

Bible Study # 71
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Minor Prophets Series—Hosea and Joel

We are going to get into the books of Hosea and Joel this evening. Hosea was a native of the Northern Kingdom. The nation of Israel had split into two sections: the Northern Kingdom (the northern ten tribes called Israel) and the Southern Kingdom called Judah. The nation had split soon after the death of King Solomon. At the time we pick up the story, the split was approximately 130 years downstream. So quite a bit of time had transpired. A lot of time had passed as far as the history of the nation when Hosea came on the scene.

One of the things interesting to note is that a whole cluster of prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah) all flourish right in the same general time period. The prophet Isaiah was in that same general time period. It's the greatest cluster of prophets of which we have any record or evidence. The interesting thing is that their work began at a time when Northern Israel was at its height. It was approximately 50 to 60 years before the collapse and the Assyrian captivity. There are several things we learn from that. One thing we learn is expressed in the book of Amos.

Amos 3:7, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets."

God will warn Israel prior to intervention, prior to punishment and captivity. God's greatest work in ancient Israel was done in a time of warning and witness. The nation was warned about where they were headed and the consequences of those actions. The warning came at a time when the nation was riding a crest of power. Now, that's an interesting thing, too. The warning didn't begin when the nation was on the way down and out and everybody could look around and say, 'Things are sure headed down; things are sure in trouble.' God began to warn when there wasn't any physical evidence that things weren't just going to get bigger and better.

When God raised up this work, Mr. Herbert Armstrong was used to raise up the radio program. The magazine began to go out, back in the 40s in the aftermath of World War II, through the 50s and through this time. America really was at a pinnacle of its power in the world. There are some of you sitting right here whose contact with the work goes way, way back to the

early 50s or late 40s at a time when it seemed like America was on the way up and was at the pinnacle. Mr. Armstrong was giving warning that the nation was going down. And, at the time when Germany was down and at the bottom, he said Germany was going to come back. Germany was going to rebuild. He wrote the article "Will Russia Attack America" way back around 1951. That article was printed many times since because it was always a popular article. Up until the last few years, everybody thought that was the most likely thing. He had written an article on it way back at the beginning of the cold war. He understood from Biblical prophecy that would not occur. The point that I am making is that there is a parallel. *God raises up His work at a time when the nation needs to be warned based on what God says, not on all of the physical evidence.*

There's something interesting I am going to read to you. I'll read a little bit out of the *Soncino Commentary*, which talks about the circumstance in Israel and Judah at the time of this cluster of prophets—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, plus Isaiah (seven prophets) clustered in about that 50 to 60-year time span. There certainly were individuals who saw all of those men and heard their message. There was this great concentration of prophets because of what was taking place.

The *Soncino Commentary*, "The Introduction to Micah" says, "The eighth century witnessed the emergence in Israel and Judah of a commercial civilization of great material prosperity. [Now you could substitute the words "20th century" and you would have a very good parallel to today.] Its foundations were laid in the peace and security, which Jeroboam II, who reigned from about 783-743 B.C., won for Israel, and Uzziah, who reigned from 778 to 740 B.C., for Judah." They overlapped considerably. The foundations of this commercial civilization were laid in the peace and security of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah.

"And in the extensions of the borders of their kingdom from Damascus to the Red Sea, from the desert to the Mediterranean, giving the Hebrew states command of all of the main trade routes of ancient days. But it was a civilization which displayed all the evils of a society making haste to be rich. Greed and covetousness, reckless and unscrupulous competition, a pitiless disregard of the claims of sympathy, charity and brotherly consideration, extremes of wealth and poverty which had been impossible in an agricultural society based on the Biblical system

of land tenure were dividing the nation into classes of possessors and dispossessed. The rich built up large estates with the help of corrupt judges; they added house-to-house and field-to-field, while the oppressed and dispossessed peasantry sought in vain for legal redress. The pursuit of commerce encouraged the development of cities and city life. And it was to the city that the landless farmers migrated in search of a livelihood where wealth, luxury and vice dwelt side by side with poverty, misery and squalor. With the exchange of goods went the exchange of ideals. New religious cults, standards of luxury and splendor and materialistic aims of living, which had hitherto been foreign to Israel, were introduced from Assyria and Egypt.”

