

# A Call to Repentance

Russell Kemp—August 17, 2024

I look at the conditions and some of the things that are taking place in the United States, my homeland. I'm concerned about some of the things that are taking place.

We just recently celebrated Independence Day—July the 4<sup>th</sup>. We always sing songs about the United States of America and about our freedoms and the wonderful life that we're fortunate to share, *and we are!*

But there's a darker side to America that we don't often bring up. Please, please don't think that I lack any patriotism toward my country, because I did serve in the military for over 20 years. I've been tremendously blessed over a lifetime living in this country. So let me let me just make that statement first.

However, things have changed significantly from the country that I grew up in. ***Things have changed significantly when*** I look at the state of our nation today. We abort—perhaps I should use the term *murder*—millions of babies every year. When I was a young man—and I'm sure many of you, too—remember when abortions were totally illegal in this country.

It's now! Not only abortions, but it is now legal for a man to marry another man or a woman to marry another woman. ***Totally against God's Plan for humanity!***

- we now have men changing their gender to become a woman, and we have women changing their gender to become a man
- when you look at our cities, they become a mess of:
  - ✓ rioting
  - ✓ violence
  - ✓ looting; *looting without any kind of consequences*
- drug abuse is rapidly increasing in our country
- poverty is available everywhere, anywhere you want to turn in
- profanity is common, and it's not even considered crude anymore

*And finally,*

- corruption in our government is totally out of control

***Brethren, this is the state of our nation today!***

- we have taken God out of our schools
- we've taken Him out of our public places or public functions of any kind

***So we are definitely in need for a call to repentance!***

There was a Prophet that spoke to the nation with many of these same problems, *and he called for repentance, but they didn't listen to him!* As a result, they were conquered.

That Prophet was Hosea. He actually lived to see the destruction of Samaria, the capital of Israel in 722<sub>B.C.</sub>

I gave an entire sermon not too long ago, actually, about the book of Hosea. I'm not going to actually go through the whole book of Hosea, but I'd like to feature basically on the idea of it: ***this call to repentance!***

Hosea 6:1: "Come and let us return to the LORD, for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up."

This was a call to a troubled nation. The nation was in both moral and religious decay. They had departed from the Lord in their worship. Hosea minces no words when he speaks quite bluntly. Notice their behavior:

Hosea 4:1: "Hear the Word of the LORD, children of Israel, for the LORD *has* a controversy with the inhabitants of the land..."

I would think that if God is looking at the inhabitants of our land, He wouldn't be happy with what He sees. Now Hosea goes into the details:

**"...*There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and the committing of adultery they break out; and blood touches blood*"** (vs 1-2). *That's pretty clear:*

- no truth
- no mercy
- no knowledge of God

*in the land we live in today!* Truth grows out of being right with God.

John 8:32: "And you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free."

Mercy flows from knowing our merciful God.

Psalms 103:17: "But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him, and His righteousness is unto children's children."

God's people had forsaken Him and they had no time for it; *no time!* Lesser things had more of their attention.

Hosea 4:6: "My people are destroyed for

lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being as a priest to Me.... [they were not keeping God's Laws] ...Since you have forgotten the Law of your God, I will also forget your children."

This is God speaking to the children of Israel, the nation needed repentance. Their worship had become formalistic and they lacked faith.

- Could this be a commentary on our own country today?
- Could this be a commentary on how we live?

They had departed from the Lord in their words. We read earlier:

Hosea 4:2: "By swearing, and lying..." *Think about it!*

Words measure our spiritual condition. They reveal what occupies our mind. They reveal the state of the heart.

Matthew 12:33: "Either make the tree good and the fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for a tree is known by its fruit. Offspring of vipers, how are you able to speak good things, being evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings out good things; and the wicked man out of the wicked treasure brings out wicked things. But I say to you, for every idle word that men may speak, **they shall be held accountable in the day of judgment**" (vs 33-36).

- Is it important what we say?
- Are we careful with what we comes out of our mouth?

