

5. Adulterous nation, but faithful God

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The devil's tactics for those who want spiritual things has not changed for several thousand years. Because it works. The devil does not outright lie to people not to believe in God. He knows that people want to have God in their lives.

However he tells them they don't have to have Him completely in their lives. He also presents so-called other options to choose from. He says, "God is good. But there are many other gods you can have. God doesn't mind." Guess what? People go for it hook-line-and-sinker. Yet God still love them enough to chasten them.

This has been a case in point for the people of Israel during the time of Hosea and nowadays.

A. SIN AND CAPTIVITY

Hosea 10:1-8 Israel empties his vine; He brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit He has increased the altars; According to the bounty of his land They have embellished his sacred pillars. 2 Their heart is divided; Now they are held guilty. He will break down their altars; He will ruin their sacred pillars. 3 For now they say, "We have no king, Because we did not fear the Lord. And as for a king, what would he do for us?" 4 They have spoken words, Swearing falsely in making a covenant. Thus judgment springs up like hemlock in the furrows of the field. 5 The inhabitants of Samaria fear Because of the calf of Beth Aven. For its people mourn for it, And its priests shriek for it-- Because its glory has departed from it. 6 The idol also shall be carried to Assyria As a present for King Jareb. Ephraim shall receive shame, And Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. 7 As for Samaria, her king is cut off Like a twig on the water. 8 Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, Shall be destroyed. The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars; They shall say to the mountains, "Cover us!" And to the hills, "Fall on us!"

Although God had made Israel prosperous, He was not given credit for it. Their prosperity was blinding them from their true condition. Addition to that, their sin increased as the population increased.

Actually they did worship God – we can't say that they didn't. Many of them went down to Jerusalem for the feast days as they had done in former years and joined in the worship of God. However, they would come right back up to the golden calves that had been set up in Samaria or Bethel, and they would also worship Baal. Their hearts were divided – one day they would worship God; the next day they would worship Baal.

Why did the Israel people worship the golden calf? Because it was a tangible image they could see and touch instead of this unseen Jehovah God. People in general, want to see and touch God rather than believing in Him by faith.

After the desolation of exile, the once-busy pagan altars of Israel are now overgrown with thorns and thistles. This is the result of Israel's rejection of the Lord and embrace of pagan gods.

People will do just about anything including believing a fiction novel to avoid God's conviction through the Holy Spirit.

The definition of fiction is "An imaginative creation or a pretense that does not represent actuality but has been invented." The more convincing it is as true, the better it is to the readers. That is what Dan Brown, the author of the Da Vinci Code just did. It seems that everything he wrote sounds so true even though the book cover says, "a novel" and it goes into the category of fiction in the Library of Congress.

The Da Vinci Code has been on the New York Times Bestseller List since its release in April 2003. In less than 2 years it has become a bestseller in 150 countries and one of the most widely read books of our time.

Author Dan Brown has done what many authors only dream of doing. He has written a book "everyone" is talking about. All over the world people are discussing his upscale murder mystery that teases readers with provocative theories about history, religion and the arts.

This novel, however, is more than a page-turning murder mystery. The Da Vinci Code is a conspiracy theory that leaves many readers wondering whether everything they have believed about Christ and the Bible is wrong.

The Da Vinci Code begins with a lengthy list of acknowledgments and then a "fact page" designed to leave the impression that the novel is based on careful research of little-known facts.

One of the book's main characters is Robert Langdon, a fictional Harvard professor of religious symbology. Claiming years of research, the professor maintains that for 1,700 years, the church has been covering up the real truth about Jesus. His views are later echoed by a fictional British royal historian referred to as Sir Leigh Teabing who says things like, "almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false".

The title of the book comes from the claim that Leonardo Da Vinci – along with other notables like Sir Isaac Newton and Victor Hugo – was a member of a secret society entrusted with the truth about Jesus. The secret of this group – The Priory of Sion – is that Jesus had a daughter by Mary Magdalene. Mary, according to the Priory, was the true Holy Grail who bore the royal bloodline of Jesus on earth. This, according to the professor, is a fact the church will kill to suppress.