Now, does that sound familiar? With just the change of a few words, you could be describing 20th-century America. Interestingly enough, from the 1790 census, the nation was 90 percent rural and 10 percent urban. Amazing changes have taken place and most of that has taken place in the 20th century. I believe it was the 1900 census that saw the shift from majority rural to majority urban—the rapid urbanization of this country.

Interestingly enough, what is described in the “Introduction to Micah” from the *Soncino Commentary*, which is a Jewish Commentary, actually includes all 12 of the Minor Prophets. In the Jewish order, they regard The Twelve as one book and this is the way they publish it. They have Hosea through Malachi.

Micah was a latter contemporary of Hosea. The introduction applies just as much to Hosea as it does to Micah because after all, Hosea starts out, Hosea 1:1, “The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam [II] the son of Joash, king of Israel.”

The time that Hosea wrote (the eighth century) witnessed the emergence of a great commercial civilization and an urban civilization. The foundations were laid in the peace and security that Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah won. You can compare their control of the great trading routes to the early part of this century—the period that culminated at the time of Franklin Roosevelt, World War II and the emergence of our nation from there as a great superpower. What he describes is the exact problems. We find individuals writing against the background of their time and their circumstances. One of the reasons why God inspired this—you’ve heard it explained and Mr. Herbert Armstrong stressed

over the years—was that prophecy was dual. Do you know why there is a duality? Because you put the same people in the same circumstances and they do the same thing. You have Israel in the same circumstances, a circumstance of power and prosperity. What did it do? Well, the last time it happened to them was the period that ultimately set the stage for the Assyrian invasion and captivity. As we look at the book of Hosea, there is much in the background that is a parallel to our time today. What we’ve found is the same circumstances, which sets the stage for the same sins. And those sins set the stage for the same punishment.

As he describes the problems that came in—the extremes of wealth and poverty, the corruption, the rapid urbanization and landless farmers migrating to the city in search of a livelihood— isn’t that descriptive of what we have today? We have a lot of the urban ghettos and things built up that are very descriptive of that. The major cities have wealth, luxury and vice dwelling side by side with poverty, misery and squalor. Also, the exchange of ideas, the new religious cults, standards of luxury and splendor—haven’t we been inundated with all of these things coming in? It set the stage.

These are the circumstances that we find as we get into the Minor Prophets and as we get into the book of Hosea in particular. **At a time when Israel was at the height of her economic and military power, Hosea was beginning to warn of impending collapse and captivity.**

Hosea’s wife, Gomer, is used as a type of Israel. We will see some of that in just a few moments. God used much in Hosea’s life, as He did with many of the prophets, as things that took on a symbolic significance. Hosea married a wife who went into harlotry. The land was filled with immorality.

It was, in that way, not much different than in our land today—a land that is absolutely filled with immorality, where just recently they are having controversies in some of the so-called mainline churches about whether or not they should bless homosexual marriages. What do you mean marriage? There also is the controversy of whether they should ordain clergymen who are practicing homosexuals. Now that shows how far they have gone from the Bible. Go back and read what God says in Deuteronomy. He didn’t say anything about ordaining them. Now He did say something about “laying hands” on them, if I remember correctly, but they didn’t lay hands on them to ordain them. We have come so far in terms of

standards that here are places that call themselves churches that are arguing over trying to redefine morality. And you wonder why they call themselves a church. Why do they even claim to be associated with the Bible and Christianity? They are free to start their own religion, but why drag God into it? Why claim that they have some sort of connection with Christianity or the Bible? It is totally their own invention. We live in a society that is not at all unlike the society that the prophet we read of here addressed.

Hosea married Gomer who proved to be and was utilized by God as a type of Israel. She lapsed into immorality and harlotry. Hosea ultimately put her away. There is a period of years that goes by in the first three chapters of Hosea. She is continually degraded. Hosea ultimately buys her back. He purchases her at a slave auction.

There is an analogy to God's dealing with Israel. God's relationship with Israel is a marriage relationship. God ultimately put Israel away because of spiritual harlotry. That involved the wife's responsibility of fidelity to her husband. Israel of old entered into all sorts of illicit relationships, looking to the kings around. Israel looked to the kings of other nations as her protectors and providers, rather than being loyal and faithful to God. Gomer ultimately hit bottom. Hosea extended mercy. He bought her back. He took her back and gave her another chance. There is an analogy through that period of years in his life. Those first three chapters of the book of Hosea go into that. It is used as an analogy to God's relationship with Israel.

