

God's Charge Against Israel

“Righteous exalteth a reaction, but sin is a reproach to any people.”
— Proverbs 14:34

Every age is an age to try men's souls, but rarely in human history has man's corruption and departure from God become so great that it destroyed a nation, defiled a people and the anger of God was aroused so that His hand turned against them, and judgment was inevitable. Such was the situation during the prophet Hosea's day. Let us examine this day and time and see if there is any resemblance to the present day and time in our country. Hosea began his work as a prophet in the days of great prosperity. There had been no invasion of Israel of Judah for many years. The nations round about respected the power of God's people. After the death of Jeroboam many changes took place. In 2 Kings, we learn that internal feuds broke out, rival politicians sacrificed the nation's interest to their own, princes became debauched, and the national power became seriously weakened. Of the six kings that followed Jeroboam II, only one, Menahem, died a natural death. The nation that had forgotten God began to look one way and another for help. They turned to Assyria and to Egypt and for the help they received; they paid a heavy toll, until finally they lost their independence and national autonomy. In time Samaria fell and Israel was carried off into Assyrian captivity. So, from the day of Jeroboam, the king of Israel, "who taught Israel to sin," (1 Kings 21:22), the nation went into a decline and finally an eclipse. It was during these years of bloodshed and revolt that Hosea prophesied to the people. Hosea sums up the condition with one word "Whoredom." Israel had done worse than adultery; she had become a 'prostitute'!" Hosea 2:13, it is said that "She went after her lovers and forgot me, sayeth the Lord." Let us never forget that God's adage that "righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34), is still operative in the kingdoms of men today.

What were the reasons underlying Israel's decaying condition? Hosea summarized it in two ways: 1) There were certain qualities that were missing and: 2) There were a number of evil conditions present which were easily identifiable.

What Was Missing? "there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." (v.1). Truthfulness was missing both in their



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speech and in their actions. Their word was no longer their bond. God requires us to be truthful in our utterances, true to our promises, true in all our engagements, true and just in all our dealings. Goodness, love, and mercy for one's fellow man were miniscule and declining every day. God was not in their hearts and they did not acknowledge Him as the One to direct their lives. Acknowledgement of God is essential to the well-being of any nation. Where God is unknown, where men live "without God in the world", where His knowledge is suffered to lapse, and the rising generation is trained with no fear of God before its eyes, vice and crime will be rampant and unchecked and there will be social disorder. (See Romans 1:21-28). These foundation virtues had been subverted in Israel and they are being subverted today. The acknowledgement of God, that bond that binds man to God, is also the bond which binds him to the practice of moral virtues. When a nation fails to acknowledge God it sets itself adrift in the vast sea of immorality.

Sinful conditions that were present: Immorality was rampant. Swearing, lying, deception, and stealing dominated. These were the violations of the third, eighth, and ninth commandments. The people seemed to have no sense at all of honesty. This is becoming ever more prevalent in today's culture. Oaths and contracts are made to be broken. Property rights of others are lightly esteemed. Killing was common place. This was a violation of the sixth commandment. Today people are killed for a candy bar. Sanctity of life is on the decline. Sadly many gladly choose the "quality of life" ethic over the "sanctity of life" ethic, when they are making the choice for someone else. When people have little compunction at killing the innocent within the womb, then there is little regard for life out of the womb. Society cannot diminish the value of one category of human life – the unborn – without diminishing the value of all human life. Abortion is a crime that kills not only the child but the conscience of all involved. Adultery abounded and it abounds today. This was a violation of the seventh commandment. Today adultery is extolled instead of condemned. Homes and families are

in deep trouble today. Parents and children are torn apart by selfishness and divorce, and society is gradually reeling out of control. Preachers work overtime to concoct arguments explaining away and justifying adultery. But Jesus' word is plain and simple to understand (See Matt. 19:9).

In all of the aforementioned sins we see a clear violation of the Ten Commandments. But this shouldn't come as a surprise today. If the One who wrote the Ten Commandment is not acknowledged, why should the Commandments themselves be esteemed? Is it any wonder that there is little respect for law today? Verse two says they broke all restraints. Today on every hand, there is rebellion against restraints and authority as people clamor for freedom to do as they please. There was, in Israel moral chaos and anarchy; i.e., a general disregard for law and rights, and we are approaching the same conditions with great speed. Verse eleven says, "Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the hearts." We are familiar with the old saying of "wine, women, and song" (See Isa. 5:11-12; 28:7-8). More and more, intoxication defines our culture. Social drinking is the norm and drunkenness is epidemic, even among the youth.

THEY LACKED KNOWLEDGE – "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God" (4:6). The people were ignorant of God's law. Why did this condition prevail? Primarily because they rejected knowledge. God's law had become a strange thing to them (8:12). The priests, Israel's religious leaders, had allowed this to happen and were primarily responsible for this condition. They had failed in instructing the people and were actually feeding on and benefiting from the people's sins. Ignorance of God's law, neglect of its adherence, or willful indifference and disobedience to its practices, are fatal to any people. They were seeking counsel from the wrong sources. "My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them..." They were listening to the wrong people. The priests were corrupt. The people were as evil as the priests, and the priests were as wicked as the people. Verse 9 says: "And it will be; Like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds." The priests knew God's law, yet DESPISED it; the people simply ignored it or forgot it altogether. Their corruption would result in their punishment.