

**Vultures and Tornados
Probably Not Good News for the Culture
Hosea 8**

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Up to this point in Hosea we have come to recognize that Israel is a culture in crisis. What we are currently experiencing as a so-called culture war today is not the first time it has ever taken place. The Israel of Hosea experienced much the same as we are today.

Knowing the truth about God, the northern kingdom of Israel has committed treachery and deliberately turned against YAHWEH.

The culture in the west today has pretty much done the same.

Instead of relying on God, Israel relied on their economic, agricultural and military strength. At the same time, led by influencers in the culture, the social fabric of Israel spiraled downward. The nation degenerated into becoming the purveyor of all God said was abhorrent; immorality, sexual deviancy, and infanticide to name a few.

Even worse, Israel's leaders, political, business, and religious, deeply supported those involved in those lifestyles.

Meanwhile, Israel's people still said they were God's chosen, and they alleged that He would look out for them, even though they were not living for Him or following His laws at all. In God they trust, kinda.

They were identifying as Jews without acting like one. Just like some today who are leaders and identify as Christians, yet do not reflect any fruit of the spirit; at least none that we can see publicly.

Galatians 5:22–23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (NET 2nd ed.)

If everyone who said they are Christians actually lived in obedience to His word, revival would break out immediately. The problem we have today is the same as Israel over 2700 years ago, we know the truth but do not believe the truth and instead are believing the lie. The last two lines of William Henley’s poem *Invictus* clearly sums the lie up for us. “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.”

Luke 12:20–21. “But God said to him, ‘You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?’ Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.” (NLT)

Hebrews 10:26–31

“Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. There is only the terrible expectation of God’s judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God’s mercy to us. For we know the one who said, “I will take revenge. I will pay them back.” He also said, “The LORD will judge his own people.” It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (NLT)

I find my self in awe of the Lord and His servant Hosea and just how closely they have come, in this book, to providing us a cultural and social picture of our 21st century world.

We live on this side of the resurrection and daily experience the grace of God, all because of Jesus. Here is the thing though, the principles that He outlined thousands of years ago in His word still have not changed. Sowing and reaping are still relevant principles today. Obedience by believers is still desired by the Lord.

Galatians 6:7–8

“Do not be deceived. God will not be made a fool. For a person will reap what he sows, because the person who sows to his own flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.” (NET 2nd ed.)

In these last days we hear His voice calling, as Israel did, seeking those who would repent and follow Him. For Israel, judgement is coming soon. In these last hours of the last days, the message to our world is the same...judgement is coming soon.

Once it all kicks off with the promised removal of the church, events will then move rapidly to the conclusion we see in Revelation 19.

Amazingly, we see the same basic message being given to the culture in crisis, the culture of the northern kingdom of Israel.

As He has warned us today, that we are indeed living in the last hours of the last days; He also warned Israel. There is a time coming when your time is up, and judgement begins.

We see that announced by YAHWEH to Israel in chapter 8.

Hosea 8:1–3

“Put the trumpet to your lips! Like an eagle the enemy comes against the house of the LORD, Because they have violated My covenant And rebelled against My Law. They cry out to Me, “My God, we of Israel know You!” Israel has rejected the good; The enemy will pursue him.” (NASB 2020)

Judgement begins in a manner that we, as New Testament believers, should be familiar with. It begins with a trumpet blast. This is similar to what we read about taking place as the church is removed from this planet in preparation for God’s judgment on this world.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“Now we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep as Christians. For we tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.” (NET 2nd ed.)

The ram’s horn (šōpār) or shofar is a means of public communication. It can be blown for a variety of reasons, one of which is to signal approaching danger. (Dearman 2010, 216)

When we hear a trumpet, as believers, it is a call to gather together. “Tekiah is one of the notes blown on a shofar. Tekiah, one long blast, is the first note played when a shofar is sounded during High Holy Day services. The sound of tekiah calls the congregation to attention.” (Eisenberg and Scolnic 2001, 169) But for those who are not believers, it is a sound of danger.