Chapter 4 goes into the catalog of Israel's sins and why the nation was destroyed.

Chapter 5 deals with the fall of Judah and Israel. Both of them were seeking to Assyria instead of God.

Chapter 6, Israel finally learns a lesson.

Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 deal with Israel seeking the help of other nations. It shows her glory departing. It's a warning to Israel of future captivity.

Chapter 11 deals with the future deliverance of Israel.

Chapter 12 deals with God's warning and His ultimate deliverance.

Chapter 13 makes the point that Israel's punishment is her own fault. Israel's deliverance is the consequence of God's mercy.

Chapter 14 focuses in on that ultimate promise of mercy from God.

As we get into the book of Hosea, who is the book addressed to? One very crucial factor in

understanding Biblical prophecy is to know the identity of the nations being addressed. If you don't know, then you really can't claim to understand the prophecy at all. It's a mystery.

Now the most fundamental error of most of the Protestant fundamentalists who discuss prophecy today is the lack of knowledge of the identity of Israel. When you read the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel and Amos and for that matter, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum on through Malachi—when you read all of the Major and Minor Prophets—over and over again the prophecies are directed toward Israel. Now, if you don't know who Israel is, if you think Israel is simply that little nation in the Middle East that calls itself Israel, if that's what comes to your mind and if that's what you understand when you read the book of Hosea or the book of Ezekiel, then you've come to one set of conclusions that's totally different than if you understood the fact that Israel and Judah refer to two totally separate nations.

When we go through the book of Hosea, it's very clear to whom Hosea is writing.

Hosea 1:10-11, “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, “You are not My people,” there it shall be said to them, “You are the sons of the living God.” Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!”

He is speaking of the end time. Hosea makes a distinction between the children of Judah and the children of Israel. Hosea didn't think they were all Jews. And for that matter, anybody who has carefully studied the Bible knows Northern Israel went into captivity over 120 years before the Southern Kingdom of Judah went into captivity. Israel went into Assyrian captivity. Judah went into Babylonian captivity 120 years later. That's a long time.

It talks about the children of Israel abiding many days without a king.

Hosea 3:4, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.”

Hosea 4:16-17, “For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf; now the Lord will let them forage like a lamb in open country. Ephraim [Great Britain] is joined to idols, let him alone.”

Hosea 5:5, “The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them.” He is making a distinction between Israel and Judah. You can continue down.

Verse 13, “When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb; yet he cannot cure you, nor heal you of your wound.”

Hosea 6:10-11, “I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the harlotry of Ephraim; Israel is defiled. Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you, when I return the captives of My people.” He talks throughout about Israel and Ephraim. Ephraim is the leading tribe of Israel.

It’s very specifically a message for the modern-day nation of Britain and, secondarily, for the United States. In the book of Hosea, over and over, Ephraim is singled out. It is fundamental to understand the book of Hosea. You can’t understand the end time if you don’t understand the identity of the people being described.

That’s why, when most of the Protestant fundamentalists try to talk about Bible prophecy, they don’t have any more idea than the “man in the moon” where the United States is discussed in Bible prophecy. They find reference to little obscure nations like Syria and Egypt. They recognize those, but they don’t have any concept of where the United States, Canada and Great Britain are. They don’t understand that because they don’t understand the identity of our people. If you are going to understand Biblical prophecy, if you are going to understand the Minor Prophets and their application for our time today, then you have to understand the identity of the people being discussed. That shouldn’t be really hard to figure out.

We find Hosea’s family life (as already mentioned) had prophetic significance. His wife Gomer went into harlotry, was put away, ultimately came to repentance and was brought back—literally bought back and redeemed in the literal sense. She was forgiven by Hosea. It is a picture of God’s relationship with Israel.

As we get into the book of Hosea, God talks about a time when mercy will be extended. There will be a time of forgiveness.

Hosea 2:18-20, “In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely. I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness

and justice, in loving kindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.”

Verses 21-23, “It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer,” says the Lord; ‘I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, “You are My people!” And they shall say, “You are my God!””

What is the setting of that? Clearly, that’s the Millennium. That’s when Christ returns. That hasn’t happened yet. That’s talking about conversion. It’s talking about God’s blessing. It’s talking about breaking the sword, the bow and putting an end to warfare—all of these things. Hosea’s message went on far beyond his day. There are implications for our time.

Hosea 4:1-3, “Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: ‘There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed after bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away.’”

