

# VESSELS OF WRATH | HOSEA CHAPTERS EIGHT THROUGH TEN

BY LUKE THORNE

## INTRODUCTION

**Romans 9:22-23, 28 (ESV)**

“22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,  
23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—  
28 for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.”

In the letter to the Romans, Paul poses this hypothetical question that bears healthy consideration, especially this morning. What if God had prepared with incredible patience, the Jewish race of old as a cautionary tale of the consequences of sin and God’s wrath towards idolaters so that we could genuinely appreciate the value and weight of God’s forgiveness and grace? If he had, will we listen, or will we fall into the same cycle of iniquity and idolatry as they did?

In today’s passage, we will discover just how heinous Israel’s depravity was and just how far God was willing to go to purify those who could still be saved. Indeed, it was so bad that, another prophet of the time of Hosea wrote, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.”<sup>1</sup>

Like a mouth full of rotten teeth that need to be pulled, we shall proceed through the hardest part of Hosea’s prophesies by getting all the painful stuff done at once instead of stringing it out over multiple sessions. As such, we will not be going verse by verse through a chapter. Instead, I will be providing an overview of three chapters together

## CONTENT WARNING

This sermon is not for all audiences. It contains references to sexual perversion, rape, murder, and infanticide. I have, however, attempted to put the most grievous descriptions in the footnotes so as to keep the main text mostly clear of traumatic triggers.

## IDOLS, ALTARS, AND KINGS

“Like the nations that the Lord made to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.” Deuteronomy 8:20

In our first section, we shall be dealing with the themes of kings and idolatry. Although we could look at the chapters in order of verse, I believe it might be more helpful to parse out the different themes and study them separately before bringing it all together again at the end.

## A KING AND CONSEQUENCES

**Hosea 8:4 (ESV)**

“They made kings, but not through me. They set up princes, but I knew it not.”

When I first read this, I was confused. After all, Romans 13:1 makes it clear that all authorities are appointed by God, and even in Daniel, the prophet makes it clear that God gives kingship to whomever he wills with disregard to all other considerations<sup>2</sup>. What then is meant when God says, “They made kings, but not through me.”?

If we read a little further on, in chapter nine YHWH makes a strange and ominous declaration:

**Hosea 9:15 (ESV)**

Every evil of theirs [began] in Gilgal; there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels.

What happened in Gilgal that the LORD would say that it was there that his hatred of their idolatry began?! It was there that the children of Israel demanded to have a king<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 1:9

<sup>2</sup> See Daniel 4:14

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, they had on another occasion asked Gideon to be there King. His response is wiser but unheeded: “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you.” (Judges 8:23, ESV)

## 1 Samuel 8:7-8 (ESV)

7 And the Lord said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.

8 According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.

The LORD gave them their heart’s desire (a king, so as to be like the other nations). He did this in anger<sup>4</sup>, and he was now going to take the kingship back at great cost. What folly it was to pursue a flawed and imperfect human king when they were already in the Kingdom of God. And yet, is this not something we can fall prey to?

There is only one true king, but there are many counterfeits. Like physical counterfeits, the most dangerous ones are those that are near to seeming the genuine article! The Apostle Paul warns the church of Corinth,

“3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, **you put up with it readily enough.**” 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 (ESV)<sup>5</sup>

Some of the ways “Christian” teachers have corrupted the kingship or robbed the crown of its glory are obvious; some are not.

Have you ever found yourself preferring Christian books and writers over the Holy Scriptures? Or perhaps you have attended a new “Bible Study” only to discover it was a [insert famous author here] fan club? How easy it is for us to venerate and devote ourselves foolishly to the teaching of Man rather than come to the feet of the one true King!

If not carefully guarded, the Christian faith becomes a vehicle for wolves and wayward sheep to spread their own personal gospels, drawing away the flock into heresy and distraction.

## ALTARS AND IDOLS

### Hosea 8:11 (NET)

Although Ephraim has built many altars for sin offerings, these have become altars for sinning!

“This is one of the oldest, the most prevalent and the most hateful sins amongst mankind. Men have perverted worship, not only by making false gods, but by making false altars for the true God. There is only one altar in true worship, and that altar is Christ (Heb. 13:10).<sup>6</sup>”

This is incredibly important for us understand; for there are two distinct ways to fall into idolatrous worship. The first is to worship “false gods.” The second is to worship the true living God falsely.