Then there is the last note played on the shofar at the end of Yom Kippur. That note is the tekiah gedolah.

It is a long, loud blast held for as long as the person blowing the shofar can manage—often several minutes. It is the last note sounded when the shofar is blown, ending Yom Kippur. (Eisenberg and Scolnic 2001, 169-170)

This is different from what the Lord is telling Israel that they are to expect. Judgement is coming, an attack is coming, and it is so close that the alarm is now being sounded.

Hosea calls upon a watchman to blast the trumpet to warn that an invading enemy is coming. It is a symbolic way of announcing the judgement of God. (Eaton 1996, 125)

That alone is bad enough, but the description of the enemy makes it much worse, they are compared to a vulture coming against the house of the Lord, or rather, Israel.

In Hebrew, the word is נֶשֶׁר (neser) which means “griffon-vulture (4 feet long with a 9-foot wingspan), eagle.” (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1977, 676)

Depending on who the scholar is, they translate this as either vulture or eagle. Both are unclean birds, one attacks prey, the other only picks the meat off something already dead. I lean towards this being the picture of a griffon vulture. Israel is dead, dead, dead. This creates interest with the gang.

The picture is one of the entire nation wandering around dying and, in the sky, floating and waiting patiently are vultures waiting to pick the bones clean. “The vulture might not have long to wait; the object of its interest, the ailing nation, had even less. Its plight was nearly too late to mend.” (Kidner 1976, 76)

Assyria is coming, exile is coming, the bones are indeed about to be picked clean.

Seeing this imagery here makes relooking at Ezekiel 37 and the valley of the dry bones much more relevant. Hosea creates the picture that exile is like a vulture swooping in and picking the carcass clean where Ezekiel is seen prophesying to the bones centuries later as they return to life as a nation.

Ezekiel 37:1–2

“The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry.” (NRSV)

The warning has been sounded, judgment is about to begin, exile is in the future. Those in Israel would be asking “why is this happening?” “We are God’s chosen people after all.” They will not like the answer.

Hosea 8:1b

“...Because they have violated My covenant And rebelled against My Law.” (NASB 2020)

But how is that fair?

God has already outlined and listed His grievances, He will not recap here, but rather simply says “you violated the contract and have activated the curses.”

The Grievances

- Loved false gods (Hosea 2:13)
- Forgot all about God (Hosea 2:13)
- Stubbornly refused to repent (Hosea 4:16)
- Committed treachery against God (Hosea 5:7)
- Actively recruited others into their sinful lifestyle (Hosea 5:1)
- Liars (Hosea 7:3)
- Intentionally strayed from God and rebelled against Him (Hosea 7:13)
- Lied about God to others (Hosea 7:13)
- Intentionally turned from Him to others (Hosea 7:14)

And here is the thing, that is not even a complete list. The nation of Israel has arrived at the end point of rebellion, that end point that Moses warned of back in Deuteronomy 28.

Deuteronomy 28:28–29

“The LORD will make you lose your mind; he will strike you with blindness and confusion. You will grope about in broad daylight like a blind person, and you will not be able to find your way. You will not prosper in anything you do. You will be constantly oppressed and robbed, and there will be no one to help you.” (GNB)

Paul restated this end point in Romans 1

Romans 1:22–25

“They say they are wise, but they are fools; instead of worshipping the immortal God, they worship images made to look like mortal human beings or birds or animals or reptiles. And so God has given those people over to do the filthy things their hearts desire, and they do shameful things with each other. They exchange the truth about God for a lie; they worship and serve what God has created instead of the Creator himself, who is to be praised for ever! Amen.” (GNB)

We have seen examples of this in Israel, God listed them. One of the items was their chasing false gods and the worship of them which included infanticide.

