

KINGDOM SPIRIT



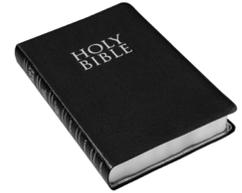
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“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Matthew 6:33



Issue 712

II KINGS—II CHRONICLES AMOS—HOSEA

We have reached the point, in our study of the two kingdoms of Israel, that God starts sending prophets to warn and testify against each of these kingdoms. We have written records of several of these prophets in books by their names in the Old Testament. The prophet Amos is one of the first to fulfill this divine mission to the kingdom of Israel, the northern kingdom. He first foretells the events we find recorded in II Kings 16:9, the taking captive of Damascus, capitol of Syria, by the Assyrians due to the actions of the Syrians against Israel as recorded in II Kings 10:32-33. He lists the judgment of God against other cities and nations such as Gaza (a principal city of the Philistines), Tyrus, Edom and Moab as a result of their actions against Israel. He also pronounces a judgment on Judah for their despising the laws of God.

Then he focuses his attention directly on Israel. Not only were they worshipping other gods, they were selling themselves (taking bribes), oppressing the poor and submitting themselves to physical perversion. In Amos 3:2, God tells Israel, **“You only have I known of all the families of the earth:** (referencing the promises to Abraham and David and the covenant He made with Israel at Mt. Sinai), **therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”**

Then verse 7 says, **“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”**

God tells Israel, through Amos, that He brought hard times on them such as drought, pestilence, war, etc., in an effort to cause them to turn back to Him, but there had been no turning. So He says in Amos 4:12, **“Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”**

In a lamentation, Amos pleads with Israel to return to God’s way and to put away the gods of Jeroboam. He warns Israel of the severity of God’s judgment. It was not that Israel did not offer their sacrifices and offerings or sing their songs. They did this, but they did so hypocritically in that they did them for show and strictly as a ritual—not an obedience from the heart. Amos told them that God wanted judgment, or justice, and righteousness. He tells Israel in chapter 5 that because they had forgotten their God, yet carried their images, God would cause them to go into captivity beyond Damascus. He accuses them of putting the inevitable judgment of God out of their mind, seeking their pleasures and luxuries, and of not being grieved for the affliction of Joseph, (another name for Israel). The most guilty would be the first to go into captivity.

Their biggest sin seemed to be the deceitful robbing of the poor through their business transactions. God promised a famine of the hearing the words of the LORD.

In promising to destroy Israel, God prom-

ised not to destroy them utterly. In Amos 9:9 He said, **“For, lo, I will command and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.”**

In verses 11-15, God promises a re-gathering, a **“bringing again the captivity of my people of Israel”** (i.e. bring them out of captivity), then to plant them upon their own land and **“they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them.”**

A note before we get too far into prophecy, let me say that we should study prophecy from two perspectives at least. First we will find a direct fulfillment. Then often we'll find prophecy to have a second, or double, fulfillment in the latter days. Though this is not necessarily always the case, it will always pay us to look for the second, or sometimes third and fourth fulfillment.

God told Israel in Lev. 26:33 that if they made idols and continued in their worship of them, **“I will scatter you among the heathen (nations) and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.”**

Now we have a prophet telling them that they have made idols, continued in the worship of them, and have come to depend on themselves instead of God. God was going to cast them out of the land and scatter them among other nations. The point of no return had been reached. They were going into captivity! Amos was roughly 35-40 years ahead of the actual events.

Before we look at what other prophets had to say, let's return back to the kings of the two kingdoms and see what actually happened. During the reign of Uzziah in Judah, Israel went through six kings, all adding evilness to the sin of Jeroboam's sin (the two golden calves) rather than putting it away. Zachariah took the throne when his father Jeroboam died, to be followed in short order by Shallum, then Menahem, Pekadiah and finally Pekah. During the reign of Pekah, we see the prophecies of Amos begin to come to pass. Tiglathpileser, king of Assyria, came against Israel, took several cities and all the land of Naphta-

li, and carried the people captive to Assyria. Hoshea then conspired against Pekah, slew him, and reigned in his stead.

Meanwhile in Judah, Uzziah died and Jotham, his son reigned, to be followed by his son Ahaz and then his son Hezekiah.