What false gods demand your worship? Surely there are the old pagan deities, but many of the most pernicious devils lurk much closer to home. Materialism, sex, public image, money and success, patriotism, social reform, and the big one, self. The bigger trouble with these idols is that they often infect our worship of the living God, YHWH!

How much of the western church’s devotion and worship to God is motivated by Mammon<sup>7</sup>? How many pastors fill their appetite for financial success or sex through the fame of the pulpit. How many churches have become propaganda platforms where the people within are more interested in political victory than proclaiming Christ?

How many people are “Christian” because they believe it will benefit them in their work or their family or their finances? If we worship God, it must be because he alone is God, and he alone is worthy of our worship. Beware turning God into a golden calf! He will not abide it.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Hosea 13:11

<sup>5</sup> Galatians 1:6-7 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfendale, J. (1892). *Minor Prophets* (p. 122). New York; London; Toronto: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>7</sup> “...mammon, the Aramaic term for wealth or possessions. The point is not that money is inherently evil, but that it is often misused so that it is a means of evil; see 1 Tim 6:6-10, 17-19. God must be first, not money or possessions.” Biblical Studies Press. (2006). *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Lk 16:13). Biblical Studies Press.

**Hosea 8:4b-6 (NET)**

4b They made idols out of their silver and gold, but they will be destroyed!

5 O Samaria, he has rejected your calf idol! My anger burns against them! They will not survive much longer without being punished, even though they are Israelites!

6 That idol was made by a workman—it is not God! The calf idol of Samaria will be broken to bits.

While Moses and Joshua were upon the mountain receiving the Law from God, the people became restless, and so they made a golden calf out of their jewelry to worship. Indeed, what's even more alarming is what they named it.

**Exodus 32:4-5 (ESV)**

4 And [Aaron] received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And [the priests] said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord."

They turned God into something profane! They made an Idol out of him. Indeed, when the next day came, they worshiped and ate and drank, and proceeded to "play" around the altar<sup>8</sup>. God was so incensed that he vowed to kill them all, but in the end he rented to Moses' plea's for mercy. Only 3,000 were killed.

But this was not the last time the children of Israel created golden calves to worship YHWH through. Indeed, during the time of the division of the Kingdom, Jeroboam created two idols for the northern tribes to worship so that they would not have to go down to Jerusalem<sup>9</sup>. It seems the children of Israel was hell-bent on idolatry, in spite of everything the LORD had shown them and done for them.

**Romans 1:18, 21-23 (ESV)**

"18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."

**SOWING SIN, REAPING RUIN**

"Do not be deceived: God is not to be mocked, for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap..." **Galatians 6:7**

**SOWING AND REAPING CHAOS**

**Hosea 8:7 (NET)**

They sow the wind, and so they will reap the whirlwind! The stalk does not have any standing grain; it will not produce any flour. Even if it were to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it all up.

What does this metaphor mean? Logic would seem to say that if you sow nothing, then surely, you will reap nothing. But that cannot be further from the truth. Indeed, they will not just reap no fruit, they shall reap the fullness of the wrath of God. If you sow nothing, you will reap everlasting destruction<sup>10</sup>! God was going to destroy them for their faithlessness.

Interpreting "sowing the wind" as sowing nothing is a good start, but is there not another more nuanced interpretation? While considering this, I sat in my office at home, pondering the trees outside through a swelling breeze. What I saw was not a constant push in one direction, but a chaotic turbulence of eddying wind. It blew the branches this way and that without rhyme or reason.

<sup>8</sup> Lit. to revel v. – to celebrate noisily or engage in uproarious festivities, often indulging in drinking and sexual activity including orgies.

<sup>9</sup> See 1 Kings 12:26-28

<sup>10</sup> "And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 25:30

Perhaps this is a more accurate interpretation of “sowing the wind.” Perhaps it isn’t that they sowed nothing, but rather that all their efforts were chaotically thrust in whatever direction their hearts were pointing at the moment. It hearkens back to Jesus’ condemnation of the tepid heart in Revelation 3:15<sup>11</sup>. They sowed their hearts desires—did what was right in their own eyes—they followed their heart. But the heart of man is deceitful and wicked<sup>12</sup>; no wonder it led them to wickedness and ruin!