In the insanity of western culture today, we read and see lies so frequently that in some cases, distinguishing between truth and lie, apart from the Holy Spirit's help, becomes difficult to do. We need to pray for the spiritual gift of discernment just to be able to parse through everything.

Satan lies, always has, always will (John 8:44). Satan loves religion too because it keeps us from the truth. That was the problem for Israel. They thought killing their children would help them achieve better crops and a better life. All under the guise of religion.

Today, lies and religion have been combined to create an organization that supports abortion and does so from the perspective of it being acceptable to God.

God was clear in His condemnation to Israel and Judah. Why do we think He has changed His mind on the topic?

God forgives, let me be clear, and He loves those who have been caught up in the lie of abortion, the blood of Jesus is sufficient to cover this. But this is not something that the scriptures ever approves of.

This is the mission statement for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Yes, there is a pro-abortion group that says they are representing "God," but their God is not the one we worship. Recall Israel lied about God.

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) is a broad-based, national, interfaith movement that brings the moral force of religion to protect and advance reproductive health, choice, rights and justice through education, prophetic witness, pastoral presence and advocacy. (Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice 2020)

The primary theological and ethical themes we find in Prayerfully Pro-Choice and other RCRC literature are: the existence of absolute, God-given sexual and reproductive freedom, including abortion rights; the isolation of the woman or teen as sovereign moral agent; the trivialization of the moral status of unborn human life; the legitimacy of abortion as birth control; the holiness of abortion; and the sanction of a pro-choice God, attested in Scripture, who blesses all decisions. (Gorman and Brooks 2003, 11-12)

As we can see, lying about who God is and what His word truly says did not end with judgement on Israel, but continues today. Today, there are websites that exist to "assist" you in constructing a believable lie narrative, all under the guise of religion. Recall that religion was a problem for Israel, one that never really went away.

Israel had religion but not relationship with YAHWEH, yet when the chips were down, and they would be very soon, God relates that Israel will rely on that non-existent relationship by restating they know God.

Hosea 8:2-3

"They cry out to Me, "My God, we of Israel know You!" Israel has rejected the good; The enemy will pursue him." (NASB 2020)

The way this reads is that as Assyria moves in on their offensive assault, Israel will turn and say that the God they have spent over 200 years rejecting will suddenly come to their aid. They allege to know God.

James talks a little about relying on non-existent relationships.

James 2:19

"You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (ESV)

God's relationship to Israel was initiated by redemption through blood. It was maintained by obedience to Mosaic law. The nation was promised life if it kept the Mosaic law. The 'life' concerned was not 'eternal

life' as we have it in the New Testament but 'living long in the land' as we have it in the fifth commandment. (Eaton 1996, 126)

Jesus talked about the problem as well. He addressed the problem of saying you know Him, but there is no obedience making that evident to an outsider looking in. One who is obedient will do things reflecting that, but the other person provides only lip service, they do evil.

Luke 6:45–49

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.” (ESV)

Our faith in Christ and obedience to what He says impacts our living and makes it clear to everyone we are believers. What Israel had done is they had come to believe that religion and rites would get them in, and they could live a life with no obedience at all. They did not know YAHWEH. Jesus talked about that self-lie.

Matthew 7:22–23

“On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (ESV)

At the Great White Throne, it all depends upon who you know.

For Israel, there is no relationship, "Israel has rejected the good; The enemy will pursue him." (Hosea 8:3, NASB 2020)

Exile is coming. God will not stop Assyria. He provides more reasons why He will not, on top of what He already has said.

Hosea 8:4–7

“They have set up kings, but not by Me; They have appointed officials, but I did not know it. With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves, So that they will be eliminated. He has rejected your calf, Samaria, saying, “My anger burns against them!” How long will they be incapable of innocence? For from Israel comes even this! A craftsman made it, so it is not God; Assuredly, the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces. For they sow wind And they harvest a storm. The standing grain has no kernels; It yields no grain. If it were to yield, strangers would swallow it.” (NASB 2020)

We start off with a deadly mix in verse 4, politics and religion, but without YAHWEH. Notice I said religion.

