

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”  
September 3, 2016**

**Hosea 6:1–7:16.** The Lord’s case against Israel.

**Acts 2:42–3:26.** Early Christians and a word about capitalism.

**Job 15:21–35.** Eliphaz’s poem on the fate of the wicked.

**COMMENTS:**

**Hosea 6:1–7:16.** In **6:4-7:16**, the Lord’s case against Israel is expanded. Emphasis is placed on the nation’s guilt, especially for her unfaithfulness to and ignorance of God: **Hosea 6:4** *“O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, And like the early dew it goes away. 5 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And your judgments are like light that goes forth. 6 For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.* Their love for the Lord was like a morning cloud and the dew (**6:4–11**). Early in the morning, the dew looks like sparkling jewels, but as soon as the sun comes up, the dew is gone. Israel’s devotion to the Lord was temporary, lovely but not lasting. To give some substance to their faith, God sent them His prophets with the Word of God which is like a penetrating sword and a flash of lightning (**6:5**), but the people turned a deaf ear—they were too sense oriented. We see the same problem in churches today filled with anti-intellectual Christians who likewise are too sense oriented and ignorant of God. These Jews missed the whole point. They were going through all of the rituals of offerings but not living in the reality of God *by knowledge and by love*. God doesn’t want our relationship with Him to be one of shallow, transient feelings and empty words and rituals, hearts that are enthusiastic one day and frigid the next. What’s even worse is that many Christians come to church in an effort to get God to work for them. The idea of giving their life to Christ and subordinating all of those things they think they need does not attract them. Christ simply is not viewed as good enough for that. They are simply too into their senses, which collapses into wanting entertainment in church services. Of course when the senses run the life instead of the intellect, the result is to live a life of passion. Consider the passion of the Israelites that Hosea is speaking to in **7:4-7**, where their lust is compared to an overheated oven. Their passion for sin was like a fire in an oven: bank the fire at night, and it will be ready to blaze out in the morning. The oven was so hot that the baker could ignore it all night and know it would be ready for baking his bread in the morning. The “fuel” for the fire was wine, for excessive alcohol and sin often go together (**7:5**). Hosea describes a palace celebration during which the king and his officers get drunk, and this gives the king’s enemies opportunity to overthrow him and even kill him. Then, Israel is described as a half-baked cake (**7:8**). The nomadic peoples of the East baked their bread on hot rocks. If the dough wasn’t turned, one side of the loaf would be burned and the other side uncooked. Instead of remaining separate from the nations, Israel mixed with the nations and became like them. Because of her compromising political posture, the nation was “burned” by Assyria on the one hand and left uncooked on the other. When it comes to our relationship with the Lord, we must be thorough and not “half-baked.” His gracious work must permeate our whole being so that heart, mind, and strength are all devoted to Him *by knowledge and by love*. Compromise with the world destroys such commitment.

**Acts 2:42–3:26.** Note the alacritous commitment of the early Christians. The Christians we see in the Book of Acts were not content to meet once a week for “services as usual.” They met daily (**Acts 2:46**), cared daily (Acts 6:1), won souls daily (Acts 2:47), searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11), and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5). Their Christian faith was a day-to-day reality, not a once-a-week ritual. Why? Because the risen Christ was a living reality to them, and His resurrection power was at work in their lives through the Spirit daily. I am sure it pains the Lord to see how many of His local churches are so poorly attended through the week and to see how little believers care for each other. Note the attitude of early Christians toward worldly wealth versus each other in **2:45**, “*and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*” While this passage is often used by socialists and liberals to justify redistribution of wealth, such an idea is far from the mark. This was voluntary, not state mandated. However, I do feel a few balanced and biblical words on capitalism is in order. Although I am a capitalist, I do not think that lack of capitalism is the *chief* problem in our country, or that it will fix what ails our country. It is a problem, no doubt, but the idea that if we just had free enterprise and robust capitalism, then the country would be prosperous again is misguided, in fact it comes with a certain deistic mindset. To think that God will bless this country regardless of its moral and spiritual condition because of free enterprise or capitalism flies in the face of the Word of God as well as what natural revelation/theology teaches us about God. Moreover, by making wealth and freedom the focus instead of virtue and freedom the issue will do nothing but create class warfare, which is then exploited by liberals, socialists, and communists. Before one makes a judgment on what basis God blesses or disciplines a nation, he should examine the Scriptures regarding Gentile nations, and note the emphasis on divine institutions of freedom, family, nationalism; these are far more critical to God than mere free enterprise, which apart from virtue always leads to corruption as well as a mammon-oriented people and class warfare and corporate welfare. In sum, I do believe that socialism and communisms are great evils. However, free enterprise and capitalism alone are not panaceas—at least not that I can find in Scripture. Let us keep our eyes on the Lord first and foremost to deliver and bless our nation.

**Job 15:21–35.** Eliphaz continues his poem on the fate of the wicked. This was, no doubt, meant to convict Job and persuade him to repent of whatever sin he had committed. It should be pointed out that the book of Job does not imply that everything the three friends said was wrong. Most of what they asserted fully agrees with the rest of the Bible. As a matter of fact, **Job 15:17-35** is very similar to Prov. 6:12-15. It is just that it did not apply to Job; Job was not suffering for his wickedness. Let this be a lesson for us all. We have no business judging anyone. The last thing we should do is automatically assign sin or evil to a fellow believer when he suffers. We need to let the Lord handle those issues.

*Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

*Pastor Don*