

## 97-02-09a

Turn with me for a Scripture reading to Matthew chapter 21. As always, our Scripture reading should be viewed in the context of our study in Romans. We're in the three chapter section, chapters 9, 10, and 11, that deals with the question of Israel.

If what Paul says is true, and if there really is a new focus and a new direction in God's plan in this age, if the focus is on righteousness by faith, if the law has been set aside, and not only the misapplication of the law that the Jews were guilty of making for many centuries, but the law itself had been set aside for a different way of life, then what is the fate of Israel? What about God's promises to Israel? Someone who finds the situation as far as God's covenants and so forth applicable to them in this generation that Paul is speaking to, these Old Testament saints who have now come to Christ, even those who are faithful and who understand the role of the Holy Spirit and the role of faith and the importance of righteousness by faith, may have questions. Well, what about this change? What are the consequences of this change for Israel? And Paul is answering that in chapters 9, 10, and 11, and he is talking about the fact that as a branch that's unproductive is broken out of the tree, so Israel, as believers who have been unproductive in God's plan in terms of bearing fruit, the fruit of righteousness, have been snapped off. And it is as though in this age God is grafting in new branches, branches from the wild olive tree that will bear fruit, and they can also be broken off if they fail to bear fruit.

But the issue here is the bearing of fruit. It's not the life of the branch in the sense of representing salvation from the lake of fire. It is the accomplishment of God's purpose.

It's fulfilling His call. Israel had a call, which as a nation they did not fulfill. We have a call in this age, and in a similar way to Israel, much of Christianity fails to even perceive the call, much less fulfill it.

We have accepted substitutes. We've gone in a different direction. We have found other goals.

We have found other gods, even as believers. We have found other things that consume us in terms of priorities and objectives. Jesus came and presented Israel with the ultimate challenge, which was the fulfillment of God's kingdom promises.

John the Baptist heralded these things, preaching that the kingdom of God was at hand, that the Messiah that had been foretold in Old Testament Scripture was at hand. Jesus came and presented the gospel of the kingdom to Israel. And this was an ultimatum.

This was the make or break point for the nation of Israel. And in this case it was the break point. It was the last straw.

And God set aside Israel in His plan, in His purpose of bearing fruit that reflects His glory, and instituted the church age. Jesus taught about this. And in Matthew chapter 21, which is our

Scripture reading for this morning, we have several passages we're going to be looking at in the Gospels that apply to this.

But Matthew chapter 21, Jesus tells the parable of the landowner, beginning in verse 33. And keep in mind the situation that Israel is in historically, both in Jesus' day and what we're going to study this morning, which is in Paul's day, as we hear this parable. Jesus says in verse 33 of Matthew 21, hear another parable.

There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now, when vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers that they might receive its fruit.

And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all, he sent his son to them, saying, They will respect my son.

But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? They said to him, He will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus said to them, Have you never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone? This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This, of course, is a quote from Isaiah.

Jesus continues, Therefore I say to you, The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. Now, this verse 44, if you have it included in your Bible, is actually imported from the parallel account in Luke. It isn't found in the original of Matthew, but it is in the original of Luke.

Whoever falls on this stone will be broken, but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder. It will crush him. Now, when the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking of them, but when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitudes because they took him for a prophet.

Isn't it ironic that even as he speaks these words about the vinedressers seeking to kill the son, that's exactly what they do when they hear the truth. Israel is God's people. Israel is pictured as God's son, as God's wife, someone with whom God has a permanent family relationship in the Old Testament.

And yet, after everything that God does in delivering them from bondage in Egypt, in sustaining them in the wilderness, in giving them the land, in giving them victory over their enemies, in providing for them, in blessing them in so many ways, Israel as a nation through their history is largely hard-hearted, disobedient, stiff-necked, and as a result of their apathy, and in some cases outright rebellion against God, they receive discipline from God in the form of famine, in the form of retribution and affliction from their enemies, in the form of captivity in many different ways. And ultimately, at this point, when after sending the prophets who were neglected and ignored, who were stoned and sawn asunder, you read the account of what happened to the prophets in the middle of Hebrews chapter 11, it fulfills this parable. And there is a point at which God is going to set aside those vinedressers and He's going to give the vineyard to those who will render to Him the fruits.

