's firstborn among the nations (Exodus 4:22). As God's firstborn the nation had greater privilege (Romans 3:1-2; 9:1-5) and therefore greater responsibility (Luke 12:47-48). The firstborn always received greater blessing in being given the double portion (Deuteronomy 21:16-17). When Israel is restored, the nation will receive a double blessing (Isaiah 61:7; Zechariah 9:12).

10:11 – Like a cow that loves to thresh because as they tread out the grain they can eat, Israel would lose their blessing from God and experience bondage because of their sinful choices. Judah the southern kingdom would also be involved. When believers choose sin, other believers are almost always affected. Sin withholds the good God would do for us (Jeremiah 5:25) and if not forsaken results in bondage (Proverbs 5:22).

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10:12 – How we live is viewed as sowing and the result we receive from God is reaping. Breaking up unplowed ground, means making the effort to live in a way that obeys and pleases God even though it involves effort on our part (1 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:14). Just as Israel needs to seek God by trusting Christ until He comes and makes them perfect so we too need to be constantly seeking God. When Christ comes, we will be made like Him (1 John 3:2).

10:13 – When we live in a wicked way and build our lives on lies, we receive a harvest of injustice. The cause of this is trusting our own way instead of God's different and higher ways (Isaiah 55:8-9) and trusting in our numbers.

10:14 – Because of the disorder caused by conflict from outside and among God's people, their sources of security are destroyed. The destruction will be as complete and as shocking as when the leader of the Assyrians cruelly dashed mothers and children to the ground at the battle of Beth-arbel. Sometimes discipline of God's disobedient children has to be shocking.

10:15 – God's complete and shocking disciplinary judgment strikes where His people have actively promoted and pursued substitutes for the true God to do great wickedness or sin. The carnal leaders whom they have followed no longer have any authority or influence over their followers.

### Chapter 11

#### A. Rejecting God's love brings his judgment (11:1-7)

11:1 – The principle is that God has loved us since we first became believers and even before. He also called us out of our old life of bondage to sin into the freedom and liberty Christ provides from the penalty and power of sin (Acts 26:18; Romans 6:17-18; 1 Peter 2:9-10). Israel was God's son (Exodus 4:22) – the son who failed to fulfill God's purposes - who fulfilled this verse literally when they were called out of Egypt. The spiritual prophetic fulfillment of this verse was the calling of Christ out of Egypt (Matthew 2:15). Remember that prophecy will always have a literal fulfillment and sometimes it will have a non-literal spiritual fulfillment as here. In contrast to the nation of Israel Christ was the son who succeeded in fulfilling God's purposes.

11:2 – The more that God called them through the prophets, the greater was their disobedience. We need to ask ourselves, what are we making our sacrifices for, God or for something we think is equally or more important than God. We need to ask ourselves, whom are we trying to please (pictured by the burning of incense)? Some try to please themselves (Romans 15:1) while others try to please people (Galatians 1:10). Our aim needs to be to please God (2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1). We must remember though that pleasing God many times does involve pleasing others in certain respects (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 7:33-34).

11:3 – God taught His people then and now to walk which pictures how we live. God carries us when we cannot seem to go on by providing a way of escape in temptation that we may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13). God heals us or restores us even we don't fully realize it in the sense of appreciating it.

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11:4 – God’s leadership is both gentle and loving (cp. Matthew 11:28-30). God removed the old yoke of bondage from them just as He removes the yoke of bondage from us. God bending down shows that it is He who in His grace feeds or sustains our Christian life through the milk and meat of His word (1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Hebrews 5:11-14).

11:5 – Just as the people did not return to Egypt so we do not return to the life of bondage to sin. Just as God used the king of Assyria to discipline His wayward people in the past, he uses Satan to discipline His wayward people at the present (Luke 22:31-32). The reason for this severe discipline is the refusal to return to God for fellowship.

