**December 29th 2024 Sunday after Christmas**

**Text: Hosea 14:1-9** 0757

**Theme: Israel of the New Testament.**

May the riches of God’s grace ever be given unto you all in great measure, that we may never entirely despair but have increased hope throughout our lives. Amen. Dear friends in Christ: Recently I saw a news story from a conservative news source regarding the ongoing conflict in the middle east between Palestine and Israel. The story postulated that Christians should support the nation of Israel, not because theirs was a just conflict, nor because the other side was immoral, as would usually be the case for a Christian, but rather it was stated that Christians should support Israel because they are God’s people, and since we are also God’s people we should support them without question. Yet that statement is an oxymoron of the highest degree. Here is the truth of the matter: Christians and Jews are not the same, and both cannot be God’s people, for the two are polar opposites. It is true that the Christian faith grew out of the Old Jewish faith, but the modern day Christian has as much in common spiritually with the Jew as he does with the Muslim. In fact a Christian is less kindred with the Jew, for the he is as a snake in the grass, whereas the Muslim is a known enemy. I say these things not to disparage the Jewish race in general, but to show the spiritual status of those who practice the Jewish religion. They have forsaken the true way, and are to be counted among the heretical religions of the world, to be considered by the Christian as a false church, and among those who spread lies. The reason this is the case is because of their rejection of the Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the New Testament as a whole. Let us turn to the book of John, chapter 14, reading verse 1: **read passage here.** Jesus’ statement to His disciples is on of exclusivity. If you believe in God the Father then you must also believe in God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. A person cannot believe in a third of God, just a part of God, but a person believes in the whole God or none of Him. And if your reject the Son of God, you have rejected God and it doesn’t matter what your lips might say to the contrary.

The news story, along with a great majority of the reformed church of today, has the idea of Judeo-Christian equality because of a handful of misinterpreted and misapplied passages which speak of Israel as being saved, primarily from the book of Romans, chapter 11, verse 26: **read passage here.** The words all Israel shall be saved is torn out of its context in the book of Romans, which had spent the previous ten chapters stating that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ the Savior. Israel, as Paul is using it here and other places, is referring not to Israel as a nation, but to spiritual Israel. This we learn from Romans, chapter 9; verses 7-8: **read verses here.** Paul is showing the truth that many times, especially in the New Testament, that when Israel is referenced, it is not speaking of Israel in the flesh or the nation, but spiritual Israel, that is, those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior whether of the Jewish race or Gentile. These are the true children of Abraham, the true people of God. It is faith or unbelief. And so the Jewish religion and the Christian religion cannot both be God’s people, for they are opposites. The truth of the matter is that the Church of God on earth, the militant Church, is the Israel of the New Testament. This Church differs from the Old Testament Church in one way only: we look back at Christ having come to fulfill all things, the Church of the Old Testament looked forward to the same and the coming fulfillment of all things. It is the Church, that is, Israel of the New Testament that we look at today as we wrap up our study of the book of Hosea, and learn of sacrifices, and from whence they proceed. Let us then see these things according to our text which is found in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Hosea beginning at verse one.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most glorious Lord God of heaven and earth, we praise and worship Thy name for the great revelation of Thyself in the Old Testament to Thy people of Israel, that is, the Old Testament Church. Show us that their faith at the time was the same as ours: forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation through the promised Savior. Likewise we thank Thee for the revelation of Thyself in Thy Son, when in the fulness of the time Thou didst send Him forth to accomplish Thy good purpose of saving a world of sinners. Like the Church of old, we too believe on the Savior sent to redeem us, but from the other side of history. Grant that we understand clearly the difference between spiritual Israel, and the Israel who has now rejected the true faith in favor of a lie. Help us to retain the plain teaching of Scripture, that faith in Thy Son and His redeeming work grants to us the forgiveness of all our sins and eternal salvation, but rejection of Him and His work is unbelief and therefore damnable. Grant us knowledge and salvation, and as a fruit thereof to offer the fruit of our lips and the contrition of our hearts. Grant, O Lord, our continued growth, and our preservation in the faith, until we shall be brought to Thee for all eternity. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us see the Israel of the New Testament which:

1. **Offers contrition.** We read verse three of our text: **read verse here.** One of the major themes of the Old Testament, of the book of Hosea, and of the entire Bible, really, is exhortation to contrition. The definition of contrition is the state of being sorry for sin committed, heartbroken, desperate. It is wishing you could take back what you did, and having the earnest and sincere intention of never committing sin again. In fact, no person can be a Christian if he is not contrite over his own sin, for the Gospel cannot be believed if there is no sorrow over sin. Hear David the King after he had committed adultery and murder and had been reproved for those sins; turn now to Psalm 51, and read verses 16-17: **read verses here.** David the King, who was said to be after God’s own heart, had committed grievous sin, purposeful sin; and had fallen from faith, but is restored first through the contrition of his heart by the admonition of Nathan the prophet. He sorrowed not because of any punishment, but because He knew that he had grieved God in His heart, that He had broken the righteous Law of God. He sorrowed because thereby he had given up the faith that had saved him. He was heart-broken because he knew that he had sinned. So is true contrition each and every time. If a person says that they are sorry for the sins they have committed but is not willing to put that sin away from themselves, then they are not truly sorry for that sin, but are entrenched therein, and love their own, which is the opposite of sorrowing over it. This is called the fruit of repentance, or the fruit of contrition; let us turn to the book of Matthew, chapter 3, reading verses 5-8: **read verses here.** The Pharisees had thought to outwardly participate in what was seen as repentance, as contrition, but in their hearts they were not sorry and no intention of ceasing from their sin. Rather they continued in unbelief, and intended to do so. The fruit of true penitence is to go and sin no more, as Jesus often told those He had forgiven. This is said, not because Jesus thought those people could actually stop sinning altogether, but He exhorted them to cease from purposeful and impenitent sin. In other words, ‘I have forgiven you, don’t continue in that same sin.’

In the case of our text we see the contrition of Israel, which like many prophecies has multiple fulfillments. First the people of Israel of the Old Testament would indeed repent and turn to the Lord after their captivity in Babylon, but which would ultimately cease again. But the primary fulfillment is in spiritual Israel, wherein every member is truly contrite over their sin. They each acknowledge what they have done, acknowledge that there is no help to be found in men or in any gods of our making, but only in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, in the Messiah who was to come. This includes, of course, Israel of the New Testament, for we are one body and one Church with them, according to the faith in our hearts. Some are in the Church triumphant, some are yet in the Church militant, but all are in the invisible Church of God; God’s people; Israel. Now this contrition is a sacrifice to God, not of merit, but one like unto the incense offered in the Temple, a sweet smelling savor to God, for a broken heart, is a heart that is also healed by God through His grace. It is a heart prepared to receive the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus have we seen Israel of the New Testament which offers contrition, and:

1. **Offers praise.** We read verses one and two of our text: **read verses here.** Another sacrifice offered by the Christian, and by the Hebrew of old, is the calves of our lips as they are referred to in our text, This is another way of saying that we offer ourselves to the Lord, with our hearts, our lips, our song, our preaching, our service, and the like. It is the result of a heart that has been turned from sin and looks to the Lord for salvation, for there it is found in great measure. The blood of bulls and goats cannot save or forgive, but only in view of what Christ would do, and likewise with the good works of a Christian. We offer praise and worship because of what has been done, which is to God the height of mankind’s service toward Him. You see, mankind has invented all sorts of things to do something for God, things which He has not required, and that we have attached some value to, but which God cares nothing for. This is apparent in the Roman Catholic church, who requires that its members attend confession and practice penance, neither of which are required by God, at least in the way they teach them. Further their monks and nuns practice self-flagellation, forbid to be married, and live in poverty, none of which are ever commanded by God. But the same applies to all in unbelief. Whether it is the thought that God is appeased by our charitable work toward the poor, or by practicing the Torah, or by giving ten percent of our income. God desires none of these things as David says, but He desires a broken and contrite heart, and the praise of men to Him as the rightful recipient of their adoration. He is God and therefore deserving of all glory and honor due Him. This is true of both the church militant and the Church triumphant as well as both Old and New Testament churches. Now have we seen the Israel of the New Testament which offers contrition and praise:
2. **Resulting from God’s grace.** We read verses one through nine of our text: **read verses here.** We cannot cease our study of the book of Hosea or of this text without noting the grace of God, and the fact that it is this grace which produces contrition and praise, not the other way around. We don’t want to make the mistake of thinking that our contrition and praise elicits a gracious response from God, because that would mean that we are talking about love that has been earned by us from God based on our conduct. No, it must be that our ‘sacrifices’ are in response to the great things God has done for us. Notice the wording of verse two: **“Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.”** Our action is a result of the change in God’s heart toward man. He is no longer wrathful over sin because of Christ’s redeeming work in our behalf, and His love then is expressed toward us, and manifested by the sending of His Son.

This response is common to both Old and New Testament Christians. Both are contrite and offer praise because of what God has done for us. Let us compare David’s words in Psalm 51, verses 1-19 with Paul’s words in Romans chapter 7 verses 18-25: **read all passages here.** Notice the similarities: contrition over sin, desperation for forgiveness, and exclamation that forgiveness and salvation have been given. What is really being talked about is faith. Let us then dear Christians not fall for the old evil foe’s deception of Judeo-Christianity, but let us believe the Gospel, sorrow over our sin, ask the Spirit to cleanse us from all sin, and believe that we are forgiven of all our sins for the sake of Jesus Christ. In this way we remain the true people of God no matter what race we are, whether Jew or Gentile. I pray that this study of the book of Hosea has been edifying and instructive, and next Sunday we will move to the next of the minor Prophets, that of the book of Joel. May the Lord continue to bless and keep us in the new calendar year to come, and bless our study of His Word unto us for our eternal salvation. Amen.