Verses 6-7, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.” The more we have prospered, the more we have been blessed; the more that we have increased materially, the more we have sinned against God.

Most of us sitting here are living on a standard far beyond anything we grew up in—things we never dreamed of years ago. Our conveniences have been taken for granted. We are sitting here enjoying the air conditioning. It hasn’t been that long since air conditioning has been readily available. This school wasn’t built with air conditioning. It was built with windows to take advantage of the breeze. A lot of us sitting here didn’t grow up with air conditioning. I remember the first time I ever saw a car that had air conditioning in it. A neighbor of ours had it, and I was really impressed with it. I was

really fascinated with that. We now take it for granted.

Also, contemporary to that, it hasn't been that long ago when, particularly in rural areas, about the only lock most of us had on our doors were the latches on the screen door—and that was more to keep the cats and dogs from coming in or out.

The more we have multiplied and prospered materially in this nation, the more we have sinned against God and the further away we have gotten from God. We see evidence of that. God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Now we have a knowledge explosion. We have all sorts of technological knowledge. But the knowledge that we are destroyed for lack of is knowledge we have rejected. It's the knowledge of God's truth.

Now, the Supreme Court of the state of California has, "in its great wisdom," ruled that when you have high school graduation, they can't open the service with a prayer because they don't want to, in any way, acknowledge there may be God involved in it. They don't want them standing for something like "God Bless America" and having an opening prayer at the high school graduation. We have rejected knowledge that has any sort of connection with God's law or with the Bible. It's absolutely incredible.

Several months ago, the Gideons got in trouble for trying to pass out Bibles in Bossier City in north Louisiana. They were coming around and had been passing out Bibles for years. But this was horrible. The ACLU jumped in on it. You couldn't do that; passing out Bibles was unconstitutional. Now, at exactly the same time, New York City started passing out condoms in their schools. Nobody challenged that. Nobody saw anything illegal about that. You could give out stuff like that to kids in school without their parents even knowing anything about it and paying for it with the taxpayers' dollars. The taxpayers weren't buying the Bibles the Gideons were passing out. The taxpayers were buying these other things they were passing out in New York City.

Let me ask you something. Doesn't it say something about a society and its values when it takes for granted and sees nothing wrong with taxpayer dollars buying condoms and passing them out to school kids all the way down to seventh and eighth grade? Yet, is it horrified at the idea that somebody might give them a Bible? Well, I would suggest that if they want to stop the spread of AIDS, it would be a whole lot

better to pass out Bibles than the rest of the stuff they are passing out because that's where the key is. If they really want to prevent the spread of some of these things, then they should hand them a Bible and say, 'Read it and follow the advice.' It's incredible.

Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."

Verse 11, "Harlotry [KJV, "Whoredom"], wine and new wine enslave the heart." You know what has sapped the heart of the nation? – Immorality and drug and alcohol abuse—whoredom (immorality), wine and new wine (talking about drunkenness), which would certainly, by implication, cover the whole realm of substance abuse. It would cover not only alcohol but the whole realm of various drugs that people try to get their "highs" and "kicks" out of. God says whoredom and wine and new wine has enslaved the heart. They have sapped the very fiber of the nation. Immorality and substance abuse have greatly impacted our nation. God focuses on that here.

Verse 12, "...For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray. And they have played the harlot against their God."

Verses 16-18, "For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf; now the Lord will let them forage like a lamb in open country. Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone. Their drink is rebellion. They commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor."

Hosea 5:5, "The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them." Now, that didn't happen the first time. It is going to happen this time.

Verse 7, "They have dealt treacherously with the Lord, for they have begotten pagan children. Now a New Moon shall devour them and their heritage." KJV, "...Now shall a month devour them with their portions." We have gone into earlier studies on prophecy and the fact of where this month fits in.

Daniel 12:11, if you go back, "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days."

Verse 7, he also describes the Great Tribulation as lasting a time, times and half a time or three and one-half years or 1,260 days. Now, between

the abomination that makes desolate and the onset of the tribulation is 30 days—one month. We find our missing month right here in Hosea.

Hosea 5:7, “...a month devour them...” In other words, this 30-day period is the period of time that it takes for the “mop-up” operation. It takes a month for the nation to actually be completely devastated. Things begin and there is a month that sees this calamity to fruition.

Verse 9 talks about Ephraim being desolate in the day of rebuke.