What many readers fail to keep in mind is that The Da Vinci Code is fiction as I said before. Worse yet, the story rests not on careful research, but on a documented fraud passed off as truth. The idea that Leonardo was a member of The Priory of Sion is based on a document proven by a French court of law to be a forgery and a hoax.

The Da Vinci Code's "alternative view of history" also falsely states that Jesus was not regarded as a God until the fourth century when the Roman emperor Constantine decided it was in his own political interests to unite the empire by giving Jesus "an impenetrable cloak of divinity". It also says that Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's human traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. According to the book, the earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up and burned.

The Da Vinci Code claims that some of the documents Constantine tried to destroy managed to survive in scrolls found in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Egypt. These scrolls allegedly “highlight glaring historical discrepancies and fabrications, clearly confirming that the modern Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda – to promote the divinity of the man Jesus Christ and use His influence to solidify their own power base”.

The ancient texts found at Nag Hammadi, however, were not “lost books of the Bible,” as Teabing claims. They were the writings of a mystery religion known as Gnosticism. Gnostics viewed spirit as good and matter as evil. They denied the physical body and crucifixion of Jesus and emphasized a secret knowledge received only by those initiated into the religion. The early church rejected their teachings long before Constantine.

But even if The Da Vinci Code doesn’t stand up under scrutiny, is it possible that the Bible has been altered through thousands of years of countless copies and versions? This is the kind of question that is best answered by those who have applied the principles of science to manuscript evidence. Scholars spend lifetimes examining all available manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts. They note and map any variations of spelling or wording that show up in families of manuscripts that have been copied from a common source. In addition they analyze the writings of second- and third-century church fathers who left extensive quotes of the Scriptures they were reading and studying.

Throughout the history of literacy, the Bible stands far above any other document for its accuracy except for very small portions of differences in spellings or wording. The original Greek New Testament manuscripts were preserved and carefully copied into Byzantine New Testament Manuscripts around 7th-10th century A.D. This was the base for Erasmus’ Greek Text and Stephanus’ Greek Text where we got our current Bible.

In other words, The Da Vinci Code is nothing more than a fictional book that was written by a man who does not have the Savior Jesus Christ God Himself in his heart to undermine the truth of God. Unfortunately, many people rather believe a fiction than God’s Word.

B. GOD’S COUNSEL TO SINFUL ISRAEL

Hosea 10:9-15 “O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah; There they stood. The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity Did not overtake them. 10 When it is My desire, I will chasten them. Peoples shall be gathered against them When I bind them for their two transgressions. 11 Ephraim is a trained heifer That loves to thresh grain; But I harnessed her fair neck, I will make Ephraim pull a plow. Judah shall plow; Jacob shall break his clods.” 12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the Lord, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you. 13 You have plowed wickedness; You have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, Because you trusted in your own way, In the multitude of your mighty men. 14 Therefore tumult shall arise among your people, And all your fortresses shall be plundered As Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle-- A mother dashed in pieces upon her children. 15 Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, Because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel Shall be cut off utterly.

This refers to the terrible events recorded in Judges 19-20. Even after the civil war, and the men of Gibeah were wiped out, the sin remained, and Gibeah was emblematic of gross and cruel sensuality. Along with the idolatrous practices of Israel were also gross sensual sins.

Sometimes when the Word of God goes forth and seems to have little effect, it is because it falls on fallow ground - the hard ground that will not allow the seed of the Word to penetrate and become fruitful.

Since fallow ground is hard, it probably doesn't "want" to be broken up. If the fallow ground could talk, it would probably cry out when it is plowed. Yet it is useless as ground as long as it is fallow.

Many people expect to sow sin for years, but to immediately reap in mercy after sowing righteousness for one day. If we stick with sowing in righteousness, we will reap in mercy in due time.

I asked you to underline v13. This is the essence of all sin. Ruin always comes when we trust in our own way instead of God's way.