Psalms 127:1

“If the LORD does not build a house, then those who build it work in vain. If the LORD does not guard a city, then the watchman stands guard in vain.” (NET 2nd ed.)

In Israel, that is the case. The Lord is not the one building up the nation. They have turned away from the Lord and to religion. It is all about the doing, not the being.

Two national sins are listed in verse 4. Puppet kings and puppet gods.

1. With the exception of Jeroboam I and Jehu, the Kings in Israel who the people made King, were not God's choices. They never sought out God for who it is that should rule over them. The system took care of who became an official in the Kingdom, not God. Israel tended to rely on assassination as a method of selection. They did not recognize God at all so it made no difference to them who was King.
2. The second sin listed in verse 4 is that of the manufacture and enthronement of idols as god rather than a reliance upon YAHWEH. Using the wealth God gave them, they made gods. Two calves as gods? They accessed the same lame justifications made by Aaron and voila.

Psalm 135:15–18

“The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; they have eyes, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear, and there is no breath in their mouths. Those who make them and all who trust them shall become like them.” (NRSV)

Israel was so given over to idolatry that God asks the rhetorical question, “...How long will they be incapable of innocence?” (Hosea 8:5b, NASB 2020). How long will it be until they are innocent of idolatry?

Israel has turned away from the God who made the universe in favor of one made by craftsmen. They went from God to a no god. They worshipped their own creation rather than the creator of everything. “God’s anger burns against Israel because the calf that she worships was designed by the Israelites, made by a man, and so is not God. God will destroy it for it takes away worship from Himself. God brooks no rivals, 8:6.” (Gingrich 2004, 25)

God has rejected the state religion established by Jeroboam I and embodied as a golden calf. They were broken into pieces since they were no gods and had no true power at all.

It is all about sowing and reaping. With Israel having followed a golden calf, what does God consider that to be the equivalent to? He says it is the same as sowing the wind. The crop, basically a tornado. Following after the no-god is like sowing wind and the only available crop is destruction. All they did was sow trouble for themselves.

We are talking about the ultimate in snake oil sales here. Stop and think, everything will be cured, all your needs wants, and desires met. All of your bills paid and a nice new chariot in the driveway. To get all of that, you must commit to my five-step guide to wind sowing. You’ll love it because it involves things you are familiar with. Just no more pesky issues with sin, because there is no sin in my new system. Nope, you can have your best life now and you need to come back each week so I can tell you more. Sow your seed now and give as a down payment for a better life. And it goes on and on and on.

The sense is, the Israelites took a great deal of pains in the idolatrous worship of the calves, and made a great stir, bustle, and noise in it, like the wind; were very vain-glorious and ostentatious, made a great shew of religion and devotion, and promised themselves great things from it, peace and plenty, wealth and riches, all prosperity and happiness... (Gill 1810, 417)

But they got disaster, Assyria and exile instead. A serious tornado.

Empty religion leaves the one searching, empty. You believe it will provide what is needed, but not only is the pursuit destructive, but those who chase after false religion tend to give all their resources to that false god. At the end of the day, there is no salvation, there is no redemption, there is only disaster. On top of all that, Israel is also dealing with a famine. Their fertility gods were sought to ensure a good harvest, but nothing is there and knowing that the enemy is coming soon, if there was a crop, it would just be eaten up by the enemy.

Hosea 8:8–10

“Israel has been swallowed up; They are now among the nations Like a vessel in which no one delights. For they have gone up to Assyria, Like a wild donkey all alone; Ephraim has paid fees for lovers. Even though they pay for allies among the nations, I will gather them up now; And they will begin to diminish Because of the burden of the king of officials.” (NASB 2020)

Earlier we saw the picture of the vulture floating along in the sky waiting for the dying nation to finally croak so they could land and strip the bones clean. That image continues here with Israel being swallowed up.