Verse 13, “When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb; yet he cannot cure you, nor heal you of your wound.” The difference between a wound and a sickness is that a wound is external and a sickness is internal. Ephraim saw his sickness—internal problems, economic difficulties; Judah saw his wound—external problems, things that were inflicted from an outside force.

Based on this verse (Hosea 5:13), Mr. Herbert Armstrong said back in the 1960s that Britain would try to join the Common Market and very likely would even be part of the Common Market for a while but would never be a part of the Beast Power. Britain would try and get involved in that because when they saw their sickness, they went to the Assyrians to bail them out. They looked to the Germans to help them out. They looked to join up with this thing. Whether that is the final fulfillment of this verse or whether there is more yet to come, time will tell.

The latter part of the verse, Judah seeing his wound and going to the Assyrians, has not yet happened. But that is ultimately very likely the pretext on which European troops are going to enter the Middle East. There is an enigmatic statement that Christ makes in Matthew 24:15-16 and Luke 21:20-21 that helps to understand this.

Luke 21:20-21, Christ said, talking to His disciples, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.”

Let me ask you something. If the armies are hostile armies and are coming at you with guns blazing and bombs falling, do you need somebody to tell you that the desolation thereof is near? Even a “dummy” could figure that out by that time. Even Dan Rather and company or Peter Arnette and all those by that time will be

able to figure that out. When the bombs start dropping, it begins to dawn on some of them that the desolation thereof is near. Anybody can figure that out once it is here.

The other thing is, isn't it going to be a little bit late to flee to the mountains if the armies are coming in and the guns are blazing and the bombs are falling? You say, 'I think it's about time for me to flee to the mountains; see you guys later. It says right here I am supposed to flee, so I have to leave.' That's a little late. If one bunch doesn't shoot you trying to get out, the other bunch will shoot you when you do. You are in trouble. Once the bullets are flying it's too late to flee to the mountains.

Christ's statement in Luke 21 and Matthew 24 only makes sense if the armies surrounding Jerusalem do not give the immediate appearance of being hostile armies. Christ told His disciples, 'When you see the armies surrounding Jerusalem, then you will understand it's all over with. The desolation of Jerusalem is near and the abomination will be set up. That will lead to the desolation. You had better get out of there right now because if you wait, it is going to be too late. You won't have a chance to make a getaway.'

You can tie in, “when Judah saw his wound he went to the Assyrians” (Hosea 5:13). Evidently there's going to be something that's going to occur in the future that Judah is going to come out of feeling wounded and enter into some sort of pact with the Germans. The Germans are going to use it as a pretext to bring troops into the Middle East. The only thing is, when they get there, they are going to do something far different than what people suppose.

It's kind of interesting. I don't know how many of you saw it. There was an article in *U.S. News & World Report* a week or so ago about the change of NATO—that the Americans right now are agreeing to withdraw a large portion of their troops and what's left are going to be put under European command. We've never had that before. The only United States troops that have ever been under anybody else's command were some American troops under British command in World War II. But we're looking at putting some under German command, which is a totally different matter. We are looking at a totally different circumstance with our brother Ephraim. And another thing, there was a little article in the *Morning Advocate* in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, buried way back on the back pages. I don't know if any of you saw it. It was just a little short article. It said that negotiations are taking place

between the United States and Germany for German troops to now be stationed in the United States. The article pointed out that's the first time since 1812 that foreign troops will be stationed on American soil. They will be stationed here as part of an agreement. Up until 1812, there were British troops that were stationed up at what was then called the Northwest, some of the area like Michigan and Ohio. There were some British troop soldiers there. But for the first time since 1812, German troops will be stationed over here in this country. Some of the bases they are closing out, they are going to give them to the Germans. Just a small number of troops, you understand, here to help us and protect us.

Anyway, Hosea discusses some of these matters. Hosea is a very up-to-date book.

Notice God talks about how they are going to be brought down.

Hosea 5:15 (KJV), "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early."

Let's follow on in the context.

Hosea 6:1-3, "Come, and let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know; let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth."

What's being discussed here? If we go through the context of chapter 5, we see Israel going into the tribulation, and now we see the fact of repentance. It makes this sort of enigmatic statement, "after two days will He revive us and the third day He will raise us up." The tribulation—the three and one-half years or 1,260 days—is the prelude to Christ's return. The last year of that is really God's wrath on the Beast power. The first two and one-half years of that three and one-half-year period represents Satan's wrath against physical Israel and against the Laodicean Church, the remnant that is left behind as Revelation 12:17 defines it. The circumstance described here—as the Israelites in the concentration camps of the future in areas of South America, North Africa, Germany—as time progresses on into this period of tribulation, as they languish in some of these work camps and some of these places, they are going to think about and remember the message that they heard.

