

Welcome to the 11th lesson in the book of Hosea. The 11th lesson is a continuation of the 10th lesson in that we continue to discuss God's judgment scheduled to fall on both Israel, the Northern kingdom, and Judah, the Southern kingdom.

(verse 14)

From the previous lesson 10, verse 12 likens the hand of judgment upon Israel unto the slow eating of a moth. A moth is an insect that consumes a garment slowly.

While Israel's judgment was likened unto the moth, God promised that judgment upon the Southern kingdom Judah would be like unto rot. We know that the process of rot is a slow process. It is not in the wisdom of man to determine God's method and schedule for judgment. Man is told one thing for sure- sin will always be judged unless it is forgiven. God may sometimes judge slowly, sometimes swiftly. The moth ate slowly. Rot consumed slowly. Merciful God gives us time to repent, but if we are not willing to do so, e will increase the pressure and punish us like a lion. Slow, gradual judgment can become swift and sudden. That is what happens in this verse 14. The moth became a lion. Slow judgment became fast and furious. God will not always strive with man.

As stated above, I believe God sent judgment slowly in the form of a moth and rot to give Israel time to repent. They never turned from sin, so He pounced upon them as a lion. You and I have known people who failed to walk with God. Initially, God was gracious and merciful and slow to anger in His judgment toward them. Eventually, God's patience expires. The moth and the rot turned to a lion, and God strikes viciously and rapidly in His judgment. Listen to the words of Proverbs 29:1 "*He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*" The plagues of God upon the Egyptians progressively got worse until God's anger in judgment turned to a swift destruction in the death of the firstborn in the land. God gave 120 years of warning to the world in the days of Noah. Suddenly one day it began to rain. There are many other instances in God's word when God's slow judgment turned swift. Do not miss this important point- when Christ comes to the earth at His second coming, He is coming as the **lion** of the tribe of Judah. His judgment will be swift and fast. The Bible says "*except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved.*" Matthew 24:22.

The lion which will attack Ephraim, the Northern kingdom, will be a mature, able lion. The lion which shall attack the Southern kingdom, Judah, shall be a young, smaller lion. Did you know God

has a lion just the right size for you?

(Verse 15)

It is a shame that man will not turn to God when He begins to judge him in a gentle way. God will get your attention in some fashion if you are one of His children. This verse 15 tells us that God will strike and then return to His place. God's judgment is painful, but an even more painful thing can be the withdrawal of His presence from you. If you are a child of God walking in sin and God withdraws His presence from you, you will never know a sadder day in your life. *"I will go and return to my place."* A song we sing goes something like this: "there is nothing sadder in all creation than a soul in isolation away from the Master's fold."

When God saves you, you are His. You are bought with a price. The price is God's precious son Jesus Christ who died on the cross to purchase man from the grips of Satan. There is no arrangement between man and God that will please God other than for His child to serve him and walk with him. God says to Israel all I want is for you to *"acknowledge their offense, and seek my face."* What is God saying to Israel and Judah? He is saying "confess your sins and turn to me." How little God ask! He never asked Israel or Judah for a sacrifice. He never asked Israel or Judah to give their life for Him. He simply asked them to *apologize for their sin and look unto Him* one more time. God is good even in judgment. The scripture reads in II Chronicles 7:14 *"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."*

Chapter 6

(verse 1-3)

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord." These are beautiful words. They wonderfully summarize what God wishes for one of His children who is straying. If you are straying, bow your head and return unto the Lord now. You will never be happy until you do. The Lord *will* receive you back. Sometimes folks think what they have done is so bad God will not forgive them. This is not true. God loves to forgive His children and enjoys reunions! The same God who strikes like a lion and tears us when we sin will administer ointment. You see, God has no pleasure in afflicting us. His greatest desire is that we walk with Him.

Notice in verse 2 the swiftness of God's willingness to receive us back. This verse 2 says in two days he will *revive* us. That is very fast! How rapidly God wants us to be back in the fold! He will heal us from the affliction of our judgment in two days, and the third day he will have our feet on the path of service unto Him once again. Wow, what a merciful God!

Verse three is a powerful verse. It speaks of something that we certainly resist as human beings- “making up our mind” to live for God. Have you ever *made up your mind* to live for Christ and obey him? You can stray from God and God can and will inflict judgment. You may then return to God and repent and follow Him. But it may be a short-lived reunion unless you “make up your mind to serve God.”

The word “follow” comes from a word which means “to pursue or chase.” How many Christians do you know who are **chasing** the Lord? In many cases, He is chasing them. We should be determined as saved people to *chase* after the Lord. A young boy who has his eyes on a young girl and wants her to be his will gladly chase her. And sometimes the girl chases the boy. Do you love God enough to chase Him? Unless you make up your mind to serve God, you may be estranged from Him before the sun goes down today. This is indeed sad. It takes resolve and a made-up mind to live for God. Christians in this age don't want to hear that. We want to serve God when it is convenient for us to do so. We run to Him for help in time of trouble. I must warn you; it does not work this way! Joshua said in Joshua 24:15 “*as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*” Have you ever made that statement?

The *first* rain was to prepare the earth for the seed and this rain fell in autumn. The “former” rain means “the darting rain” that falls from the middle of October to the middle of December. The second or “latter” rains were to prepare the crop for the harvest. These rains came in the spring. Why is God mentioning rain? He is telling us He wants us to be fruitful. There has never been a saved person nor will there ever be a saved person but what God desires that they bear fruit.

