

The Word and the Womb

A while ago, my wife, Loretta, was reading an article on infertility, which is making an alarming increase in our country. Although doctors and researchers are diligently studying and spending more money than ever to uncover the problem, *there seems to be no apparent medical reason* for such a drastic rise in the American woman's inability to conceive a child in the last few years.

I didn't think much about this new development in our nation's families until a few weeks later, when I was teaching this verse from the Book of Hosea:

I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baalpeor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.

Hosea 9:10,11

The "glory" of any nation is its children, the next generation in whom we place our hopes and dreams for a stronger, happier, and more prosperous world. But when a nation leaves the principles of God's Word and worships the idols of materialism, power, and sexual lust; when legislation and government regulation strive to quiet the voices of those who proclaim the gospel; even natural laws go into upheaval.

In this verse of scripture, God clearly shows the relationship between chaos in the natural course of life and the spiritual climate of a nation. When a nation turns from God, it is as if nature, in its inherent wisdom, turns on itself to stop the next generation from entering a degenerate world. Thus, for no apparent medical reason, women experience tremendous difficulty in conceiving, safely bearing, and delivering healthy children.

An obvious example in history, where the next generation of a nation is cut off because that nation has pursued idols instead of God, is in Pharaoh's Egypt. You recall

that when Pharaoh tried to stop the nation of Israel from leaving and fulfilling God's plan, nature launched a ten-fold series of plagues, ending with the death of the firstborn of the whole nation, including Pharaoh's son.

The same situation also occurred in Israel during Hosea's time. I believe if we examine the root cause of this problem, it will help us to better understand why we are seeing some of the unexplainable problems we are seeing today in our own country.

Hosea's prophecy (Hosea 9:10,11) was written to the northern tribes of Israel who had left the Lord to worship idols. Originally, God raised up Israel, and as He blessed them mightily they were a blessing to Him. The verse says that He "found Israel like grapes in the wilderness," that they were a refreshing people among all the nations of the world.

Ephraim was the leading tribe in Israel, and when Israel was following after God, Ephraim followed the Lord more closely than the other tribes. They set a great example for the rest of the nation. However, when Israel turned to idol worship, Ephraim, who should have been leading them back to the Lord, was excelling in government corruption, materialism, and fornication — the hallmarks of a nation that turns from God's ways to its own ways.

It is interesting that the name Ephraim means fruitful, and this tribe had always been blessed with many children, which were their glory. But Hosea prophesies to them that their glory, their fruitfulness, will depart "like a bird." God declares that because they have turned from Him, three plagues will strike their women: stillbirths, miscarriages, and infertility. These were not the only consequences that they suffered, however.

Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

Hosea 4:1-3

Hosea tells us that all of the inhabitants of the land are spiritually tied to the land itself. He says that *nature responds to the spiritual condition of those who occupy the nation*. Nature was the first thing to be affected when Adam and Eve disobeyed the Lord in the Garden of Eden. The curse of rebellion against the Word of God entered into the dust of the ground, from which everything had been made. Animals turned on each other, and thorns and thistles rose from the ground to choke off crops, trees, and flowers.

In Hosea's day, the evening news probably sounded a lot like ours. Every natural method and means to save the environment and wildlife was being used. But if we apply the truths from the Book of Hosea to our country today, we can see clearly that the problems of disease, poverty, corruption in government, and even the extinction of animals are merely symptomatic of a deeper sickness that is spiritual.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame.

Hosea 4:6,7

The problem was not a lack of knowledge in the nation, but a lack of knowledge in the *inhabitants* of the nation. There were plenty of priests and places of worship in Hosea's time, but the people had decided to worship idols instead of God. They were pursuing knowledge of pagan rites and traditions instead of hungering for the Word of God. Therefore, as a result of their ignorance of spiritual truths, they were being destroyed.

God is not the author of infertility, miscarriages, birth defects, or stillbirths; He is the Protector against these tragedies. When a people turn away from godliness and prefer to live in sin, they remove themselves from His divine protection. Because of their own choice, they open their lives to attack from the enemy and the curse that is in the

earth. Not only is nature around them affected, but nature within them. Thus, we not only have extinction of animals, but extinction of human beings.

What was it that caused Israel to turn from the Lord to idols? What did they want so badly that it drove them to turn from the promises and covenants of God?

Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor.

Hosea 9:1

Very simply, Israel wanted to be like other nations. They saw the prosperity of the heathen with no dedication to the Lord, and they thought they could have that for themselves. They wanted to indulge in sin, follow after lusts, and worship idols like the Assyrians did, but still keep the blessings and prosperity of the Lord. What they did not understand was that riches appropriated through sin will soon fly away (Proverbs 23:5).

America, like Israel, has been blessed because of its Christian heritage. Instead of following after other nations, we patterned our government and our lifestyle according to the Word of God from the beginning. As a result of our consecration to the Lord, our country achieved prosperity and a quality of life second to none.

But recently, we have become very impressed with the lifestyles and religious practices of other nations, and today we find that many of the blessings we have taken for granted are in jeopardy. The years of handing a great heritage of both spiritual and natural blessings from one generation to the next have come to a screeching halt. Comparing ourselves to other nations has resulted in excusing all types of sin and lowering our standard of living.

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

II Corinthians 10:12

The hope of America is not in government, special interest groups, or task forces, but in the hearts and lives of the people who know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. We have seen that because nature is closely tied to the spiritual climate of a nation, disobedience to God's Word will result in crop failure, the heavens becoming as iron and the ground as brass, and inflation that destroys the prosperity God has given us (Leviticus 26:18-20). But the Bible says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12).

The Word of God tells us that God is not looking for quick riches, but "durable riches," (Proverbs 8:18), which can be passed down from one generation to the next (Proverbs 13:22). "Durable riches" come only from the knowledge and application of God's promises in the lives of those who love and follow after Him. He wants us to prosper *as our soul prospers in His Word* (Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:7,8; Ill John 2). And, as we teach our children how to live according to His principles, then they can be trusted by God to handle and pass on the wealth and spiritual stability to our children and our children's children.

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