Verse 37: "For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned." *The people had made profanity their practice!*

- Have you noticed how profanity has become a regular practice today?
  - ✓ it's common on television
  - ✓ it's common in movies
  - ✓ it's common in everyday practice

I remember when I was in Keflavik, Iceland. I was all of 19-years-old in the military. I was playing poker with a bunch of sailors, and of course, the language was terrible, and I found myself using bad language. I was so shocked that I made a commitment right then that I would I would not use any kind of that foul language.

Anyway, I remember I once used the word 'damn' in front of my mother, *and I caught the back of her hand!* Even my kids, a lot of my kids, use profanity. I think it's become a practice. *They didn't*

*learn it from me!* I can guarantee if you ask them, they would tell you that.

Profanity is one of the marks of a decadent society. We are told to put the filthy communications out of our mouth. Notice what Paul tells us about filthy language:

Colossians 3:8: "But now, you should also put off all *these* things: wrath, indignation, malice, blasphemy, **and foul language from your mouth.**"

Lying was another one of the problems that they had. And it's not to be taken lightly.

John 8 44: "...**for he [Satan] is a liar, and the father of it.**"

Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore, let each one **put away lies and speak the truth...**"

*King David said;* Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight..."

- Is our language pleasant to God?
  - ✓ the things we say
  - ✓ the things we produce
  - ✓ the things that come out of our heart
- Would they be acceptable in God's Kingdom?

Israel had departed from the Lord in their works. Three of the marks of decay of Israel at the time, they were all covered as part of the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20):

- thou shalt not kill
- thou shalt not steal
- thou shalt not commit adultery

*All three of these are prevalent in our society today!*

- killing brings danger to our streets and to our homes
- stealing is costly to all of us in one fashion or another
- committing adultery increases diseases and it ruins marriages

We today are facing the same situation as Israel was during the time of the Prophet Hosea. Many of the same issues ***either repent or face the wrath of God!*** That's what it boils down to.

Israel did not repent and they went into captivity. I would like to believe that here in America where I am, ***that we will repent of all these evils that we're bringing on this nation!***

However, we seem to be getting worse every day. I don't see it improving. ***But without repentance,*** we face what is referred to as the end-time events before the return of Christ.

Now, I'm not going to get into all those today; I don't have time in a short sermonette. But:

- Are you prepared for what may come soon?
- Are you prepared?

I've heard ministers in some of the Churches of God say that we are in the last seven years or close before the return of Christ. I've heard that often.

Could they be right? *I don't know!* Nevertheless, we need to be prepared for the end-time events. I don't like people that set dates, by the way. Christ Himself in Matt. 24 made it very clear that only God Himself knows when the return of Christ will come.

In Matt. 24 we're told that there will be wars and there'll be rumors of wars. Now, wars have been with us throughout history, there's no doubt about it. I've spent a lot of time off the coast of Vietnam.

In our time, however, war is far more deadly. We have weapons of mass destruction that could wipe out most of the world if used. I remember some of the submarines we had. Of course, I'm so outdated on them, but they had 16 nuclear missiles ready to be fired. There are weapons that can reach across continents in a short period of time. Could we be lured into a peaceful environment? *Paul tells us, and I think it's important:*

1-Thessalonians 5:1: "Now then, concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, there is no need that I write to you; for you yourselves understand perfectly that the Day of the Lord will come exactly as a thief *comes* by night.... [we won't know] ...For when they say, 'Peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail *comes* upon a woman who is with child; and they shall by no means escape" (vs 1-3).

We certainly have our concerns today with the war in the Ukraine that is taking place with Russia right now. Also we could look at what's taking place in the Gaza Strip. We also know that just recently Iran has said that they are going to attack Israel, which would bring us into a much broader prospect of a world war, perhaps.

We also have the concern about the military power of China and their threat to attack Taiwan, which we said that we will protect.

So, we're living in a pretty shaky world right now when we look at the situation. We have been warned that at the end-time there would be signs of increased *inequity*.

Matthew 24:36: "But concerning that day, and the hour, no one knows... [that's why I say time-setting is very difficult] ...not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. Now, as *it was in the*

days of Noah, so shall *it* also be *at* the coming of the Son of man. For as in the days that *were* before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark; and they were not aware until the Flood came and took *them* all away; **so shall it also be at the coming of the Son of man**" (vs 36-39).