(verse 4-9)

“*Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?*” “*Oh Judah, what shall I do unto thee?*” Has your mother or father ever made this statement about you when you were a child? “Son, what am I going to do with you?” As children we get into trouble. We have all heard our parents say “what am I going to do with you?” This seems to be what the Lord is saying to Ephraim, which is Israel, and to Judah. “What am I going to do with you?” It seems the people were what we would call “fickle.” At one time, they had goodness, love, and faithfulness toward the Lord. He pays them the compliment that once their goodness was “as a morning cloud, and the early dew.” I truly believe every child of God has some good in them. When Israel was good, faithful, and loving, they were like dew reflecting in the sunlight of the morning as a diamond. The morning cloud fades away with the rising of the sun. The morning dew rapidly disappears with the rising of the sun. So, Ephraim and Judah were

not steadfast in their dedication to the Lord. They started well, but they did not finish the journey. In other words, as we discussed in verse three, they had never *made up their mind* that they would serve God.

God despises unfaithfulness. If there is anything God may say that “drives Him crazy” it is unfaithfulness. We start the day out as the morning cloud and the morning dew, and we melt away. We begin with good intentions, but they pass. We make promises to God, and we keep them for a week or two weeks, and then we get inconsistent. The Lord said “Israel and Judah, what am I going to do with you?” God is frustrated, if God can be frustrated. Is the Lord asking the same question about you? Are you *fickle* in your faith?

Verse five tells us that God, in order to help the people, “worked” on them. The children sometimes sing a song “God is still working on me.” “*I hewed them by the prophets.*” This is like the hewing of stones in the rock quarry with hard blows and sharp instruments. God used the prophets’ preaching in an attempt to correct Israel and Judah from sinning. Jeremiah 23:29 says “*Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*” The book of James says the word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword.

I feel like, as I preach God's word today, one of the prophets of the Old Testament. I am a preacher of righteousness. I trust, with the help of God, that I preach to this society like unto a hammer and sharp instrument upon them. I am preaching to stony-hearted people much of the time. I am preaching to soccer moms and NASCAR dads. I am preaching to a people whose minds are not stayed upon the Lord.

Imagine something God likes more than sacrifices and burnt offerings. You may say “is there such a thing?” The answer is yes. Verse six says God desired *mercy* and *knowledge of God* in the lives of the people more than He desired their sacrifices and burnt offerings. You see, God is not asking you to give your life. God is not asking you to lie on an altar with your throat slit as a bleeding lamb. God is not asking you to give your home, your means of living, and your food and clothing to Him. God's only desire is that He can look upon you with *mercy* and not judgment and that you will *take knowledge* of his existence. Oh, how little God requires of His children!

Some sins seem large and some seem small. Some sins are far-reaching and long-lasting while others seem tiny and their impact small. There is one thing that every sin has in common. Do you know what it is? It is disobedience to God's commands. The very definition of sin is “breaking God's law.” The first man in the Garden of Eden had one law- don't eat from the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil. Adam broke the law. His sons, Cain and Abel, had one law- bring me a sacrifice of blood. Cain broke the law and Abel kept the law. Why do we have revised, perverted Bibles? So the law of God will be distorted from the view of man and man will longer know how to please God. Why, through the ages, have men attempted to burn all Bibles? So that men cannot know the law of God. Some folk today, by their own choice, do not own a Bible. Why? They feel if they do not own a Bible they're not obligated to obey God. The Bible is the book that records in writing the expectations of God unto mankind. All people of all ages have sinned against God. There is not a time in history when man was not sinning.

Verse eight speaks of Gilead. Gilead is a city. It was once a place that was sacred. Now, it is a city of them that work iniquity and a place that is polluted with blood. Do you see what sin can do? Are you afraid of sin? Do you fear sin? You should. Altars and churches, once sacred places, can become places of corruption and evil if sin remains unchecked.

(Verse 10)

Verse 10 once again points us to the corruption of the religious leaders. This is not a new topic, for in the book of Hosea, we have already seen the corruption of religious leaders. We recall the great story in the book of Luke Chapter 10 of a man who was beaten on the road to Jericho. He was also robbed. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho has many rock cavities where thieves could hide. Robbers could position themselves along the way and jump out and rob and beat those who travel the road.

The company of priests, says verse nine, became "*as troops of robbers*" lying in wait for a man. Yet, they were not murdering with weapons. They were not maiming with swords. They were not robbing with bayonets. They were committing robbery and murder "*by consent.*" What do you think of a preacher who would tell a person "it's okay to steal, just don't steal too much?" What do you think of a preacher who would tell a person "a dress code is not important?" What do you think of a preacher who would tell a person "it's okay to tell a few lies, just don't tell too many and don't have any big ones?" Today, preachers are consenting to the sin of the people. They are promoting sin by consenting to it. In the eyes of God, the blood on the hands of the people is also on the hands of the priests. Now, do you see the light? Do you now understand why I am obligated to stand for truth and right no matter who likes it or dislikes it? Do you understand that preachers, pastors, Bible teachers, and elders are responsible to God for what they tell people? I am not going to stand before God as a robber and murderer. I am going to tell people what thus saith the Word of God. It does matter what you think, what you say, how you live,

where you go, and what you do! And I am just the man who will tell you so. If you are looking for approval for your sin and “*consent*,” don't look at this preacher!

(Verse 11)

Harvests can be good or bad. This harvest of verse 11 is not good. The Bible speaks to us about *reaping what we sow*. Judah is set to reap a harvest of judgment.

Illustration: A donkey was loaded with salt. He came to a river. As he was crossing the river he slipped and fell. The salt dissolved. The donkey was relieved for suddenly his load had lightened. The donkey felt he had become wiser. The next time he came to the river with a load, he slipped on purpose. This time, though, he was not loaded with salt but with sponges. His load became enormous. The moral of the story is this: just because God does not strike immediately when we sin, we are not to think we can get by with more sin. No, God is not an old, silver-haired Southern gentleman in South Georgia sitting in the front porch trying to remember the names of his kids! God is alive and well and looking down from heaven upon you and me!