The fruit is what God is interested in. Now, this is not addressing the eternal fate of the vinedressers, either the first set or the second set. They are all in the employ.

They are all servants and have a relationship with the owner, with the vineyard owner, in this case picturing God. And when He talks about the fate of these vinedressers that are destroyed, and in Luke it says He will kill them, this isn't talking about loss of salvation or that they were unbelievers. The whole reason God has an expectation of tending the vineyard and bearing fruit is that they are distinct and separate from anybody else, any other vineyard, any other vinedressers, any other people.

They have a relationship with Him. They owe Him this fruit unlike anybody else that you might want to think about. They're believers.

And this is one of the most overlooked principles in the Word of God, is that Israel as a nation represents believers. And as we will come to see through our study, they are believers. That's where the believers of the Old Testament age were planted in history by God.

God didn't say whoever is born in Israel, I'm going to make them a believer. But God in His foreknowledge, knowing those who would choose Him, designated their place and time of birth in history. And in one way you could look at it as a matter of convenience.

He had them be born and live their lives in the nation of Israel. That was the place of provision. That was the place of protection.

That was the place of worship. That was the place of the communication of the Word of God. The reason you don't find missionary calls in the Old Testament is that there was no need.

The believers were born and grew up and made their decision about God in the nation of Israel. And that's the reason that God holds the entire nation accountable. That's why God makes no distinction in Israel between those who believe in Him and those who don't.

He assumes their knowledge of Him and their relationship with Him. And His expectation of them is obedience. He doesn't call them to come to Him in a salvation sense.

He calls them to obedience. He calls them to fruit bearing as a nation because that's the goal. That's the purpose.

That's why He has placed all of those believers in that nation, in that period of history. And He deals with them as a group. And it presents a wonderful, concise picture for us.

Now of course there are exceptions. And you can go through the Old Testament and find Gentiles who come to faith. But generally speaking they also come to Israel, don't they? And they have a relationship with the nation of Israel.

And that's their association. That's where they come to live. They marry in.

They are proselytes in the later periods of history. But Israel is the residence of God. Israel has the tabernacle.

Israel has the law that communicates the truth of God and expresses His character. Everything that's necessary for the life of the believer in the Old Testament age, once you come to Abraham and forward, is in that seed of Abraham, in that nation of Israel. And that's why God holds the entire nation accountable for obedience.

Time and again when we read the prophets, time and again when we read the parables, such as this one in Matthew chapter 21, we find that God has given the nation a responsibility for fruit bearing. God has given the nation responsibility. He doesn't say now you need to be sure and evangelize internally.

He doesn't say you need to evangelize externally. Evangelization in the sense of eternal salvation is not an issue. They are believers.

They come to the point of accountability. They come to the point of knowledge of God. And they say, yes, He is God.

He is the God of Israel. They fulfill Hebrews 11.6. He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Many of them, even though they know this and acknowledge it, don't live by it.

It is not enough to recognize the truth. We have to respond to the truth and live in the light of the truth. And that's where Israel's failure is.

So like these fine dressers, they are going to be uprooted, taken out of the vineyard and destroyed in the sense of not having any operational role. And God is going to give the vineyard to others. That's what Paul is addressing in Romans 9, 10 and 11.

And let's turn now to that section of Scripture where we will continue our study. We saw last time this picture of the tree from which branches had been broken off in Hebrews 11.17. And Paul addressing the Gentiles says, you being a wild olive tree were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree. Now from this passage and a few others, people have arrived at the conclusion that the church is the new Israel.

That we are a continuous entity with Israel and that Israel, quote unquote, has been opened up so that it's no longer bounded by the racial lines of the physical seed of Abraham through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but that we are basically spiritual Israel and that we are going to receive the fulfillment of the covenants to Israel. Now if you think about this for a minute, what does that do for the promises that God made in the Old Testament as far as the land, the throne and so forth? If you say that the church is spiritual Israel, what you can then say is that there's no requirement for God to fulfill in a literal sense those Old Testament promises. He doesn't have to restore the nation of Israel.

