

Hope for the Exiles

Hosea 8:10-14

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Hosea 8:10-14 (NIV)

¹⁰ *Although they have sold themselves among the nations, I will now gather them together. They will begin to waste away under the oppression of the mighty king.* ¹¹ *“Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings, these have become altars for sinning. ¹² I wrote for them the many things of my law, but they regarded them as something foreign. ¹³ Though they offer sacrifices as gifts to me, and though they eat the meat, the Lord is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins: They will return to Egypt. ¹⁴ Israel has forgotten their Maker and built palaces; Judah has fortified many towns. But I will send fire on their cities that will consume their fortresses.”*

v10 – Where is the hope among the proclamations of judgment?

God promised that Israel would face the conquering Assyrians and exile, but also that He would one day gather them again. This note of mercy is sprinkled through the warning of judgment.

When would this regathering of Israel happen?

Under the Persian rule, some would return in the time of Esra and Nehemiah. Others would return when Israel had a temple again in Jerusalem. Ultimately, this is referring to the return to the land of Israel in unbelief in preparation for the Messiah to return (happening now).

Ezekiel 37:21, 23 – *Surely, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land... I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. **Then** they shall be My people, and I will be their God.*

Israel will be supernaturally regathered back to the land at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom as believers:

Jeremiah 16:14-15 – *Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.*

This regathering in belief will be something of a “lateral rapture” probably in conjunction with the resurrection of Old Testament saints...

Daniel 12:1-2 – *there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And **at that time** your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

What would become of Israel while they are in exile?

They will begin to waste away under the oppression of the mighty king – they would find it difficult to hold on to their culture unless they returned to the land of Israel.

- Some would assimilate, intermarry and even forget they are descendants of Jacob.
- Others would hold on to their culture by returning to the land of Israel when they could or by isolating themselves in enclaves

v11 – What did God think of the altars of Israel?

Israel foolishly built many altars for sin as part of their idol worship. So, it is no surprise that those altars became altars for sinning.

What is the application of this for us today?

How do people today build altars for sin?

We build altars for sin when we allow things in our lives that distract us from God. Also, when we give ourselves opportunity and occasion for sin, it should never be surprising when we end up sinning.

v12 – What else had Israel done that ostracized them from God?

I have written for him the great things of My law, but they were considered a strange thing: In their sin and idolatry, Israel also rejected the Word of God. God had great things for Israel, but they seemed like a strange thing because their hearts were far from God.

How is it that God wrote the many things of His law? Wasn't it the prophets who wrote Scripture?

The humans involved in recording Scripture were essentially scribes. It was God who gave us His Word...

2 Peter 1:21 – *for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

If God is truly Almighty as He represents Himself in Scripture then He is almighty enough to have accurately given mankind His Word and preserved it through time even using His flawed scribes.

What does it mean to regard the Bible as inerrant?

It is not just the prophetic passages that were inspired by God...

2 Timothy 3:16 – *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*

This means we can use the Bible to understand what God teaches us, to correct those in error, and to help us be more like Christ.

What are the important doctrines of the Bible?

The fundamentals... Jesus is God, He was miraculously born of a virgin, He died to pay the penalty for our sin, He rose from the dead, He is returning, we are saved by grace through faith...

Why are the things of God's Law described as "great" (NKJV)?

This tells us the content of the Bible – great things. The Bible speaks of the greatest and most important things of both life and eternity.

- There is nothing in the Bible which is unimportant.

What are life's greatest questions that the Bible answers?

- Does God exist, and, if so, what is He like?
- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- What is my purpose in life?
- Why is there so much pain and suffering in the world?
- How can I live a joyful, meaningful life in a world with so much evil?
- What happens after I die?
- Is history headed somewhere?

The Bible answers Does God Exist? in its first four words: *"In the beginning God . . ."* (Genesis 1:1). In other words, at the beginning of the universe and all life as we know it, God was there already. **What is God like?** is answered through the rest of the Bible, but two of the dominant features are that God is loving but also holy. Since He is holy, He must punish sin; but, since He is

loving, He wants to forgive sin as well. This is a dominant theme that is developed in Scripture.

Who am I?, Why am I here?, and What is my purpose in life? are also answered in the first chapter of Genesis. Genesis 1:27–28 says, *"God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"* We are here because God created our first parents and put them on earth. We are created in God's image, and our purpose is to act as God's representatives on the earth, living in obedience to and fellowship with Him. How we respond to others is a good measure of what we think of the One they represent. When we work, cultivate, invent, explore, innovate, have children, and love others, we are doing what God put people on earth to do. However, if we do these things but are not in fellowship with Him, we are missing the key component.