11:6 – The results of growing sinfulness is loss of peace and destruction of worldly security. These disciplinary judgments prove to be overwhelming because of our counsels, i.e. whom we have been listening to.

11:7 – Despite the intensifying of God’s discipline, God’s people are determined to turn away from Him (Hebrews 3:12). Even though the messengers of God or prophets call them to God, the people without exception refuse to give God first place (Matthew 6:24).

### B. God’s mercy toward His people and eventual restoration (11:7-11)

11:8 –9 - While God is going to bring severe disciplinary judgment on Israel, He is not going to give them up completely. He will not treat them like He did Admah and Zeboiim which were cities God destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deuteronomy 29:23). It grieves God for His people to sin (Ephesians 4:30) and He is compassionate toward them. There is time that God is not going to come at them in wrath again. In the same way, God has not appointed us to wrath but to receive salvation from the very time of His wrath, the day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:9). God reminds us that His wrath is not like that of man but is a reflection of Him being the Holy one within the midst of His people.

11:10–11 – This refers to the time when Israel will be restored as a nation. At this time during the start of the 1000 year kingdom, the nation will walk after the Lord (cp. Ezekiel 36:26-27 where we see the cause of this is that He will put His Holy Spirit within them). God would roar like a lion summoning its young to re-gather His people from the nations (cp. Isaiah 11:1-13). Their depiction as birds and doves reminds us of their helplessness and our own helplessness apart from the working of the Lord (John 15:5). It also reminds us to be innocent as doves in an evil and wicked world (Romans 16:19; Matthew 10:16). His settling them in their own houses shows that they will dwell permanently secure and undisturbed by other nations (Ezekiel 28:25-26; 34:27-28). This would help us to understand that real security and peace is in the Lord Himself (John 16:33).

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### Chapter 12 (including 11:12): God's charges against Israel (11:12-12:14)

11:12 – There was a widespread problem with lying and deceit among the people of the northern kingdom of Israel. Lying and deceit are part of the old life and are to be put off by the believer while putting on truthfulness (Ephesians 4:22-25). This is necessary if we are to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:1-2). Even the southern kingdom of Judah was having problems with increasing carnality and were unruly – in the sense of straying – against God (the NKJV understanding of this passage is probably in error). God expects His people to live orderly lives (1 Corinthians 14:40; Colossians 2:5). This sin is despite the fact that God is both holy and therefore offended by sin and despite the fact that God is faithful in providing for their needs and not dealing with them according to their sins (Psalm 103:10).

12:1 – The northern kingdom of God's people was feeding on wind which pictures the latest fad in false teaching circulating among God's people (Ephesians 4:14). Instead of separating themselves from Egypt and Assyria in obedience to God's word (2 Corinthians 6:14), they were aligning themselves with the world (James 4:4).

12:2 – We as believers are accountable for our ways and our deeds. God will discipline us (Hebrews 12:6) in this life and will judge us with regard to rewards or loss of rewards in the life to come (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

12:3-5 – The life of Jacob was an example of God's working to bring His people under His authority. Jacob came out of the womb trying to struggle for the blessing. He struggled with God who appeared in the form of an angel (Genesis 32:24-28). Jacob prevailed with God because He was made weak by his thigh being dislocated. When we lose our power struggle with God we are stronger not weaker (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). He was an example of a saved man who found God in order to experience abundant life (John 10:10) because he sought Him with all his heart (Jeremiah 29:13). Jacob found God's favor, i.e. His grace.

12:6 – The lesson for the nation was obvious. The same lesson applies to us. When we see sin in our lives, we must turn to God in confession (1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13). These involve mercy/loving-kindness, justice in our dealings with others, and learning to wait for the Lord. This means we have to give up trying to get even with people (Romans 12:17-19) and wait for God to act. This means we have to see the wicked get away with it and wait for the Lord to deal with it (Psalm 37:7-9).

