

The Richer the People, the More Pagan

‘Caruthersville is such a small town that it only has one church and no barbershop. So to stem the tide, Baptist preacher Harley pastors the little church and during the week becomes the town barber. Well, in Caruthersville lived a [very] successful man who decided that he wanted to show off his wealth by getting a daily shave at Pastor Harley’s barbershop. Now, when the preacher had to go out visit the sick and shut-ins, his wife Grace picked up the shears and razoring responsibilities. As a matter of fact, it just so happened that Grace was holding forth when the successful man came in for his first shave, and shave him she did. “How much do I owe you?” he asked Grace. “That’ll be [forty]-five dollars”. Even though it seemed a bit steep, the man paid up and left the shop feeling very successful. The next morning he woke up and rubbed his chin. Why, his face was as smooth as it was the day before. The same thing happened the following morning and the next, too. Perplexed, the successful man went back to the barber shop and asked how he kept his clean-shaven look. This particular day Pastor Harley was in, and his answer to the successful man’s question was, “Friend, you were shaved by Grace—and once shaved, always shaved”.’

If only! If only it were once “*saved*”, always “*saved*”, as Bap-

tists like to believe. But that whole theological controversy revolves around one thing, like most all controversies, semantics. Exactly what is meant by being saved. Without delving into this topic that has generated thousands of years of debate, let me sum it up this way: God has given all humanity free will, and for each and every one of us to receive eternal life, it requires that we “cooperate” with, and obey our Savior Christ Jesus. If we don’t, as the Scriptures explain, how could we possibly assert that we love Him? If Person A doesn’t love Person B, why would Person A want to spend eternity with Person B? Well, they wouldn’t, and they won’t. As stated last Sunday, love, at its fundamental level, is a decision, an action of our will, feelings notwithstanding.

Hosea 10:1b states: “the richer the people get, the more pagan altars they build”. This simple phrase captures in a few words an ancient, practically inescapable tendency of humanity. But not just that. The entirety of Hosea, indeed the whole Bible, tells us exactly what’s wrong with this world and us. And more importantly, what to do about it. While the original context for the prophecies Holy Spirit gave Hosea were directed to Israel, aka Samaria, and to Judah, as all God’s holy and supernatural words are, their meaning is not limited to time and space. And we, reading these words, can not help but see how they apply just as decidedly to us in America. Why? Because we are, in a very real sense, the Gentile Israel. As I’ve said before, as the only nation in history founded and established to be in covenant with God, to

specifically propagate the Gospel, God's Holy Word, to the peoples of these lands, and to all the world, we are a second Israel. Thus, we are joined at the hip with the Jews, God's chosen people. We are both, together, along with all believers, the one New Man, that Christ Jesus inaugurated in His Own Body. As such, what happens, what happened, what will happen to Israel, in the past, in the present, in the future, will also happen to us.

As we keep that in mind, we also need to understand what "natural law" is, God's fundamental principals in how the creation operates and functions. We need to have some grasp of both what it is and how it operates. In brief, natural law is essentially another name for the two choices God gave us in the beginning. Choose life or choose death. Obedience or rebellion. Simple as that. Like the physical laws of the universe—gravity, the laws of motion, conservation of matter, etc.,—obedience to His natural laws for our behavior by *anyone* attracts His blessings whether they're believers or pagans. Disobedience attracts the curses, again whether believers or not. They are part and parcel of all the other "natural" laws of the universe, that's what they are. No different than the universal laws of physics, etc. As the Lord stated that He sends rain on the just and the unjust, when many people in an area live according to God's laws of behavior, summed up as loving God and one's neighbor as one's self, God's promised blessings flow on that place, benefiting those who obey and spilling over onto those who disobey as well. The disobedient

thus benefit by others' obedience who consciously or even unconsciously follow God's statutes for living. The story of America is a case in point. Remembering this we now look back at Hosea.

Hosea 1 began with God telling him to marry a prostitute. An unconscionable thing to do! But it was to vividly show the chosen people, and all people ultimately, the relationship God intended to have with us humanity from the beginning of time. God wanted and wants to be the perfect loving Father, like a perfect loving husband to us. To protect us, care for us, shower us with His love and blessings. All we needed to do, if we can even call it that, was just to go along with His program! Simple as that! But Adam disobeyed, willfully, that one tiny little, so-easy-to-obey, command. And that rebellious nature has been in all humanity ever since.

Hosea 9 begins with God telling His people, "you have been unfaithful to your God, hiring yourselves out like prostitutes, worshipping other gods". Is this not literally true for America? What manner of depravity and worship of sensuality and demons was on full display last month? Verse 2: "So now your harvests will be too small to feed you". As transpired with Israel and Judah centuries past, so increasing shortages will come upon us and the world. In the future days after the Third Great Awakening comes and goes in our land, and presumably after the Church, the faithful believers, are raptured out of the world, the curses of verse 6 will come upon us. Though a diminished United States will seek alliances with other nations, it will be conquered. As verses 7-8

described ancient Israel, so they describe America today. God says, “Because of your great sin and hostility, you say, “The prophets are crazy and the inspired men are fools!” Hosea then comments, speaking from his own experience: “The prophet is a watchman over Israel for my God, yet traps are laid for him wherever he goes. He faces hostility even in the house of God”. Thus we see even so-called Christians today ridiculing and violently attacking the faithful warning others to repent and turn back to God.

Though God saw how beautiful the devotion, praise and worship made the people in the beginning when He chose them through Abraham and his descendants, “Soon they became vile, as vile as the [false] god they worshiped” (verse 10). So Hosea asked God how he should pray for them. Hosea understood God in verse 14 to pray thus: “I will ask for wombs that don’t give birth and breasts that give no milk”. Do you see how merciful that is? By not allowing them to give birth, they would have fewer children to sinfully sacrifice via abortion, and there would be fewer of them to suffer God’s punishment. The same is happening even today!

Hosea reports at the end of chapter 9: “My God will reject the people of Israel because they will not listen or obey. They will be wanderers, homeless among the nations”. You see how that came to pass and lasted some 2,000 years. But God’s incomprehensible mercy turned it around in 1948 when Israel as a nation state was reborn! Thereby He fulfilled His promises and started the clock for the end of this age, and the soon return of Christ

Jesus, and the re-creation, the total gut rehab of the earth and all the universe. What a day of glory that will be!

Now Hosea 10 begins: “How prosperous Israel is—a luxuriant vine loaded with fruit. But the richer the people get, the more pagan altars they build. The more bountiful their harvests, the more beautiful their sacred pillars”. And so has not America? The more prosperous we’ve become, the more pagan! Somehow, we fall into the trap of thinking that somehow it’s by our own strength and ingenuity that we have prospered, and then not only start forgetting God, but as pride floods higher and higher within us, the emptiness in our hearts that God is supposed to and used to fill, is now increasingly filled with evil, unholy, depraved spirits that cause insanity. Verse 4 continues: “They spout empty words and make covenants they don’t intend to keep. So injustice springs up among them like poisonous weeds in a farmer’s field”. Sound familiar? But praise God for last month’s Supreme Court decisions! College affirmative action has been overturned! A Christian sister’s right to freedom of religious expression has been upheld! Things are starting to turn around as God’s people pray!

God says in verse 12: “Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the Lord, that He may come and shower righteousness upon you”. The people then did not listen. But, now we will listen! And we will obey!! And America shall be saved until the Tribulation begins!