I might note that the first use of the term “Jew,” a term that has been badly misused and that causes much confusion in our modern day, was used for the first time in our Bibles in II Kings 16:6 in recounting some of the events during the time of Ahaz. Very briefly, II Kings 14:22 tells us that Uzziah, king of Judah, built Elath and restored it to Judah. II Kings 16:6 tells us the Rezin, King of Syria, recovered Elath to Syria and drove the “Jews” from Elath. This would indicate that the Jews were strictly of the house, or kingdom, of Judah. It will pay us to be sure to correctly identify these people called “Jews” as we study.

King Hoshea tried double-crossing the king of Assyria after Hezekiah became king of Judah and the king of Assyria, Shalmaneser, came up against Israel again. Following a three year siege against Samaria (capitol of Israel), Assyria took Samaria, then all Israel captive and placed them in Halah and Habor, cities by the river Gozan and in cities of the Meads. Consulting a map of that time will show us these cities were located just south of and between the Black and Caspian Seas in Northern Assyria which is now northern Turkey and Iran. The Assyrians then brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hameth and Sepharvaim to re-inhabit the land of Israel.

Nine years later, Sennacherib, the new king of Assyria, returned and took all the fenced cities of Judah, with the exception of Jerusalem, and carried them captive to the same place as the Israelites. These last two captivities took place in the 5th and 14th years of Hezekiah's reign. We now have all of Israel and the majority of Judah in captivity to the Assyrians and peoples from other lands occupying their land and cities. Jerusalem has escaped the captivity, and people of both Israel and Judah who were gone from home have es-

caped, for now. This massive (in the millions of people) relocation has taken place in a series of three captivities over a relatively short period of time.

The Bible doesn't record actual history of these people from this point on, as it has up to now, yet if the promises to Abraham are unconditional, this certainly can't be the end of their story. Amos has told us there will be a re-gathering and that these people will be in a land of their own never again to be removed, so possibly the clues as to this people's destiny will come through other prophets as well.

When Israel became a nation, or kingdom, at Mt. Sinai, we likened the relationship between God and Israel to a marriage. Now that Israel in particular and a good share of Judah are cast out of their land, both the prophets Jeremiah, in Jer. 3:8, and Isaiah, in Isa. 50:1, refer to what has happened as a divorcement of Israel from God. God follows his own law of divorcement. (**"When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."** Deut. 24:1-4) He first gives Israel a bill of divorcement (dis-ownership) through the prophets and then casts them out of His house (land) by the kings of Assyria.

Now that we know what actually happened to Israel, we need to continue on with what the prophets had to say about what was going to happen to them. Hosea, contemporary with Amos and several of the other prophets we'll discuss,

had a strange mission for God. He is told by God to marry an harlot. Hosea complied, marrying a harlot named Gomer. As Hosea and Gomer began having children, God prophesied, concerning Israel, in the names He instructed Hosea to give these children. The first, a son, was named Jezreel which, according to Hosea 1:4 meant God would cause to cease the kingdom, or the house of Israel.

The second, a daughter, was named Loruhamah (meaning not having obtained mercy) which meant God was to no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but would utterly take them away. An interjection in verse 7 tells us that God would have mercy on Judah and would save them by the LORD their God and not by military might. II Kings 19:35 is the fulfillment of this prophecy.

The third child, a son, was named Loammi, meaning **"not my people."** As we read the book of Hosea we will see that this **"not my people"** actually became the name of Israel. On into the New Testament, we find it used as an identification there, as well, in places such as Rom. 9:25-26. Here in Hosea it deals with the actual divorce, God's dis-ownership of Israel as His wife. We have seen all of this happen as we read the actual history of Israel. God has fulfilled the requirements of His law of divorce.

Now, in verse 10, we are told that the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea in number (remember the promises to Abraham) and then Hosea says that in the place where it was said unto them, **"Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God."**

The prophecy that follows in verse 11 reminds us of the final verses of the book of Amos. So now, we have a prophecy of the things we now know actually happened to Israel and again we have a prophecy of their restoration. But keep the law of divorce in mind. If God fulfills this prophecy, something else has to change to keep God from violating His own law. Though we're not told at this point what has to happen, Hosea goes on to assure us that God will remarry Israel.