12:7 – An example of the failure of God's people was their dishonest business practices and their using other people. God expects us to be honest in our dealings with others (Ephesians 4:25, 28). He did not put us here to use people or control them but to serve them (Mark 10:42-45).

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12:8 – Their attitude was all wrong. Their goal was to be rich not righteous. We are not to pursue riches (1 Timothy 6:9-10) but righteousness (1 Timothy 6:11). The plan was to use their wealth to cover their sin. We are warned not to build our future on the uncertainty of worldly wealth (1 Timothy 6:17). Notice the contrast between those who pursue riches and those who pursue righteousness (Proverbs 11:4, 28).

12:9 – God reminds His people that He has been their God since their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt just as He has been our God from the time He delivered us from our old life when we trusted Christ for salvation. Instead of being rich, they would be made poor by trading their homes and cities for tents all because they were not rich toward God (Luke 12:21; 1 Timothy 6:17-18). Their having to live in tents indefinitely would be a memorial to their failure to live in the liberty of God's word (Psalm 119:45). Unlike the feast of tabernacles during which they lived in tents to remind their children how they lived in the wilderness before they entered the Promised Land (Leviticus 23:34-44), this would teach them the bitterness of forsaking the Lord (Proverbs 13:15).

12:10 – God had not only provided salvation for His people. He had provided ongoing guidance through the prophets. He gave them many visions and symbols or parables to communicate the truth of God's word.

12:11 – God's indictment of Gilead (the area east of the Jordan River) is that they are worthless. Despite their many sacrifices, their altars would be like piles of stones lying in a field. The message for believers living today is that God has called us to not be worthless but worthy in the way we live (Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:11). We make many sacrifices in this life. Are they for the Lord or are they for something else. We need to ask ourselves so that we end up with the best of God's blessing in this life and His reward in the life to come. As Paul noted in Philippians 2:17, we are pouring out our lives as drink offerings. Each of us pours his life into some pursuit. We need to be sure that we pour out our lives into what counts for the Lord.

12:12 – Just as the people of Israel were going to Assyria because of their sin, so Jacob had ended up in the land of Aram in servitude and hardship just so he could have a wife. Just as Jacob ended up running because he tried to use carnal ways to gain God's blessing and suffered hardship, believers today must remember that we often bring hardship on ourselves by moving away from God and being disciplined (1 Corinthians 11:30-32; Hebrews 12:5-11).

12:13 – However, God did not forsake Jacob's descendents but delivered them from Egypt by the prophet Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10). The prophet Jesus whom Moses spoke of in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 delivered us from our sins by dying on the cross (Acts 3:19-26). Israel was kept by the intercession of the prophet Moses (Psalm 106:23). In the same way we are kept by the intercession of Christ (Hebrews 7:25).

12:14 – Because the northern kingdom of Israel (represented by the main tribe Ephraim) had provoked God to such great anger through their idolatry (2 Kings 17:6-18), God was not about to overlook their sin and was going to repay them for it. Believers living today

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are warned about God's disciplinary judgment (1 Corinthians 10:14, 21-22; Hebrews 10:31).

### Chapter 13

#### A. Ephraim's glory to end in judgment for idolatry and ingratitude (13:1-8)

13:1 – The leadership of Ephraim, the principal tribe of Israel, inspired great respect in the nation of Israel. Joshua was from that tribe (Numbers 13:8, 16) as was Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:26, 29-31). The tribe died spiritually because they felt that a substitute god would help them even more. When churches substitute a god of their own making for the God of the Bible, they show that they have died spiritually.

13:2 – When we substitute for the real God, we end up increasing our sinfulness. It affects other areas of our lives. Substitute gods are man-made in contrast to the true God who made man. Substitute gods are the result of human skill and wealth. Their worship was to kiss (showing their love and allegiance) the calves in contrast to true worship which will kiss the Son (Psalm 2:12).

13:3 – Men who serve substitute gods have nothing that lasts. Four illustrations: (1) the morning cloud, (2) the dew which disappears, (3) the chaff blown from the threshing floor, (4) smoke coming out of a chimney.