He doesn't have to fulfill the promises that we understand as being fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom. Why? Because you've got spiritual Israel and God is spiritually fulfilling those covenants with the church. There are multiple problems with that view, the first of which is that when God makes those promises and he says, for example, the statement of the new covenant in Ezekiel, and he says, I will make a new covenant in the latter days with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, he very specifically states who the covenant is with when he talks about taking out the heart of stone and giving them the heart of flesh.

I believe that's in Ezekiel, along about chapter 33, and he specifically designates Israel. He specifically says that they are the house of Judah and the house of Israel. That doesn't fit us.

We're not Israel and we're not Judah. We have a new and better covenant founded on new and better promises, the author of Hebrews tells us. So then if we're not spiritual Israel, if we're not replacing Israel in the tree, then the tree doesn't represent Israel, does it? And what we tend to do is literalize and try to say, well, the tree is Israel.

We're grafted into Israel. We're the new Israel. Some people say, oh, well, we're the ten lost tribes and so forth, and you get British Israelism and all kinds of other strange beliefs stemming out of misunderstanding this passage.

When Paul talks about this tree, he's talking about fruit. He's talking about the same thing that Jesus spoke of in his parables. God is looking for those whom he can declare righteous by faith.

That's what he was looking for in the Old Testament. That's what he's looking for in the New Testament. The tree is God's plan.

The branches that come out and bear fruit are bearing fruit that glorifies God. It is beneficial to the landowner. Remember in Hebrews chapter 6, the very same idea comes through.

Verse 7 of Hebrews 6, the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated receives blessing from God. The parable of the soils where the seed is planted and some of it never sprouts, some of it sprouts and withers, some of it sprouts but is choked by thorns and weeds, and some of it sprouts and bears fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold. What's being spoken of there? When the plant dies, does that mean someone lost their salvation? Not at all.

We tend to link everything to salvation from the lake of fire and try to force everything into that and say, well, the big thing is whether you're a believer or not, whether you're going to hell or not. That's what counts. And that's not the emphasis of the Bible at all.

The Word of God assumes that we are believers or we wouldn't be looking at it in the first place and focuses on what our responsibility is as believers. In the parable of the soils, as we've studied on a couple of different occasions in the past, it's the bearing of fruit that is the issue and it's the fruit of the Spirit. It's the fruit of righteousness that comes by faith.

Why is it that the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches and so forth can choke the fruit? That can't choke your salvation but it can certainly choke our faith, can't it? We can be distracted. We can be pursuing wrong goals. That's what Israel did and that's why they bore no fruit and that's why their branches were broken off.

Same thing in Hebrews chapter 6. If the rain comes and falls on the field and it bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, it receives blessing from God. It doesn't say it receives eternal life from God, it's rescued from the lake of fire by God. It receives blessing from God.

It's fulfilling its purpose. But in verse 8 of chapter 6, if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. And we say, oh, burned.

Well, that must be hell. That must be the lake of fire. They're going to be burned.

Not at all. This field is separate and distinct from other fields, isn't it? It's God's field. God waters it.

God cultivates it. God plows it. God weeds it.

And if all it does is bring up thorns, God is going to discipline it. God is going to judge it. It's near to being cursed.

And the fruit of that field, the thorns and the worthless production of it, are going to be burned. But the author of Hebrews encourages his audience, Beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, things that accompany deliverance, even though we speak in this manner. So, when we see this motif of the vine and the branches, the tree and the branches, the field, the soil, the seed that is planted and so forth, God is looking for fulfillment of purpose, fulfillment of calling

from believers.

He has always looked for that from the very beginning. He looked for that in the angelic creation. He's looking for it in the human creation.

If we fulfill that purpose, we're blessed. If we disregard and are apathetic toward that purpose, we will be disciplined. We may even be set aside and taken out.