In other words, people living for the pleasure of the moment, perhaps increased alcohol and drug abuse, violence increased everywhere, and conditions like those in Sodom where we had immorality on the increase and perversion was accepted as normal.

Some of the things we've mentioned at the very beginning of this message, we're already living in that state of affairs. ***I would truly like to believe that the people of the United States and other countries***—not just the United States—***would repent and would turn to God!*** But I fear that they are like Israel and ***refuse to heed the warnings of Hosea!***

If that is the case, we will all be facing all those end-time events revealed in Scriptures.

Verse 21: "For then shall there be Great Tribulation..."

That's also mentioned by Daniel. Not a very pretty picture when we take a look at that, what we're facing:

"...such as has not been from *the* beginning of *the* world until this time, nor ever shall be *again*. And if those days were not limited, there would no flesh be saved... [not a very pretty picture what we're facing] ...but for the elect's sake those days shall be limited" (vs 21-22).

I can only bring this up to indicate that we need to be prepared for the return of Christ. Just as Israel refused to heed the warnings of Hosea, Peter warns us of the mockers that we will face in the last days:

2-Peter 3:3: "Knowing this first, that in the last days *there* will come mockers... [we've got plenty of them] ...walking according to their own personal lusts."

Currently, a lot of the situation we're facing, with so many turning away from God today, just look at the celebration of the 'Gay Pride Month' we just witnessed back in June,

Verse 4: "And asking, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the forefathers died, everything has remained the same as from *the* beginning of creation.'" ***No changes!***

***Belief in God is shrinking every day!*** If we even look at the Protestant churches and the number

of people who *were attending*, compared to what it is today, it's shrunk so much, it's unbelievable.

We cannot lose faith in the fact that the Day of the Lord is coming and to be prepared.

Verse 9: "The Lord is not delaying the promise of *His coming*, as some in their own minds reckon delay; rather, He is longsuffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." ***It all boils down to repentance!***

Once again, and that's what Hosea was trying to say to Israel before, like I said, they were taken into captivity. Again, and without it, without repentance, Peter warns us:

Verse 10: "However, the Day of *the Lord* shall come as a thief in *the night* in which the heaven itself shall disappear with a mighty roar, and *the elements* shall pass away, burning with intense heat, and *the earth* and the works in it shall be burned up."

Not a very pretty picture. We need to be prepared regardless of what sins continue in the world we live in. We live in a very sinful world. Once again, as we were warned in:

Matthew 24:44: "Therefore, you also be ready. For the Son of man is coming at a time that you do not think."

Matt. 25, we read the story of the 10 virgins. I'm not going to go into all the detail on that. I think most people are fairly familiar with that. But you had five of the 10 virgins that did not take oil for their lamps, and when they went to buy oil, they missed the entry of the bridegroom. Once again, we're warned:

Matthew 25:13: "Watch, therefore, **for you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming.**" *We need to be prepared because we do not know!*

- Are you prepared?
- Do you have enough oil for that day?

We as a Church of God have a responsibility to warn the world that they need to repent. We all need to repent, but the world certainly needs a lot of repentance.

We also need to ensure that our house is clean and we are prepared for the bridegroom. ***We need to pray, as did Hosea for the people of Israel:***

Hosea 14:1: "O Israel... [I could say, 'Oh, America'] ...return to the LORD your God, for you have fallen because of your iniquity. Take with you words, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, 'Take away all *our* iniquity, and receive *us* graciously, that we may repay *with* the sacrifices of our lips'" (vs 1-2).

Brethren, in addition to the prayers for others—we certainly need to be doing that on a regular basis—we need to be ready for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, I close with asking you: **Is your house in order?**

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Hosea 6:1
- 2) Hosea 4:1-2
- 3) John 8:32
- 4) Psalm 103:17
- 5) Hosea 4:6, 2
- 6) Matthew 12:33-37
- 7) Colossians 3:8
- 8) John 8:44
- 9) Ephesians 4:25
- 10) Psalm 19:14
- 11) 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3
- 12) Matthew 24:36-39, 21-22
- 13) 2-Peter 3:3-4, 9-10
- 14) Matthew 24:44
- 15) Matthew 25:13
- 16) Hosea 14:1-2

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Exodus 20

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