13:4 – God had been the God of His people since their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. In the same way He is our God even more so since we were delivered from the bondage of the sinful nature in the old life prior to salvation (Romans 6:17-18). The only God we are to know is the God of the Bible who is the true God (Jeremiah 10:10). We know of Him prior to salvation (Romans 1:21). We began to know Him in a meaningful way when we trusted Christ for salvation (John 17:3) and we know Him more intimately as we put away sin (1 Corinthians 15:34). God emphasizes that He is the only savior and there is no other way to experience salvation (1 Timothy 4:10).

13:5 – God emphasized His care for His people when they were first delivered from the bondage of the old life. In the same way we need to remember God's care, concern and working on our behalf after we trusted Christ for salvation.

13:6 – Notice the cycle:

- (1) They had their pasture which is a picture of abundant life for the believer.
- (2) As a result they experienced contentment or satisfaction.
- (3) The danger is that our thought life will adopt an attitude of self-sufficiency or pride. We need to be reminded that our sufficiency is from Christ (2 Corinthians

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3:5) and that God's grace cannot work effectively in our life because God resists the proud (James 4:6).

(4) Deuteronomy 8:10-11 explains that we forget God by not obeying His commandments. Deuteronomy 8:12-18 explains the mindset of forgetting God by forgetting past trials of the Christian life and the bondage to the sinful nature in our lives prior to trusting Christ for salvation. We begin to look at ourselves rather than God as the provider of everything we have in Christ. Deuteronomy 8:19-20 warns of the ruin that will come to His people when they cease listening to His word.

13:7-8 – Like a wild animal attacking, God's judgment on His people will be sudden and overwhelming.

### B. Redemption from death (13:9-14)

13:9 – God's people bring on their own ruin because of the severity of God's discipline because they turn to the world (James 4:4) and substitute gods (1 Corinthians 10:22). So instead of having God as a helper, they have God as an adversary.

13:10-11 – When God's people lose confidence in the sufficiency of God and His word to guide them, they often demand leadership that is in opposition to God's plan. As a result when the leadership proves to be ungodly, God removes it because of His wrath against sin. We must be careful what we ask God for. He wants to give us only that which is good for us (Matthew 7:11) but may give us something bad for us to discipline us if we persist in asking for it (Psalm 106:15).

13:12 – The guilt and sin of the northern kingdom had been stored up and kept on record. Failure of believers to deal with sin puts us where God has to judge us through discipline (1 Corinthians 11:31-32) and causes the discipline to intensify (Hebrews 12:12-13).

13:13 – Israel's opportunity while under God's disciplinary judgment to come out of the womb and into a life of obedience. The labor pains picture their discipline before God had to remove them from the land. The opportunity to be born represented their opportunity to repent and live for God but they were delaying their obedience (Psalm 119:60; Hebrews 3:7-11). As a result they were unable to stay in the land just as believers today are unable to experience abundant life because of failure to confess and forsake sin (1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13). The summary was that the northern kingdom was not wise (Matthew 7:24-27).

13:14 – Despite the disobedience of this generation, Israel was promised the following as a nation. This verse shows how prophecy many times deals with the immediate future which was the destruction of the northern kingdom and the far future which awaits Christ's return and all Israel will be saved and re-united (Romans 11:25-27; Ezekiel 36:15-28). Israel will be freed from the power of the grave (literally "sheol") and purchased and set free from death. The curse of death will be removed along with the pain that it causes. Israel will participate in all this when Christ returns and the nation is

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born in one day (Isaiah 66:7-9). For the present time when Hosea was writing and the immediate future, God would have no compassion on the northern kingdom of Israel. When we fail to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking sin, God's compassion keeps becoming fainter (Proverbs 28:13; James 4:6).