And that has been Israel's fate. Now, is it that Israel did not know? Remember Paul's argument back in chapter 10? Did Israel not know? Have they not heard in chapter 10, verse 18? Yes, indeed. The sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.

Verse 19, but I say, did Israel not know? Did Israel just never get the word that this was God's purpose for them? Not at all. Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation. I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.

Isaiah is bold and says, I was found by those who did not seek me. I was made manifest to those who did not ask for me. But Israel, he says, all day long, I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.

They did know. God told them explicitly time and again. He told them at the inception of the nation.

We've seen that back in Deuteronomy 29 and so forth. Turn with me back to Hosea, chapter 9. I don't often get the chance to go back to the prophets, the minor prophets especially. If you recall the outline of Hosea, and off the top of my head, I don't necessarily recall the outline of every single prophetic book, but if you've got a decent study Bible, if you've got a Scofield reference or whatever, there's an outline at the beginning of the book.

The New Scofield Notes talk about the outline of the book in five parts. The prophet has a tragic experience. You may recall Hosea who's married to Gomer and she deserts him and goes and sleeps with every man that becomes available.

Then in the second part of the book, chapters 4 through 8, God compares Israel to Hosea's wife. She is a faithless wife. She is worthy of being divorced.

She's committed adultery on countless occasions. God talks about the retribution that is going to come on Israel for that in the third part of the book, chapters 9 and 10. But then in the fourth section, chapters 11 through the beginning of 13, He reaffirms His love for Israel.

He says He's willing to take her back even though she has been a faithless wife, even though she has wronged God, disobeyed God, flouted God's authority and so forth. God reaffirms His eternal love for His people. And the book closes with an affirmation of the coming restoration of Israel in the last part of chapter 13 and chapter 14.

But look at Hosea chapter 9, and specifically verse 17. He's married to Gomer and he's married to Gomer. He's been talking about the punishment of Ephraim, the casting away of Ephraim.

You can look at verse 7 here of chapter 9 of Hosea. The days of punishment have come. The days of recompense have come.

Israel knows. Israel knows. The prophet is a fool.

The spiritual man is insane because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity. This is the view that they have of the people who present God's Word. It's like the servants that the landowner sends to the vineyard.

They reject them. They cast them aside. The prophet is a fool.

The spiritual man is insane because of the greatness of your iniquity and your great enmity. The watchman of Ephraim is with my God, but the prophet is a fowler's snare in all his ways, enmity in the house of his God. They are deeply corrupted as in the days of Gibeah.

He will remember their iniquity. He will punish their sins. If you want to know about the days of Gibeah, you go back to Judges chapter 19.

Look at verse 10 of chapter 9. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your fathers as the first fruits on the fig tree in its first season, but they went to Baal Peor. They separated themselves to that shame.

They became an abomination just like the thing they loved. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird. No birth, no pregnancy, no conception, no fruit.

Though they bring up their children, I will bereave them to the last man. Yes, woe to them when I depart from them. Just as I saw Ephraim like tyre planted in a pleasant place, so Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer.

Give them, O Lord, what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them because of the evil of their deeds. I will drive them from my house.

I will love them no more. All their princes are rebellious. Ephraim is stricken.

Their root is dried up. They shall bear no fruit. Yes, were they to bear children, I would kill the darlings of their womb.

God is extraordinarily unhappy with the northern kingdom of Israel at this point, isn't he? He is pronouncing the severest judgment on them. Look at verse 17. My God will cast them away because they did not obey him.

Not that they did not believe in him. Not that they did not respond to his presence in a salvation sense. They did not obey.

They are his children and they are disobedient. They are his servants and they don't serve. They shall be wanderers among the nations.

You can read the rest of Hosea here and see these statements. Tumult will arise among the people in 1014. All your fortresses shall be plundered.

As Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle, a mother dashed in pieces upon her children. Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great wickedness. Remember Bethel? What is Bethel? Where did Bethel get its origin? Beit means house.