Using Gomer as a symbol of Israel, God

says, in chapter 2, He is no longer married to her because of her whoredom, He is even going to take away all that has been given to her because she credits her lovers (gods) for giving it to her. In verse 14, God looks ahead and says he will allure her (Israel) and bring her into the wilderness and give her vineyards from the wilderness and she will sing there as in the days when she came out of Egypt. In that day, she will again call Him husband. He promises to take away the names of her gods from her mouth and she will live in complete peace. He says in Hosea 2:19-20, **“I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.**

Then the prophecies in the names give in chapter 1 are reversed. The “Lo” is left off and this removes the “no” or “not.” Ammi then means “my people” for example. So we find Israel is to return to their original position with God, only better.

Hosea goes on to prophesy that Israel will abide many days without a king, or prince, or sacrifice, etc. Afterward, she shall seek the LORD her God and David her king and shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

He warns Judah not to offend as Israel has. However, God renders judgment on Judah also and they are told that they will go into captivity. After reviewing Israel’s sins, Hosea tells us, in chapter 11, of God’s feelings. God loved Israel and His heart is broken as He gives them up. He first exhorts them to return to God and finally makes it clear that they will return.

We will continue with our look at the prophets of this time period including Joel and Isaiah next issue.



BAPTISM

Most of us look at salvation as a one step thing. But if we look at the teaching of the apostles, I think that we will see that if we are to use the term “salvation” in its fullest sense, it is really a 3 step process if we are to achieve the fullness of salvation as promised by God. We have discussed justification, the first step, already as we looked at the sacrifice of Christ for the sin of all men and have noted that it is a free gift, not something that anyone of us have to work for in any way. In discussing baptism as something that we do in obedience to God, we are looking at the second step, that of “sanctification.” Sanctification means “being set apart” and while it is conferred by the Holy Spirit, it is something that requires effort on our part. The third step is something from God, but is a result of the first two steps, “glorification.” Baptism is certainly a part of the sanctification and it is carried out looking toward glorification. Paul seems to teach about baptism in this spirit. For example, let us look at Gal. 3. In verse 21, Paul asks the question, **“Is the law then against the promises of God?”** The promises referred to are the unconditional promises that God made to Abraham. Basically God promised Abraham that his seed would rule the world. Verse 16 of this chapter tells us that Christ is the “seed” to whom this promise is actually made. But continuing, Paul answers his own question, **“God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”** Paul goes on to say that before faith came, we were kept under the law until the faith should be revealed. Vs. 24 says, **“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”** The law Paul is referring to here are the ordinances, the law which

included the requirement of the various rituals including the blood sacrifice. Faith did not do away with this law. Christ fulfilled this law, so we no longer need to be taught the law with a view to the perfect sacrifice, i.e. the sacrifice of Christ. It is now an accomplished fact. We now need to believe this, i.e. have faith that it is an accomplished fact. For us to be totally righteous, for nothing less is acceptable before God, we can only be this through faith, or believing Jesus Christ was who He said He was and accomplished what He said He would do. That faith recognizes and accepts Christ's complete righteousness as our own. Paul continues, **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."** Note that we are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. If we are obedient to that faith, we will be baptized and thus, because we demonstrate that obedience, we begin to put on Christ, i.e. take on His divine nature. Vs. 29 then says, **"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."** As Christ was the seed to whom the promises applied, we, by taking on His divine nature, or putting on Christ, become a part of that one seed to whom the promises were made. This baptism then is basically with a change of mind, or repentance, not only with a view toward remission of sins, but also with a view toward putting on Christ, or taking on the divine nature. It signifies our acceptance of the free gift of justification and our expectation of sharing the divine nature with Christ.