The exile they are about to enter will be so extensive that they will be swallowed up by the nations and it will become difficult for them to maintain their distinctiveness as God’s people. As a people, they are no more special than a common pot.

Israel had an inflated sense of their own self-importance and God is letting them know how He intends to humble them.

What about the 10 northern tribes, are they lost? Is this talking about that? There is a myth called the 10 lost tribes' myth.

History and the Bible indicate that although the tribes were separated during the civil war of Israel, the separation was neither complete nor ongoing. Passages in Scripture indicate that, in reaction to idolatry in the north, many from the Northern Kingdom migrated to the Southern Kingdom to join with Judah and Benjamin. (Garland 2006, Re 22:21)

2 Chronicles 11:14–17

“For the Levites left their common-lands and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them from serving as priests to the LORD. Then he appointed for himself priests for the high places, for the demons, and the calf idols which he had made. And after the Levites left, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the LORD God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong for three years, because they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years.” (NKJV)

We later see that King Hezekiah celebrated Passover and invited those who still remained of the northern kingdom, yes there were some who were not taken away, after Assyria had taken Israel into exile, to participate as well. We also see some more of the problem Hosea is talking about.

2 Chronicles 30:10–11

“So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them. Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.” (NKJV)

Nehemiah 12:47

“In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day. They also consecrated holy things for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated them for the children of Aaron.” (NKJV)
All Israel means exactly that, all the tribes were in on this.

Hosea 8:9

“For they have gone up to Assyria, Like a wild donkey all alone; Ephraim has paid fees for lovers.” (NASB 2020)

After Assyria had passed through Israel the first time around, Israel was basically paying them money for protection. Actually, that would technically be tribute, money paid to prevent Assyria from coming back and finishing them off.

But Israel was also paying others to help them too. They thought money would help solve their problem.

2 Kings 17:1–5

“In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel, and he reigned nine years. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him. Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria. And Hoshea became his vassal and paid him tribute. But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea, for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it.” (ESV)

Hosea 8:10

“Even though they pay for allies among the nations, I will gather them up now; And they will begin to diminish Because of the burden of the king of officials.” (NASB 2020)

Hosea prophesied that Assyria would be paid by Israel but ultimately, they would be the end of Israel. “The tribute which he will exact from them will make them writhe in anguish, and the ultimate folly of seeking help from Assyria will be disclosed when the Assyrian king turns out to be Yahweh’s executioner.” (Mays 1969, 121)

That closes out, for now, the picture of the stupidity of Israel’s foreign policy. They are indeed reflecting insanity in their decision making just as Moses said they would be as they rebelled against YAHWEH.

That brings everything back to the primary reason of why God will do nothing to stop Assyria. We have reviewed, in detail, their sin, we have talked about their deeply flawed diplomatic processes that consisted of giving monetary aid who you wanted favor with.

This is not a whole lot different than what western governments do today.

Now we come back to the basic problem...infidelity.

Hosea showed that as the primary problem in the first three chapters in his dealings with Gomer. At the end of the day, no matter what was done, she was unfaithful to Hosea. Conversely, no matter what God does or has done, nothing has stepped into the way of the basic problem for Israel. They are unfaithful to YAHWEH.

Hosea 8:11–14

“Since Ephraim has multiplied altars for sin, They have become altars of sinning for him. Though I wrote for him ten thousand precepts of My Law, They are regarded as a strange thing. As for My sacrificial gifts, They sacrifice the flesh and eat it, But the LORD has taken no delight in them. Now He will remember their guilt, And punish them for their sins; They will return to Egypt. For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; And Judah has multiplied fortified cities, But I will send a fire on its cities, and it will consume its palatial buildings.” (NASB 2020)

Whatever worship they engaged in was done at altars polluted with the syncretistic worship of Baal and the immoral practices carried out there. (Patterson and Hill 2008, 49)

They were not supposed to have multiple altars. In Deuteronomy 12:5 – 7 the instructions are clear, only one location for all of the Jews.