Why is there so much pain and suffering in the world? is addressed in Genesis 3. God had given our first parents, Adam and Eve, the whole world and only one prohibition—there was one tree from which they were not supposed to eat. He warned them that, if they ate the fruit, they would die. However, in disobedience to God, they ate the fruit. As a result, they immediately felt shame and isolation from each other and from God as evidenced by their fashioning "clothing" from fig leaves and hiding from God when He came to meet with them as He had been doing daily. Because of their sin, pain and death were introduced into the world. Eve would have to experience pain in childbirth. Adam would have to work hard and experience pain in order to provide food for his family. And both of them would grow old and die. All of creation "fell," and all of the pain we see around us was introduced because of sin. Even the animals were affected. One of Adam and Eve's sons, Cain, killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4). The pattern of pain and suffering and death continues as people live in rebellion against God.

How can I live a joyful, meaningful life in a world with so much evil? God did not abandon Adam and Eve and their descendants. God continued to reach out to people and provided a way for them to be made right with Him in the midst of an evil world. God chose Abraham (Genesis 12) to be a special conduit of blessing for the world. Through Abraham would come the people of Israel, who gave us the Scriptures that show us what God is like. Ultimately, Jesus Christ, who would save us from sin and its penalty, was born into the world through the people of Israel. Jesus was God in human flesh; He lived a perfect

life and died to pay for the sins of human beings. (This was foreshadowed in the animal sacrifices that God prescribed for Israel.) But, unlike the animal sacrifices, Jesus rose again from the dead, guaranteeing that His sacrifice was sufficient. On the cross, God punished sin but made it possible for the sinner to be forgiven—both God’s holiness and His love were combined in this one event. In Christ we can be forgiven of all our sins and made acceptable to God. We can also begin to be reconciled with other people and truly begin to live the kind of life that God wants us to live. Because God’s Spirit lives within the believer, he begins to experience love, joy, peace, and a multitude of other virtues that make life better for everyone. This is a small taste of what is to come.

What happens after I die? is also answered in the Bible. Hebrews 9:27 says that *“people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”* For those who have been reconciled to God by faith in Christ, there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1). For the Christian, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8), but, for those who do not know Christ, there is only a *“fearful expectation of judgment”* (Hebrews 10:27). Death is only a transition to eternity. People, made in God’s image, will live forever either in God’s presence or banished from Him in eternal punishment.

Death is not the only end in sight. The Bible tells us that **history is headed somewhere**. God intends to create new heavens and a new earth—replacements for what was spoiled by sin. The new one will be filled with God’s righteousness (2 Peter 3:16). Christians are told to wait patiently for that day, since Christ could return at any time and bring all of God’s plans for earth to culmination.

How are God’s people regarding His Word as something foreign today?

By not recognizing its authorship and thus its inerrancy... thinking it is just the human record of mankind’s search for God. Consequently, the biblical literacy of the common Christian is pretty poor and has led to false doctrines and even heresies (apostasy).

How is not properly seeing the Bible as God’s Word render the Christian no different than an unbeliever?

Being so ignorant of God’s Word because it seems foreign to you is the same perspective of the unbeliever...

1 Corinthians 2:14 – *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

The Word of God and the things of the Spirit are great things, but seem like a strange thing when man is in sin and idolatry.

v13 – What does this say Israel did to make God not pleased with them?

They performed their rituals that were supposed to honor God but their hearts were really far from Him.

- Worship is more than just showing up to church Sunday mornings... it is what we do to honor God all day, every day.

What is meant by, *they will return to Egypt*?

As Israel was exiled to Egypt in Jacob’s day, they will be exiled in Assyria.

v14 – How had Israel forgotten their Maker?

Israel built temples, but not unto the LORD who made them. Therefore, the judgment described in this chapter is coming upon them.

What was Judah’s sin?

Judah also has multiplied fortified cities: While Israel practiced outright idolatry, Judah was guilty of a more subtle sin. They trusted in the fortified cities they built against the Assyrians. Those cities would be of no help (*I will send fire upon his cities*), and the only the LORD would preserve Judah from total destruction (Isaiah 37:33-36).

What could be wrong with success and nice buildings?

They can easily become idols if our hearts turn away from God. If God brings size and great buildings, it is wonderful — as long as we don’t turn our eyes off Him, making those things idols.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- Israel is currently gathering in unbelief, but they will be regathered as believers and this will be deemed more memorable than the Exodus.
- We build altars for sin when we allow things in our lives that distract us from God.
- Believing the Bible to be inerrant is an essential doctrine; anything less will result in error.
- The Bible answers life’s greatest questions.