We have already read that the original tabernacle with its order of rituals was a pattern or shadow of the true tabernacle yet to come. Solomon kept this pattern intact in building the temple and the two times that it was rebuilt later also maintained this pattern, but it was still a shadow of the true tabernacle yet to come. In Hebrews 10, Paul is giving us some insight into that true tabernacle. Starting with verse 14, he says, **"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, this is the covenant I will**

make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say his flesh:" (Remember that in the original tabernacle, only the high priest went through the veil into the Holy of Holies and he only went once a year. But here Paul is telling us that we should have the boldness to enter in ourselves into the true Holy of Holies and that we can do so by a new and living way which He, Christ, has consecrated for us. The margin of my Bible says "consecrated" can be read "new made." That way is through the veil which is His flesh. In the original tabernacle the veil was a fabric veil separating the two parts of the tabernacle. The veil of the true tabernacle that stands between us and the true Holy of Holies is Jesus Christ, but He has made a way for us to go through and be in the true Holy of Holies ourselves.) Paul continues, **"And having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."**

Because we have this assurance, we each can be a part of this Holy of Holies, which basically is taking on the divine nature, being a part of God, if you will, since only God is there. Only that which is righteous, that which is pure can be there. We could not be there except through Christ.

Comparing then in review, the baptism of John and that of the apostles, that of John was a

baptism with a change of mind, or repentance from sin, with a view toward remission or forgiveness. That of the apostles already assumes the sacrifice, thus forgiveness, so this baptism is with a change of mind, or repentance, with a view toward that forgiveness and one that unites us into an extremely close union with Christ that gives us a view of our ultimate destiny of being partakers of that divine nature, of being part of the Holy of Holies. Christ is the sacrifice, Christ is the veil—baptism is the outward expression of our acceptance of these facts.

In the tabernacle pattern presented to us in Exodus and Leviticus, the priest had to wash at the laver prior to either going to the altar to sacrifice or going into the Holy of Holies. In review, Christ was baptized by John in answer to this requirement, not for repentance. In His case it was preparation for both going to the altar, i.e. His supreme sacrifice, and going into the true Holy of Holies.

Revelation 20:6, speaking of those who have attained to the first resurrection, the putting on of the divine nature, being overcomers, says, **“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”** I believe that baptism serves as the laver experience for these as well as they prepare to minister as priests of God and of Christ.

There are a couple more types of baptism that I want to discuss as part of this study, but let’s pause for a moment to answer some questions that came up in our local study group that might answer some of our readers questions. First, “does one have to be baptized to be saved?” The answer to this may be more clear once we look at “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” as I think we will all be baptized one way or the other as far as God is concerned. My opinion is that justification alone does not require baptism. But, if we are to be a part of those who are going to reign and rule with Christ, we must step beyond justification and here a commitment is required on our part in this life. That commitment is visualized by others

through our physical water baptism. This is a part of our sanctification.

“Do we have to be old enough to realize the full importance of our commitment before being baptized?” Again, my opinion, I believe we should. However, there are a couple of points that need consideration about this. First, Acts 10 and 16 give us at least two instances where whole families were baptized. I have to presume that there were children in those families. If children are baptized, to me there is then a special burden on the parents to teach the child his or her responsibilities as to the commitment that the child made as evidenced by baptism. The other point is that the commitment one makes doesn’t have to be in full bloom. I don’t believe that it ever could be. It is something that can and should continue to grow throughout each of our lifetimes. It is like getting married. I doubt there ever was a couple who committed to each other at the ceremony who ever realized at that moment the fullness of that commitment that they would experience through out their lives. I strongly suspect that the reason we do not find everything about baptism spelled out fully in black and white in one place in the Bible is: 1) the ritual itself would be worshipped (though there are many today who do this very thing) and, 2) it seems that Paul, in particular, seems intent in his writings in developing this commitment, or maybe a better way of saying it would be “developing the fullness of the Spirit.” The commitment we make has to come through the Spirit as I think we’ll see as we get into the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is a growing thing. None of us at any one point in our lives can say we have reached the fullness, this is it.

The outward manifestation of our inward decision is not only to others, but is also a reminder to ourselves. It is a promise put in writing so to speak. Baptism of children would seem okay in this sense because a child can grow into the commitment made by the parents. But the parents would be in error if they did not remember the commitment and teach the child. They could not and should not put their trust in the ritual itself. Again, my opinion, if the child did not keep the

commitment, but turned away and then later comes back and wants to commit himself, he or she may want to be baptized again. But certainly being baptized every time one has a change of mind on doctrine, or has a guilty conscience would not be necessary.