**Hosea 10:13 (NET)**

13 But you have plowed wickedness; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your chariots; you have relied on your many warriors.

To illustrate the to-and-fro nature of Israel’s obedience and Idolatry, let’s look no further than the text at hand, because there is a subtle breadcrumb trail of what God meant when he declared they “sow the wind.”

### THREE ABOMINATIONS SOWN

Today’s passage alludes to three locations of significance as inciting incidents in God’s coming wrath. What happened at these places is often disturbing but reminds us of God’s justice in destroying the people.

BAAL-PEOR

**Hosea 9:10b**

Then they came to Baal-Peor and they dedicated themselves to shame— they became as detestable as what they loved.

Before the time of the Kings, or the Judges—indeed before the entering in of the promised land, The children of Israel were encamped on the East side of the Jordan fighting the Midianites. It was here, that a subtle corruption of the Midian prophet Balaam infected them<sup>13</sup>. The details of the sin here is not specific in the Bible. What we do know is that it was a sexual sin (1 Cor. 10:8) and that the plague of judgment resulted in the deaths of 24,000 Jews before the righteous act of Phineas “turned back the wrath of God.<sup>14</sup>”

Extra-Biblical sources expand the vileness of their transgression into something horrible to behold. We know that Baal-Peor means “god of the gap” or “god of holes” and that worship of this false god involved disgusting sexual practices that even gentiles found repulsive<sup>15</sup>.

The people of Israel had “dedicated themselves to shame” becoming as detestable as the thing they loved. They had become less than human by their own choice—that is they ceased to be anthropos (those who look up) and became mere bound by their appetite.

GIBEAH

**Hosea 9:9**

They have sunk deep into corruption as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their wrongdoing. He will repay them for their sins.

Hosea 10:9-10

9O Israel, you have sinned since the time of Gibeah, and there you have remained. Did not war overtake the evildoers in Gibeah?

10When I please, I will discipline them; I will gather nations together to attack them, to bind them in chains for their two sins.

The first and last place mentioned in this passage is Gibeah, and what transpired there is not often spoken about in

---

<sup>11</sup> “<sup>15</sup>I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! <sup>16</sup>So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” Revelation 3:15-16

<sup>12</sup> “<sup>9</sup>The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” Jeremiah 17:9

<sup>13</sup> See Numbers 31:16

<sup>14</sup> Numbers 25:11

<sup>15</sup> The worship of Peor involved anal sex and feces. Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, known as Rashi, comments on Numbers 25:3 stating that because the people would uncover before it, the end of the rectum, and bring forth excrement; this is its worship – therefore the place was called Peor.

Church. Indeed, do you remember the story of the Levite and the Concubine? Likely not, indeed, I had forgotten it.

The account of what happened is recorded in the book of Judges, chapter 19, and I must warn you that it is intensely graphic and disturbing. To paraphrase here, it involves a gang-rape so egregious as to result in a woman's death; the perpetrators fellow Jews no less<sup>16</sup>. The other tribes rallied in disgust to destroy the Benjamites and killed 25,000 men along with all the women and children. Indeed, only 600 men of Benjamin survived the fury of Israel.

God is here declaring that just as he smote the tribe of Benjamin then, so would he do so now against all the Northern Tribes. But what are their "two sins?"

That is tricky, and there is no consensus among scholars, but I think that it may have something to do with the fact that even after this event, the Israelites demanded a king, whom they found in Saul, a Benjamite from Gibeah<sup>17</sup>.

GILGAL

**Hosea 9:15 (LEB)**

Every evil of theirs began at Gilgal, so I began to hate them there; because of the evil of their deeds I will drive them out from my house. I will love them no more; all their officials are rebels

This is where the people demanded a king and received Saul. See the first section for more details.

### THREE RUINS REAPED

If there are three distinct scenes of shame and abomination, there are three distinct categories of ruin placed upon them. However, cannot help but be sobered to discover that each of these ruins requires the death of their children at the hands of God.

