



# 12 | HOSEA 13

## THE DEATH OF DEATH

*When life presses into you, press into God*

### Outline

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### Songs

All Creatures of Our God and King  
Christ is Risen from the Dead  
Crown Him with Many Crowns  
See What a Morning  
In Christ Alone

### Call to Worship:

Psalm 30

You have turned our mourning into dancing!  
You have taken away our funeral clothes and clothed us in joy,  
so that our whole being might sing praise to you and not be silent.  
O Lord, our Lord, we will give thanks to you forever!

## Announcements

1. **Welcome** visitors.
2. We now have three baby boys that have been born. Congrats to Pastor Mike and Emily on the birth of Thaddeaus Calvin. Congrats to David and Yadi on the birth of Liam Emmanuel. And congrats to Justin and Amber on the birth of Josiah Nehemiah.
3. Life groups this week.

### Introduction

Our message today is from Hosea 13 on page 759 of your pew Bible. The title of our message today is "The Death of Death. We have one more message left, and we will be done with Hosea.

Death is devastating. In our congregation alone, I have done so many funerals. Yet for the Christian, this life is as bad as it gets.

We all face the death of loved ones and friends, and one day we will face our own mortality.

Death has had a major impact on my life from an early age. When I was 15 years old, just after I came to know Christ, I came face to face with death. It was New Year's Eve, 1989, and I heard my sister cry out from the my mother's bedroom: "Matt, there's something wrong with Mom!" I went back to see my mom lying there. Her hand was still warm to the touch. She seemed like she was in a coma. I said a brief prayer before the paramedics burst in. My Mom died that night at age 49 of a massive heart attack.

Have you ever had to face death? No doubt most of us have seen the death of a loved one or friend or even faced death ourselves. Hosea 13 prepares us to face death.

Christians know that once we come to know Christ, death no longer has any power. We look forward with joy to seeing Jesus face to face! This world is not our home.

We see this victory over death taking place in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hosea. Remember God loves Israel. But Israel is spiritually dying. And God has to let Israel die, so he can raise this nation again when Christ comes. The popular verse in Romans that really summarizes the Hosea 13 just perfectly.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23).

This is the message of Hosea 13: because of Jesus being our sin bearer, death is defeated. Death is dead!

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## 1. THE DEATH OF A NATION (13:1-3)

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To say that God is contrasting Israel's former days of youth and health with her present old age is technically inaccurate since Israel is already dead. But it is a strange death. We need to follow the hand of the divine surgeon as he conducts a spiritual autopsy. In medicine an autopsy is conducted to determine the cause of death and establish the condition of the corpse for the record. God does this in the first three verses of chapter 13.

## AN AUTOPSY REPORT

**13:1** | When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel, but he incurred guilt through Baal and died.

A summary of charges against Israel. This is what you've done. This is what you deserve. This is an autopsy report: a devastating review of Israel's history. You started off strong. Nations trembled before you. Remember the pillar of smoke, the glory cloud that went before them. No one wanted to contend with Israel. Kings and nations trembled before them. They were an incredible super power on the world stage that came out of nowhere.

Then they started **worshipping Baal, and died** (13:1). It wasn't an immediate death, but their death as a nation was certain.

Consider how exalted Israel was in the days of Solomon. Financially, militarily, and in every way, they were the picture of strength. But by the time of Hosea, they were almost dead.

### CAUSE OF DEATH: IDOLS

What a sad report we hear in the time of Hosea:

**13:2-3** | And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves metal images, idols skillfully made of their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of them, "Those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!"<sup>3</sup> Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window.

Israel was willing to participate in human sacrifice to get what they wanted. The nature of Baal worship was to offer a little baby to the bull god so that he might bless with material, agricultural or other forms of prosperity. They looked at the Baal as Yahweh's footstool. They were mixing Baal worship with worship of the true God. How confusing!

Because Israel is neck-deep in idolatry, like the morning dew or the dry chaff, they will be burnt up and obliterated by the heat of judgment.

God had promised the Messiah to come through Israel. Jesus is the hope of the world. God's assessment is that Israel is dead by idols. She sold her soul to the world like Gomer earlier in the book.

### *Why did Israel die?*

Why did Israel die? It's the same reason anyone perishes. They would not trust in the Lord, their Helper. They walked right past the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Look how sad their lives are without the Lord. How sad would your life be without the Lord?

### *Remember Gomer?*

Do you remember Gomer? In the first three chapters, she is the wife of the prophet. But this dignified wife turns to prostitution.

Remember what it was like when you were lost and dead in sin in the world? We were all Gomers. Remember she had sold herself to her lovers and ended up for sale in the slave

market. We were all there once. Gomer needed a Savior, and her husband the prophet Hosea was a type of Christ, wasn't he? He paid with his own money, 30 pieces of silver, to purchase her back. He loved her, welcomed her, and received her back as his wife.

What a mess. Israel is dead. Israel is like the chaotic mass of earth and water that God created in the beginning.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters (Gen 1:2).

It looks like there is no hope.