We'll continue with some more questions next issue and then look at other baptisms discussed in the Bible. If you have questions, please send them to us and we will do our best to get you answers. JRL

ASIA MINOR-TURKEY

We are continuing our look at the various countries, or nations, that made up the geographical area known as Asia Minor, or the Anatolian Peninsula, known today as Turkey, in the days of the apostles. We began last issue with Cappadocia on the eastern end of the peninsula. As we move westward, we have Pontus on the north of Cappadocia and Cilicia on the south. The history of several of these countries is very similar with the same people inhabiting them and their being subject to the same greater powers together. So it is with Pontus and Cappadocia. In fact, for centuries boundary changes were almost constant as Pontus became more a part of Cappadocia and then Cappadocia would become a part of Pontus. As with Cappadocia, there was quite an ethnic mix over the centuries starting with the Hittites on up to the 20th century A.D. While the Persians and Greeks probably had the greatest influence, tribes of Israelites, as they left their Assyrian captivity and began migrating west, also had an influence.

At the time of the apostles, Pontus was a fairly narrow land bordered on the north by the Black Sea, Cappadocia on the east and south and Bithynia on the west. The Black Sea coast is, for the most part, a steep, rocky coast with rivers that rush down through gorges in the mountains that form an almost unbroken wall that separates the coast from the inland. Access from the coast inland is limited to these few narrow valleys be-

cause of the high mountain ridges.

Pontus wasn't significantly affected by either the Persian or the Hellenic (Greek) civilizations. However, profiting by the breakup of the empire of Alexander the Great, a Persian family took control of Pontus in the 4th century B.C. In 281 B.C. Mithradates II declared himself king of Pontus and the borders and the influence of Pontus began to expand. Phrygia became a part of Pontus. By 112-110 B.C. Mithradates VI came to power and he conquered all of Asia Minor and gained control of the Crimea which sets in the northern Black Sea. He even threatened Rome's position in Greece, but this was primarily due to Rome being busy elsewhere. In 65 B.C. Pompey defeated Mithradates VI and thus began a process in which Pontus would be divided and attached to first one Roman province and then another until 62 A.D. when Nero constituted it a Roman province. At the time of the apostles, Pontus was firmly in the hand of Rome.

The eastern part of Pontus is mountainous, wild and barren, yet rich in minerals and especially known for its iron mines. The western part was watered by the rivers Halys and Iris and their tributaries. The valleys were extremely fertile. It has been reported that cherries were brought from Pontus to Europe in 72 B.C.

Due in part to the difficult access to the country, we're told that Christianity was first introduced by way of the Black Sea in the first century after Christ but that Christianity did not reach the inland to any great degree until the third century. When the inland was Christianized, it was due in large part to the missionary zeal of Gregory Thaumaturgus, bishop of Neocaesarea. However, we find Pontus mentioned as being the home of some of the Jews who were in Jerusalem at Pentecost following the ascension of our Lord. (Acts 2:9) Also in Acts 18:2, we see Pontus was the birthplace of Aquila, who along with his wife Priscilla, became good friends and supporters of Paul. Peter addressed his first epistle to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These were probably descendants of the Israelites that had

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gone into the Assyrian captivity and were now migrating westward after leaving that captivity, that had been converted to Christianity. So we know there were Christians in Pontus very shortly after Christ.

Pontus continued to be an autonomous state in the Roman Empire through the Imperial rule of Constantinople and most of the history of the Byzantine Empire. It fell in 1204 which gave rise to the Empire of Trebizond until 1461 when

the name Pontus was preserved as a state within the Ottoman Empire.

As the Ottoman Empire declined in the early 20th century, the influence of the “Young Turk” movement resulted in mass killings and deportation of Christian Greeks in Turkey of which Pontus was a part. Finally in 1923, a population exchange was made in which 1.5 million Greeks in Turkey were resettled in Greece and 300,000 Turks living in Greece were re-settled in Turkey. JRL

A little girl, dressed in her Sunday best, was running as fast as she could, trying not to be late for Bible class. As she ran she prayed, “Dear Lord, please don’t let me be late! Dear Lord, please don’t let me be late!” While she was running and praying, she tripped on a curb and fell, getting her clothes dirty and tearing her dress. She got up, brushed herself off, and started running again. As she ran she once again began to pray, “Dear Lord, please don’t let me be late...But please don’t shove me either!”