El is the name of God. The house of God. Bethel was the place where Jacob met God, where Jacob set up the altar back in Genesis chapter 28 and in Genesis chapter 35.

Look at chapter 12 of Hosea. Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind. What is the east wind? It is the wind that comes out of the east.

If you think about the geographical situation of Israel, you've got the Mediterranean Sea, the moist, cooling, rain-bearing winds come off the Med, don't they? When they hit that ridge, clouds form, the rain descends and waters the fertile plains of Israel. What is the east wind? The east wind is the one that blows off of the Arabah. It's the one that blows over from the dry regions.

It's hot, it's dry, it doesn't bring rain. It brings no rain. It brings the parched season.

He pursues the east wind. He daily increases lies and desolation. Also they make a covenant with the Assyrians.

What direction does Assyria lie from Israel? East. Oil is carried to Egypt. This is obeisance.

This is the bribe, the payment for aid and assistance. They're going back to Egypt. They're going back to the land of the unbelievers, the land of bondage, the land from which God delivered them.

They're going back there with their oil, with their payment, with the produce of the land. They're squandering it away on the unbelievers. What happens in Christianity today when we face problems and we face difficulties? Where do we turn for answers? If you listen to the radio, if you browse the book rack at the Christian bookstore, where do we turn? We turn to programs.

We turn to self-help. We turn to small group encounters. We turn to psychology.

We turn to the fruit of scientific investigation. We turn to chemicals. It is a very depressing thing to listen to some of the advice and counsel that is given to believers today who are suffering because they're not holding themselves accountable to the plan and the call of God and are pursuing other things, pursuing temporal happiness, pursuing fulfillment in the circumstances of

life, rather than seeking the face of God and seeking the approval of God.

That is going to bring unhappiness. It's going to bring dissatisfaction and a sense of emptiness. That's designed to turn us toward God, not to turn us toward the Assyrians, not to turn us toward the Egyptians, but that's where we turn.

We medicate ourselves now. We find ourselves depressed. The Christian psychiatrist or the Christian counselor will say, well, you know, you've got a chemical deficiency.

That's why you're depressed. Let's get your serotonin levels up. Let's put you on this medication or that medication, and we'll remedy the symptoms that you have here, your depression and your feeling of unhappiness and discontent and restlessness and so forth.

We can medicate you to get over that. Instead of having these things turn us to God, why is Israel having to turn for help? Because they're in distress. God has put them in distress.

He's removed their blessing. He's removed the fulfillment of His covenant promises because of their disobedience and their apathy, and they realize that they've got a problem and they need an answer, but are they turning to God? No. They're turning to Egypt.

They're turning to Assyrians. They're turning to the pagans, and that's what we're doing today. We're finding our answers in science.

We're finding our answers in better diet and in better lifestyle and in better chemicals. Our children are unable to pay attention, and so we medicate them. They're unable to obey, and so we sedate them.

We coddle them. We try to give them their space, and we try to do all these other weird things rather than going back to the Word of God. People are shocked when you quote the Word of God saying, foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod will drive it far from him.

Oh, that's shocking. That's very politically incorrect. That's not the wisdom of the world.

That's not acceptable. Oh, that's brutal. That's primitive.

That's unenlightened. And so we accept the wisdom of the world. We carry our oil to Egypt, and we make a covenant with the Assyrians trying to solve our problems, and we reject the Word of the Lord.

Look at what God says about that kind of thing in verse 2 of chapter 12 of Hosea. The Lord brings a charge against Judah. He's already talked about Ephraim.

That's the northern kingdom. He says, look, you people who are not quite so far down the tubes down in Judah, God is bringing a charge against you as well. The Lord also brings a charge

against Judah.

He will punish Jacob according to his ways. According to his deeds, he will recompense him. Notice, this is what they do.

God is holding Israel accountable for what they do because they're believers. God doesn't hold unbelievers accountable for what they do. He holds them accountable for faith.

The issue for an unbeliever is salvation from the lake of fire. In this age, it's the issue of Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. But God is holding Jacob accountable because Jacob is God's son.