C. GOD'S UNENDING LOVE FOR ISRAEL

Hosea 11:1-7 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son. 2 As they called them, So they went from them; They sacrificed to the Baals, And burned incense to carved images. 3 "I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them. 4 I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them. 5 "He shall not return to the land of Egypt; But the Assyrian shall be his king, Because they refused to repent. 6 And the sword shall slash in his cities, Devour his districts, And consume them, Because of their own counsels. 7 My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt Him.

God remembers His tender love for Israel, when more than 500 years before the time of Hosea He brought them out of Egypt.

This is an "unexpected prophecy" fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

Matt 2:15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

God does good things so much for His people even though they are unaware of. Often we attribute some blessing directly from the hand of God to some other source.

We see a picture of a parent teaching a child how to walk by holding the child's arms and supporting the child as they make their awkward steps. God wants to win us over, but not will brute force.

It is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn. But it is equally true that God draws no man contrary to the heart of man.

It wasn't so much the sin of Israel that got them into trouble. It was their stubborn refusal to repent after their sin. Just like that, I see many people are so stubborn in

their sins that they could care less what God says in the Bible. They would justify and argue until it blows up in their faces.

Hosea 11:8-12 "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. 9 I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror. 10 "They shall walk after the Lord. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, Then His sons shall come trembling from the west; 11 They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, Like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses," Says the Lord. 12 "Ephraim has encircled Me with lies, And the house of Israel with deceit; But Judah still walks with God, Even with the Holy One who is faithful.

God takes no pleasure in the chastening us. We were in sin, and guilty before God. Justice demands that He does this, yet in His heart He must find a way of salvation. In this, God sends Jesus Christ, and on the cross Jesus was "given up" in our place.

D. DEPENDING ON HUMAN EFFORT IS IN VAIN

Hosea 12:1-6 "Ephraim feeds on the wind, And pursues the east wind; He daily increases lies and desolation. Also they make a covenant with the Assyrians, And oil is carried to Egypt. 2 "The Lord also brings a charge against Judah, And will punish Jacob according to his ways; According to his deeds He will recompense him. 3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, And in his strength he struggled with God. 4 Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him in Bethel, And there He spoke to us-- 5 That is, the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is His memorable name. 6 So you, by the help of your God, return; Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually.

The idols and foreign alliances with Egypt and Assyria are useless. It was foolish for them to think that Assyria or Egypt was more powerful or dependable than the Lord was.

We often seek help from all the other avenues before we come to the Lord as the last resort. We should learn to depend on Him from the beginning of our difficulties.

When Jacob realized that he was overpowered by this heavenly messenger who was the Angel of the Lord Himself, he clung onto Him until the Lord blessed him. That is a good lesson to learn from Jacob – hanging on to our God with all of our strength.

Hosea 12:7-14 "A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales are in his hand; He loves to oppress. 8 And Ephraim said, 'Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors They shall find in me no iniquity that is sin.' 9 "But I am the Lord your God, Ever since the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, As in the days of the appointed feast. 10 I have also spoken by the prophets, And have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets." 11 Though Gilead has idols-- Surely they are vanity-- Though they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal, Indeed their altars shall be heaps in the furrows of the field. 12 Jacob fled to the country of Syria; Israel served for a spouse, And for a wife he tended sheep. 13 By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, And by a prophet he was preserved. 14 Ephraim provoked Him to anger most bitterly; Therefore his Lord

will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him, And return his reproach upon him.

Hosea prophesied during a time of great prosperity, but spiritual and moral decadence in Israel. When things are good financially, it's hard for people to believe that their society is in trouble and they need God desperately.

When the judgement of God come to the human race, any high and mighty human efforts will be brought down like we see here with the Israelites' sacred pillars and high altars. Since the people reject God and worship idols, God takes this very seriously and personally.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) We should not have any other thing that competes with our God in our hearts.

Deut 4:24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

2) We often seek help from all the other avenues before we come to the Lord as the last resort. We should learn to depend on Him from the beginning of our difficulties.