It talks about people remembering the message they heard (Ezekiel 33:32-33).

Brethren, we have a great work yet ahead of us. We have a great work. The work is not finished; there is a work that remains to be done. Exactly when it is going to "blast out" to really shake the nation and world, this is God's time. We don't know exactly. But it's discussed and talked about in the Bible.

Ezekiel 2:5; 33:33, "...they will know that a prophet has been among them."

I don't think you can say that is really the case if the nation were to go into captivity today. The people would not really know to that great extent that there had been a prophet among them. A foundation has been laid. But there is coming a time when the message of Ezekiel, etc., is literally going to shake this nation. In Ezekiel 33:30, it talks about how they are going to be talking everywhere about the message that is being broadcast.

Our responsibility, individually, is to be ready. We need to be close to God and ready to be used by God when it comes His time to really revive His work in the midst of evil. When the time comes to really go forward, a foundation has been laid. Our responsibility is to be close to God so that we are receptive to God's leading and can be used by God to accomplish what He wishes us to do. The timing is in God's hands, and we have to recognize and accept that. We need to not just go charging off "half-cocked," trying to do our own thing.

Hosea 6:1, as people languish in these camps, they are going to say, "Come, let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up." How are they going to know that? They will know it because they have been told by this work!

Verse 2, "After two days He will revive us...."

"After two days"—after the first two years or so have gone by, God will begin to give them some relief. If they follow, then they are going to know—to really know—God. They are going to begin to understand the message that they heard, talking about His going forth and being prepared. They are going to understand how He is going to come (talking about the return of Jesus Christ) and various prophecies.

Hosea focuses primarily on Israel. A little bit of it focuses on Judah. Let's notice—we will pick out some places.

Hosea 7:1-2, "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they have committed fraud; the thief comes in; a band of

robbers takes spoil outside. They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness; now their own deeds have surrounded them; they are before My face.”

Verses 8-11, “Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned. Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it; Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it. And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, but they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek Him for all this. Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense—they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.”

It talks about the involvement with various things that have sapped the strength of Britain and certainly America, as well. And the pride that is there, stood in the way of real repentance.

Hosea 8:1, “Set the trumpet to your mouth! He shall come like an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law.”

Verse 3, “Israel has cast off the good; the enemy will pursue him.”

Verses 7-9, “They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; it shall never produce meal. If it should produce, aliens would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up; now they are among the Gentiles like a vessel in which there is no pleasure. For they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey alone by itself; Ephraim has hired lovers.” Ephraim has entered into various alliances.

Verse 14, “For Israel has forgotten his Maker, and has built temples; Judah also has multiplied fortified cities; but I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces.” “Israel has forgotten his Maker and has built temples.” That is sort of an interesting statement. It is sort of a paradoxical statement. On the one hand, we have forgotten our Maker and yet on the other hand, we really go in for the outward show and display of religion. Oh, we have temples all over and churches on every street corner. We like to pride ourselves on being such a religious people and yet we don’t follow what God says.

There was an interesting article; I believe it was *U.S. News & World Report* that had the article on American attitudes regarding sex and immorality. The statistics they give is just incredible. It shows that the Bible is almost irrelevant in the eyes of the vast majority of people in terms of what they do and practice.

We have forgotten our Maker and build temples. Judah has not made nearly the outward show of religion. They have just multiplied fortified

cities. They have built up missiles and all this kind of thing. God says, ‘I am going to send fire upon them.’

They had a little bit of a taste of that in the Persian Gulf War. It was just a little bit of a taste of that; there is going to be more. Our false religion can’t deliver us, and all their fortified cities can’t deliver them. There is going to be captivity.

Hosea 9:3, “They shall not dwell in the Lord’s land, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and shall eat unclean things in Assyria.” They are going to eat unclean things in Assyria. They are going to be transported.

Verse 11, “As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird....” It describes these things over and over.

Hosea 10:1, “Israel empties his vine; he brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the bounty of his land they have embellished his sacred pillars [images].”

Verse 5, “...because its glory has departed from it.”

