



O ISRAEL, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. ²Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. ³Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. ⁴I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. ⁵I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. ⁶His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. ⁷They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. ⁸Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. ⁹Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein. (Hosea 14:1-9)

From the moment I began this study on the Book of Hosea, I have looked forward with eagerness to this last chapter of hope and promise. To be honest, it was very difficult to write about the woes of Israel and how God's Word will apply equally to all nations who turn from Him. The United States stands in the Avant Garde of those nations who have been richly blessed and have forsaken the God of their Founding. To read of God's wrath that such behavior begets is both saddening and discomfoting. But the strong Counsel of God against such nations is not devoid of any means of return to His favor. His prophecy will always allow a means of redemption though such nations seldom overcome the downward inertia that draws them ever deeper into the abyss. Quite often, a strong and harsh national calamity is necessary to awaken such nations if such awakening can occur by the grace of God.

I compare the Book of Hosea to Psalm 22 – a Messianic Psalm – whose first part describes the horror of the crucifixion of our Lord, and whose latter verses are full of the hope and promise of the resurrection!

God is not lax in affirming His judgment against errant nations and individuals. He will bring those judgments to bear if repentance is not forthcoming.

Hosea opens this text with a plea to Israel: *O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* There is no purpose in making a plea unless compliance is yet possible. So, it is possible for Israel to turn and repent in the same way that it is possible for our America to turn and repent of their many sins of the modern era. The term 'IF' establishes a premise of that possibility: *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.* 2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV) The obverse of that verse would read: *If my people, which are called by my Name (Christian), shall NOT humble themselves and shall FAIL to pray, then I will NOT hear from Heaven, and will NOT forgive their sin, and will NOT heal their land.* This is not adding, by any means, to the words of the Lord, but drawing the exact conclusion that may be deduced from the first comment.

How pleasing and hopeful to know that there is always a resort to prayer and repentance for both nations and man. The old adage that where there is life, there is hope. This is much more pregnant with truth than may be first imagined. Until the very last breath of life, repentance and acceptance is possible. The Holy ghost may draw, even from the jaws of Hell, that one who is called and chosen at the last brink of life. Even a nation going into exile for their sins, may be drawn to Christ at the last moment, but not in time to forego exile for sins past. There is an earthly price to pay for sin. As is apparent from the text, Israel has already fallen, but can turn to God even in that condition.

If we are to be nationally, or individually, saved, we must disavow our humanistic leanings that proclaim that we ourselves are gods. *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* (Hosea 14:3) Those who are estranged from God are fatherless in spirit.

See our Lord's condescending love toward those who turn back from sin: *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.* Hosea 14:4 (KJV) Please observe that Israel's depravity did not occur overnight, but over many decades of disregard for the God who had blessed them. God did not immediately bring judgment upon them. His growing anger has a slow growth: *The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.* (Psalm 145:8) *Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?* (Joel 2:12-14) These are hopeful and reassuring Words of our Lord concerning our present national condition of depravity and immorality. But it demands a response informed of the Holy Spirit on our part.

The Holy Ghost descends as the morning dew during the season of spring planting and morning growth. It touches the coldness of our hearts and condenses into the Water of Life. It comes unseen and unheard, yet it comes. *I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his*

shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. (Hosea 14:5-7) The love of God for us has not been evaporated by the intensity of our sin – He still stands precisely where He has always stood. He is not nearly so concerned about the distance we stand from Him as He is in the DIRECTION we are heading. If it is back to Him, He will run to embrace us. If away from Him, He will give us full rein.

Heed the last counsel of Ephraim: *What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.* (Hosea 14:8-9)

Nations and children are not so much different. If we truly love our children, we will love them enough to say no when no is appropriate. We will discipline them in the righteous ways of the Lord even though such discipline may hurt us a great deal. In the end, they will come to know the wisdom of their fathers and mothers and will thank them. The nation-state is likewise affected by the whims and desires of its citizens. They may thirst after things not wholesome or helpful to their souls. In America, the people themselves are Caesar; so, whatever sins are nationally attributable are owed to the people. We have the responsibility to call the government into account. When it still our tax dollars through wasteful spending and elaborate projects, we must stand up as men and women of backbone and make them know that they are answerable to us. The same is true of immorality that is given the protection, and even the dignity, of law. If we do not call our elected officials to account, who will do so? But in the past, we have consistently sent the same bungling thieves back to public office who are the ruin of the nation.

We have allowed the judiciary to take on the role of ‘law-giver’ rather than its proper role of interpreting the clearly stated meaning of the United States Constitution.

I leave off the study of the Book of Hosea with these sage words of that great proponent of the republican form of government, Marcus Tullius Cicero, 44 BC:

Power and law are not synonymous. In truth, they are frequently in opposition and irreconcilable. There is God’s Law from which all Equitable laws of man emerge and by which men must live if they are not to die in oppression, chaos and despair. Divorced from God’s eternal and immutable Law, established before the founding of the suns, man’s power is evil no matter the noble words with which it is employed or the motives urged when enforcing it.

Men of good will, mindful therefore of the Law laid down by God, will oppose governments whose rule is by men, and if they wish to survive as a nation they will destroy the government which attempts to adjudicate by the whim of venal judges.