The first is a cutting off of their glory (that is, those things which they value above all else).

**Hosea 9:11-12, 16 (NET)**

11 Ephraim will be like a bird; what they value will fly away. They will not bear children— they will not enjoy pregnancy— they will not even conceive!

12 Even if they raise their children, I will take away every last one of them. Woe to them! For I will turn away from them.

The second is a drying up of the fruitfulness of their society and culture. Their national identity was to be destroyed and their land taken from them.

16 Ephraim will be struck down— their root will be dried up; they will not yield any fruit. Even if they do bear children, I will kill their precious offspring.

The third category is truly the means by which the first two will come to pass: violence and war. God was going to bring nations against them like a tide against the sand and all who were not slain would be sent in captivity forever.

Pause with me and consider: Is God just to have done this thing to these people? Perhaps we would be tempted to shout "No!" if we had not considered the long-suffering patience of God towards their detestable hatred of goodness.

The Canaanites were given centuries to repent<sup>18</sup>, but they refused and were annihilated in the conquest of Joshua. The Israelites were given centuries of warning after warning to repent. Here, we read of the results of their refusal. They had sowed deceit and chaos and wickedness, never turning long from it; they cultivated hearts of immeasurable blackness and now were reaping the whirlwind.

### CONCLUSION

700 years later, the Jews of Jesus' time so despised the Samaritans—the remnant of this doomed people<sup>19</sup>—that they

---

<sup>16</sup> It is a tragic story in which it is impossible to find a hero, for even the Levite is vile in his forcing his concubine out to appease the lust of the men of Gibeah (Judg 19:25). After she is found dead on steps to the house, the Levite cuts her into 12 pieces and sends them to all the tribes (v.27-30). Ultimately, the tribe of Benjamin was destroyed by the other tribes with only 600 of 25k remaining alive (20:46-48).

<sup>17</sup> See 1 Samuel 10:26

<sup>18</sup> See Genesis 16:15

<sup>19</sup> Maiers, B. (2016). Samaritans. In J. D. Barry, et-al, The Lexham Bible Dictionary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

considered them less than human. The words of the prophets comforted them in their hatred of the Samaritans. What fools they were. The lesson they chose to learn was that the northern tribes were evil—not like them, ‘righteous Jews!’

The lesson we must endeavor to learn is twofold. First, we must accept that there are dire consequences to our sin. True, if we are in Christ, then we are free from the condemnation that leads to eternal death<sup>20</sup>, but our actions will have ugly consequences in this life. All around us suffer for the sins we sow.

The second is that we are not any different than the nation of Israel we have studied today<sup>21</sup>. There was no secret virtue to being born a Jew instead of a Samaritan, nor is there one to be born a Gentile instead of a Jew. All of us are born with the same hearts, deceitful and hungry with avarice. What hope is there then? Jesus’ cleansing blood shed for us is the only hope we shall ever find.

#### **2 Timothy 2:21-22**

*21Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.*

*22So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

And so, we must find the warning in their fall worthy of our deepest prayerful consideration. If it were not for Christ, that would be me. Indeed, I am not any different, if I am honest. We are, each of us, born vessels of wrath; but we each have a choice to make. Will we make Christ our King or something else? Will the altar of our heart worship him or something else? Come, let us fall at the feet of our savior and be washed clean in his blood.

#### **Hosea 10:12**

*Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*

If God prepared with long-suffering the kingdom of Israel as a vessel destined for destruction, will you learn from their insolence? Indeed, their path is the path of the unrepentant. Have you taken an accounting of your life’s treasures and deficits? Who is the king upon the throne of your heart and mind?

#### **BENEDICTION**

Ephesians 2:4-7

*4But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,*

*5even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—*

*6and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

*7so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What happened in Gilgal?
2. Can we be tempted to turn to a different king?
3. What are the two different roads to idolatrous worship?
4. Which is more of a danger to *me*?
5. What does it mean to “sow the wind”?
6. What lesson did the Jews learn?
7. What lessons must *I* learn?

---

<sup>20</sup> See Romans 8:1

<sup>21</sup> God shows no partiality of race, sex, creed, or culture. See Romans 2:6-11