Israel is God's people, and they're accountable for what they do because they're believers. According to his deeds, he will recompense him. He, Jacob, took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength, he struggled with God.

What's this a picture of? These are two episodes from Jacob's life. Jacob, his name means supplanter. He's a twin.

Esau came out first, but Jacob grabbed ahold of his heel. He's trying to get a leg up, as it were. He's trying to get a head.

Of course, he ends up beating Esau out of his inheritance. In his own strength, he struggled with God. Remember the issue of Jacob wrestling with the angel? The Bible doesn't say it was an angel.

The Bible says it was a man, and this passage says it was God. He wrestled with God. Jacob himself named that place Peniel, and that E-L on the end is the name of God.

It's the place of struggling with God. What does it say here? In his strength, in his own strength, he struggled with God. Yes, he struggled with the angel, it says here, and prevailed.

He wept and sought favor from him. Jacob, remember that episode where he's wrestling with the messenger from God, wrestling with the man? He says, I will not let you go until you bless me. It's a picture of Israel.

He's doing it in his own strength, isn't he? I'm going to hang on to you. I'm going to use my physical strength on you until I get a blessing. It's very interesting to look at that episode in Genesis, because that's in Genesis chapter 32.

Where is it that Jacob sees the ladder and sees the throne of God and sees the angels ascending and descending? It's in chapter 28. It's at Bethel. Jacob is going to find God in Bethel.

It's what it says here in verse 4. He wept and sought favor from God at Peniel, at the brook that he's crossing when he's about to meet Esau. He's already sent his family over and he's there by

himself. He's not at Bethel.

He's at Penuel. He's at the place of struggling with God. He wrestles with God and he seeks a blessing from him.

The only thing that he gets as a result of that wrestling match is a new name, Israel, the contender, the one who contends with God. That's what Israel means, the one who contends with God, not the one who serves God, not the one who follows God, the one who contends with God. That's what he receives at the brook.

That's what he receives at Penuel in Genesis 32. Bethel is in Genesis 28. Bethel is in Genesis 35.

This passage reminds Israel, he didn't find God at Penuel. He found him at Bethel. That's where God spoke.

The prophet says, there he spoke to us, that is, the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is his memorable name. Remember, in the wrestling match, Jacob says, what is your name? And he doesn't get an answer.

Where is it that God reveals his name? Where is it that God reveals himself? It's at Bethel. We don't get the revelation of God by struggling. We don't get the blessing of God by wrestling with God, by contending with God.

It comes through faith. It comes through worship. It comes through the kind of pursuit that Jacob expressed at Bethel, not at Penuel.

And that's historically been the problem in Israel, seeking God's blessing in their own strength, seeking it by their own efforts. The Lord revealed his name at Bethel, the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is his memorable name.

So you, by the help of your God, return. Observe mercy and justice and wait on your God continually. Even in the midst of this pronouncement of judgment on the northern kingdom, Judah is reminded, you've got a problem as well.

God is bringing a charge against you and you need to turn. You need to return by God's help. You need to observe mercy and observe justice.

Take a lesson from what you see happening in the northern kingdom and change your mind. And he's talking to believers and he's calling them back to their calling. Look at verse 9 here, chapter 12.

I am the Lord your God ever since the land of Egypt. He's reminding them that they're believers. I am the Lord your God.

I will again make you dwell in tents as in the days of the appointed feasts. I have also spoken by the prophets and have multiplied visions. I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets.

You have no excuse. Look at verse 12. Jacob fled to the country of Syria.

Israel served for a spouse and for a wife he tended sheep. By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt and by a prophet he was preserved. But 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. God reminds Israel where they have come from. God reminds Israel of what the potential is for blessing if they serve.

But instead these things are taken away. We saw what Jesus had to say about this in Matthew chapter 21. Turn with me to Luke chapter 14 and verse 24.

In fact what you might do is just lay a pencil in that passage because we're going to pause here and take our break and when we come back we will see what Jesus has to say in Luke chapter 14. But let's stop here. This is a good place for a break.