Verse 13, “You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men.” It describes all these things that are going to come. Israel, over and over, is described as having sought after all kinds of allies as her protector, rather than God. The very ones that she put her trust in as deliverers are ultimately going to destroy her.

From a spiritual standpoint, as far as Israel is concerned, God labels that as adultery because God entered into a husband-wife relationship with Israel. Israel was to look to God to protect her and provide for her, rather than to put her trust in others. In that sense, God views Israel as a wayward wife. She is going to have to learn a bitter lesson and repent. Then God will take her back.

Hosea 12:1, “Ephraim feeds on the wind, and pursues the east wind; He daily increases lies and desolation. Also they make a covenant [treaty] with the Assyrians, and oil is carried to [or, through] Egypt.” It is very possibly some sort of reference to the Suez Canal—something that is going to transpire in the future.

Verse 2, “The Lord also brings a charge against Judah....” KJV, “The Lord also has a controversy with Judah....” Judah is separate from Israel, but they are going to be dealt with, as well.

Hosea 13:9, “O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from Me.” KJV, “O Israel, thou has

destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help.”
That’s the key! We have destroyed ourselves; our destruction is the consequence of our own actions.

We need to understand these things are real. It is talking about being carried into captivity into North Africa, Germany and various places. That is literally going to happen. That’s going to happen to those who don’t take this warning and this message seriously. It’s going to happen to some who have warmed seats in God’s Church. It’s going to happen to some who have grown up in God’s Church who sort of tuned it out and haven’t paid any attention to it. It’s going to happen to people who have heard the broadcast and read the magazine. It’s going to happen! *It’s going to happen!* It is something that we had better take seriously and realize that God puts these warnings in here for our good and for our benefit. We ignore them to our peril.

Hosea 14:1-3, God says, “O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity; take words with you, and return to the Lord. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, ‘You are our gods.’ For in You the fatherless finds mercy.”

Hosea 14 ends with the focus on repentance and return and God’s mercy and forgiveness.

The book of **Joel** is a little short book. We find a focus on economic and agricultural devastation. **The whole theme of Joel is the day of the Lord.**

Joel 1:4-7, “What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten. Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth. For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; he has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white.”

Verse 10, “The field is wasted, the land mourns....”

Verse 12, “The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered....”

Verses 14-15, “Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord

your God, and cry out to the Lord. Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty.”

The first chapter of the book of Joel focuses in on the agriculture sector. We have to realize that agriculture underlies the whole strength of the economy. I once saw a bumper sticker when we were traveling through the Midwest. A pickup truck had a bumper sticker on the back, and it said, “If you eat, you are involved in agriculture.” That’s how basic agriculture is. If you eat, then you are involved in agriculture—and everybody eats. The basis and starting point of economic strength and economic stability goes back to the agricultural sector.

According to what Joel says, we are going to experience some real devastation.

Joel 2:1-2, “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations.” It describes this army.

Verse 3, “A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them.”

Verses 10-11, “The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?” Christ is going to come back and He is going to have a great army with Him.

Verses 12-16, “‘Now, therefore’, says the Lord, ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him—a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast; call a sacred assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room.’”

This talks about a warning message that God is going to take to His people Israel, a warning of the events that are going to come and a call to repentance.

Verses 28-32, ““And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.””

We find part of verses 28 and 29 quoted back in Acts 2:15-21—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. So at least part of this has been partially fulfilled in Acts 2. But the great fulfillment is yet future.

Revelation 6:12-17 focuses in on the time when the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood—the time of the great day of the Lord.

Revelation 6:12-14, “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.”

Verse 17, “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Joel 2:30-31, ““And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.”” You have to tie that in with Revelation 6.

Joel 3:1-4, ““For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy in exchange for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may

drink. Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? Swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head.”” It describes the things that have occurred.

Verses 9-10, “Proclaim this among the nations: ‘Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and our pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’”” That is pretty descriptive of what we have going on right now with the arms race. “Let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’” That sounds like old Saddam Hussein going around bragging about the “mother of all battles” and all that he was going to do—this type of thing.