### **C. Judgment on Samaria (13:15-16)**

13:15 – Despite their prosperity among the nations, the northern kingdom of Israel was going to experience severe judgment through the nation of Assyria in the east which was pictured as a wind. They would lose their water supply just as disobedient believers today lose by not being filled by the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). They will lose everything they desire in what they have stored up materially (observe the warning for the believer today who builds solely for this life and not for the life to come in 1 Timothy 6:17-19). On the other hand if we commit our way to the Lord, He gives us the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:4-5).

13:16 – Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel) is representative of the whole nation. Guilt will not be removed because of their rebellion against God. They would experience complete loss of peace and cruel treatment of their small children and their pregnant women. When believers today rebel against God it sets up a lack of holiness which keeps people from seeing God as they should (Hebrews 12:14). As a result people are not brought to Christ, and they suffer a cruel eternity (Matthew 25:41, 46). Isaiah 48:18 cautions us that if we disobey God's word we lose our sense of peace.

## **Chapter 14**

### **A. Call for repentance (14:1-3)**

14:1-3 – God gives an invitation to the northern kingdom of Israel. When believers have strayed from living obediently, they need to draw near to God as stated in James 4:8. Sin blinds carnal believers (Psalm 40:12) so that they stumble. The challenge to take words with them and return to God simply means to confess their sins in keeping with 1 John 1:9. Under the old covenant, the people had to ask God to take away all sin or guilt but under the new covenant he does it based on the confession of sin on our part. We must always remember that we ask God to receive us not based on merit but on grace. It is God's grace and not our merit that enables us to approach God in offering acceptable praise (Hebrews 13:15). Living for God and experiencing abundant life cannot come from anything in the world (pictured by Assyria). The horse is a picture of the believer who depends on his own strength instead of being strong in the power of God's might (Ephesians 6:10). To fellowship with God, we must give Him our allegiance and not any substitute gods (Matthew 6:24). We are reminded that God's mercy is available to the neediest of all people pictured by the orphan. Verse 3 is summarized by noting that true repentance that brings us into fellowship with God involves turning away from the world and from substitute gods, trusting in God's power and not our own, and finally recognizing His unique ability to meet our needs.



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### B. God's promise to restore Israel and needed response (14:4-9)

14:4 – God will bring spiritual healing to the nation and they will experience the full extent of His love. We experience spiritual healing when we confess our sins (1 John 1:9) and we enjoy His love fully as we obey His word (John 15:9, 10).

14:5 – Restoration means refreshing as pictured by the dew. It means fruitfulness just as lily blossoms (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:8-9). It means stability and steadfastness as pictured by the cedars of Lebanon taking root (1 Corinthians 15:58).

14:6 – Restoration also means a life that attracts others to the Lord as pictured by the beauty of the Olive tree and fragrance of the cedars of Lebanon (Titus 2:5, 8, 10).

14:7 – Restoration means helping those who have identified with God's people – the Gentiles who identify with Israel in the kingdom and the people who identify with believers in the age in which we live – to experience growth, fruitfulness, and testimony. Helping others to grow is called edification. As we teach believers to obey God's word and pray for them, they produce fruit which gives support for them as they testify of Christ.

14:8 – God cannot fellowship with Israel or with His people during any period of time when they dabble with substitute gods (1 Corinthians 10:7, 14, 22) because He is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14). This means he demands our exclusive devotion. When the nation of Israel in the future turns to God and when believers today turn to Him, they experience answered prayer and God's care (Matthew 7:11; John 15:7; 1 Peter 5:7). God compares Himself to a tree from which His people Israel at that time and in the future and believers living today can draw their ability to be fruitful (John 15:1-5).

14:9 – The need is for wisdom (=obedient knowledge) and discernment (= using God's ways and thoughts to evaluate all other thoughts and ways). God's ways are right. They bring blessing to the practically righteous (Luke 11:28) and problems for those who rebel. Consider the contrast between God's ways and man's ways in Isaiah 55:6-9).