Deuteronomy 12:5–7

“But you must seek only the place he chooses from all your tribes to establish his name as his place of residence, and you must go there. And there you must take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the personal offerings you have prepared, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. Both you and your families must feast there before the LORD your God and rejoice in all the output of your labor with which he has blessed you.” (NET 2nd ed.)

I really like the next verse and what the Lord says. This is another way of saying “if I told you once, I told you a thousand times.” This phrase is familiar to any parent. We love our kids, and we want them to get it so yes, we repeat things over and over and over. God does the same for Israel. Here is the case, God did indeed tell them of His law. This was done with all of the prophets that He sent to them and that they ignored to their own detriment.

Hosea 8:12

“Though I wrote for him ten thousand precepts of My Law, They are regarded as a strange thing.” (NASB 2020)

What this really is though is “Israel snubs God’s commands. He has given careful instructions regarding worship, to protect Israel from sinning. Israel ignores cultic and moral laws alike. Even worse, Israel treats God’s instructions as alien, foreign, strange (8:12). The Torah is out of step with their practices, which are modeled after the worship of alien nations and Canaanite cult centers.” (Guenther 1998, 155)

But the way it is said shows that there is a desire for Israel to repent.

Hosea 8:13

“As for My sacrificial gifts, They sacrifice the flesh and eat it, But the LORD has taken no delight in them. Now He will remember their guilt, And punish them for their sins; They will return to Egypt.” (NASB 2020)

Instead of only one altar for sacrifice, there are a bunch of them in Israel. With lots of altars comes lots of sacrifices. Remember (Hosea 4:7 – 10) one of the condemnations of the Lord against the Priests in Israel was that sin was business and business was good. Lots of sacrifices means lots of food and good times for the priests.

The problem is this, the various offerings they make have nothing to do with YAHWEH. He has no delight in what they are doing because He has no part in them or in the sacrifice. They are not sacrificing to Him from a heart filled with love for YAHWEH.

They were doing the sacrifice thing, but not with a heart given to the Lord. It was ritual without anything behind it.

Today it looks and smells like religion.

Matthew 7:21–23

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (ESV)

The danger with service versus relationship, is we forget it is all about Jesus and what He did on the cross for us. We do, from a full heart because of His love. Jesus gave me everything, I cannot do but the same.

The people of Israel have been misled into thinking that their sin problem has been taken care of by the local altar and the ritual involved with it. But God says that is not the case. “Consequently He would call them into judgment for their sins and punish them. He would send them back to Egypt where they used to

live as slaves before He redeemed them in the Exodus (cf. 9:3). The Lord meant that He would send them to an Egypt-like place, which Assyria proved to be (cf. 11:5; Deut. 28:68).” (Constable 2003, Ho 8:13)

Hosea 8:14

“For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; And Judah has multiplied fortified cities, But I will send a fire on its cities, and it will consume its palatial buildings.” (NASB 2020)

We arrive at verse 14 and notice that Judah is back in the mix. They have the same problem as Israel. Both nations have forgotten who it is that put them where they now live and what it took to get them there.

Self-reliance is a problem. God does not help those who help themselves. This is in reality – pride.

Romans 5:6–11

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (For rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person perhaps someone might possibly dare to die.) But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, we will be saved through him from God’s wrath. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.” (NET 2nd ed.)

The goal for God is for Israel and Judah to rely on Him, not on themselves. Israel is into displays of wealth and Judah is into military might and preparation. God will resolve that problem for them.

But the Lord was about to destroy (by fire) these sources of false security, fulfilling a covenant curse (cf. Deut. 28:52). God’s judgment came through the Assyrians. Sennacherib “attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them” (2 Kings 18:13). (Chisholm, Jr. 1985, 1398)

Hosea recalls for both nations here a simple message. One that should remove the self-sufficiency if only it was heard.

Psalms 100:3–5

“Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” (ESV)

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