Verse 9, “Proclaim you this among the Gentiles. ‘Prepare for war. Wake up the mighty men....’” Get ready! We have this gigantic, obscene expenditure for arms in all these third-world nations that can’t feed their own people. They are beating their plowshares into swords. They are spending the money on weapons that they should spend on an agricultural infrastructure. They are going to have a chance to use all those weapons because all nations are going to be gathered together in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. God is going to finally put a stop to this foolishness. He is going to gather all nations and bring them into battle there in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. That is outside the area of Jerusalem. Armageddon is the place where the armies gather. They converge on Jerusalem, and when Christ returns, the destruction takes place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

Joel 3:12-17, ““Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The Lord also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again.””

It will no longer be the place that is trodden down by every rampaging army going back and

forth as has been the case all the way down through time.

Verses 19-20, “Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall abide forever. And Jerusalem from generation to generation.” God describes these events that are going to culminate in the return of Jesus Christ. The focus is the day of the Lord. Clearly, when you go through prophecies in Hosea and Joel, it is not primarily talking about what happened 2,500 years ago. Did these things happen exactly that way then? Go back to Revelation 6 where it describes the sun becoming black, the moon becoming blood red—the events of the day of the Lord, the events that are going to culminate in the return of Jesus Christ to this earth and the establishment of the government of God.

The phrase “Blow the trumpet” is used over and over. The blast of the shophar was a signal of warning and alarm. The implication is that God’s work is going to sound that alarm, the admonition, “blow the trumpet in Zion.” Who is going to blow that trumpet?

Isaiah 58:1, “Cry aloud spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and show My people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins.” That’s going to be fulfilled.

What we’ve done up until now has only been a partial fulfillment of that. It has only laid the groundwork for the great fulfillment yet to come. What we need to be doing is staying close to God, really walking with God and drawing close to Him, so that God will allow us to be used to finish the job that He has called us to do. We, individually and personally, can be a part of the great work with which God is going to shake this earth and this nation. We are living in what the Bible describes as perilous times (II Timothy 3:1). If you are navigating a perilous stream, it’s important that you depend on a very experienced navigator.

I remember one time where we were going through an area on a canoe trip. We were going to shoot some rapids. I had not been on this stretch before, but there was an individual who had. He knew the river. When we got up to the spot, some just went bounding right on through, and it didn’t take long before they crashed. I kind of stopped and paddled so as to just stay still because I wanted to watch the guy who knew his way through. I saw what he did and I waited until he got through. I saw what he did and the way he went through. After he was out of the way, then I tried to follow through and do

exactly what he did. We got through, too. We were a couple of the only ones who made it through without capsizing because he knew what he was doing and I followed him. I didn’t know what I was doing, but I knew that he did.

There’s a lesson there because we are in the process of navigating a pretty perilous stream, a pretty perilous set of rapids known as “the end time.” Jesus Christ knows how to navigate the rapids. He knows exactly how to do it. If we think we know how to do it and go charging ahead, we are going to crash somewhere in the process. But if we follow through exactly as He leads, we will be fine. That’s one of the key things to keep in mind at the point in which we find ourselves. We need God’s help, guidance and direction. We need to stay close to God to fulfill that for which God has called us.

Joel refers to the valley where the last battle is going to be fought. Joel 3, verses 2 and 12 refer to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The world talks about the Battle of Armageddon. In reality, there is not a battle of Armageddon. The armies gather there, but the battle is outside Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. That’s where the armies are destroyed. The armies are gathered to Armageddon to converge on Jerusalem. It’s the Valley of Jehoshaphat where they are actually going to be destroyed.

God is going to win. He is going to set the stage at this time to begin the events of the Millennium. We converge on Jerusalem, here in the book of Joel, and see a focus on the end time—on the Day of the Lord.

The book of Hosea focuses in on Israel and it’s primarily for the end time. If it was primarily for back then, why is it in the prophets? If all Hosea is, is a historical book that’s talking about something that occurred 2,500 years ago, then it’s pretty much irrelevant to us except as a part of the history. We have the history back in II Kings. Hosea is here to tell us the events that are going to come to pass. Joel is here to tell us the events that are going to come to pass.

These books of the Minor Prophets have a tremendous amount packed in. There are things that apply very directly and very emphatically to us in our time and day and in the time ahead of us. We are going to sort of skim through them rapidly. We will come back at later times and pick up other portions. But the way to get the maximum benefit out of it is to read the books and study them in conjunction with other literature that we have published over the years. Go through, read and study the books. Use the study guide and then we will try to hit the high

points next Bible study. We will sort of pick up speed. The books that we are going to cover next time—Amos, Obadiah and Jonah—are fairly short books. We will get a little bit of an overview on some of those.