

## Consequences

Hosea spoke to the Northern Tribes of Israel in a time of prosperity. Things were going well materially, but spiritually, they were bankrupt. *“Israel has forgotten his Maker”* God told them (8:14), and the consequences were going to be disastrous. Graphic judgment was spelled out for Ephraim because (God said), *“You have plowed wickedness; You have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, Because you trusted in your own way”* (10:14).

There is a principle in Hosea that would well be heeded by anyone serious about living a life dedicated to God. It involves *consequences*. The focus of this prophet is summed up well in chapter eight, and the first part of verse 7. *“They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind.”* Our society, and especially the Lord’s church today, can benefit from the lessons Hosea taught to the Northern Kingdom. The following point highlights the prophet’s divine mandate.

Ignorance is a societal and spiritual crippler. Nearly everything in our society, from educational institutions to media programming, has been “dumbed down” to accommodate our growing ignorance. Lofty standards and high expectations are a thing of the past. Sure, I watched cartoons when I was a child, but I knew we were in trouble when cartoons became popular in primetime. Seriously, folks, have we dipped so far into intellectual infancy? Worse, the church has quickly cabbaged on to the trend, offering comic book evangelism material and *“teaching for doctrines”* an Andy Griffith curriculum. Sitting down to study the Bible is passé; and the church has begun to reflect its ignorance of the Book through entertainment-oriented innovations designed to cater to personal preferences. In many churches of Christ, worship is no longer directed to God; it’s intended to meet felt needs. Hosea cried out, *“There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land...My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (4:1b, 6a); then, he rebuked them, saying, *“Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD”* (6:3a). They rejected the message.

When hoards of heathens from the Assyrian nation pummeled them mercilessly, grotesque and brutal predictions became a nauseating reality. *“Ephraim is stricken, Their root is dried up; They shall bear no fruit. Yes, were they to bear children, I would kill the darlings of their womb. My God will cast them away, Because they did not obey Him; And they shall be wanderers among the nations...Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up”* (9:16-17; 13:16). You can almost hear the pitiful cries of penitent Israelites; too little, too late.

We have an opportunity *today* to change the digression into which churches of Christ have fallen by increasing our knowledge of God. If we will learn history’s lessons, we can salvage what is left of our society and fortify the church’s defense against spiritual decline. Hosea gives us the key, and it is either an ominous warning or an enlightening encouragement. Whichever way you take it, take it. *“Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them”* (14:9).

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