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## 2. GOD LOVES SAVING PEOPLE FROM DEATH (13:4-6)

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Who is the source of the prophesied destruction? Some, wishing to preserve the name of God from any imagined tint of dishonor, speak as if death is merely a product of mother nature. This is not what Hosea says or what the Bible as a whole teaches. Hosea says that God sends death. The Almighty is the destroyer.<sup>1</sup>

But first he reminds them, that even though he is destroying their nation, he loves them, and he will never stop loving them. He takes away their nation in order to bless them. God always has good purposes when he takes thing from us.

“The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

### HE SAVED HIS PEOPLE IN THE EXODUS

Here we see an historical reminder of the deliverance of the people from Egypt by God's hand.

13:4 | But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.

Israel is neck-deep in idolatry. And why do they serve idols? Can they actually do anything. Remember the glorious feat of rescuing them from Egypt? They left with no weapons, only the pillar of God's presence in front of them. He carried them on eagles' wings, and brought them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea (Exo 19:4).<sup>2</sup>

God tells them plainly: “**besides me there is no savior.**” Why is this important? Because God is telling them: you are dead, but I can raise those who are as good as dead.

### HE SAVED HIS PEOPLE IN THE WILDERNESS

The tender words of God continue to tell us that he has an absolutely perfect record. The passage continues with a reminder of the care God gave during the days of the people's desert wanderings. It was not God who abandoned Israel, but Israel who forgot God.

13:5-6 | It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought; <sup>6</sup> but when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me.

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<sup>1</sup> Boice, 105-106.

<sup>2</sup> Mackay, 344.

God was such a glorious provider for them in the wilderness. Remember God's assessment at the end of Deuteronomy?

"I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet" (Deut 29:5).

God was really generous to Israel. He fought for them. He provided for them. He taught them. He made them noble and strong.

At this point, God's people should have responded with worship and gratitude, but instead they became proud about God's provision thinking they were better than others, and they forgot God and became self-reliant.

They were so filled and satisfied, they forgot it was God who blessed them. Beware of prosperity and comfort saints. Your blessing might not be a blessing. Your biggest blessing might just turn your heart away from God.

When you wonder why you have so many incredible judgments in the Old Testament, you must understand that it is very dangerous for God to bless sinful people. It's not until the New Testament that you have the new birth and the gift of the Holy Spirit that people can understand the bigger picture. But we're not there yet in the time of Hosea. God actually has to allow the nation of Israel to die.

Let's also remind ourselves that if we have a selfish attitude even as Christians, God's material blessings might hurt us far more than they could help us. When we go through trials, let's remember that God knows what he's doing.

"...he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).

Sometimes the greatest blessing God can give us is a devastating trial or difficulty that makes us draw near to him. He's doing a work. He had to crush Israel in order for them to know him.

My heart is "Lord whatever it takes. Do whatever it takes for me to know you and then to know you more."

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### 3. DEATH IS WORSE THAN YOU THINK (13:7-13; 15-16)

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Israel forgot God. Because of their backsliding, in this passage, he gives two images that picture the destruction of the nation and the discipline of God's people.

#### GOD'S WARNING

"The wages of sin is death..." (Rom 6:23a).

God wants Israel to know that this is not some passive judgment. Their death comes by his hands. They reject him as Savior and Lord, and therefore, they cannot be saved. There is no other way of salvation.

Because of Israel's sin, the Lord will attack them like those animals that are the sheep's natural enemies:

13:7-9 | So I am to them like a lion; like a leopard I will lurk beside the way. <sup>8</sup> I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs; I will tear open their breast,

and there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild beast would rip them open.  
<sup>9</sup> He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against me, against your helper.

Ok, the devastation in these verses is incredible and frightening. He uses the most frightening animals to portray what's going to happen to them by the nations and ultimately eternal damnation.

He doesn't say, "Assyria will be like a lion" but "I am to them like a lion...a leopard...a bear robbed of her cubs, a wild beast" who rips them open.

This passage is speaking of Israel's earthly destruction, but I believe it also points to the eternal damnation of the lost among them. Israel was asleep to their damnation, and I believe there are many who are asleep in the church today, riding their pew to hell.

And that has everything to do with us today. There may be lost people in our church at this moment.

### *What About Hell?*

So we have to ask, what about hell? This verse gets at the heart of the doctrine of eternal damnation. If you reject **God as your helper**, there is no help for you. If God is not your helper, he is your enemy.

I have had conversations with people in our congregation through the years who were not sure of their salvation. Many have been very disturbed about this, but some shockingly, are completely undisturbed and even cavalier.

Jesus himself warned, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28).

Be afraid! Be very afraid. If you don't know Christ, you will be separated from God in everlasting torment forever and ever. God uses this fearful imagery here in Hosea as a mercy to warn us.

Listen to the Lord in Revelation 21:6-8

And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. <sup>7</sup>The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup>But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." (Rev 21:6-8).

How awful is hell. Remember the rich man who went to the underworld, and he said:

"Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Lk 16:24).

Don't reject God as your Savior and Helper. Take God up on his salvation. You may be dead in your sins, but we serve a God that knows the way out of the grave.

### **MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY**

The second image in these verses is of an unborn child, a fetus, who refuses to be born. It speaks of our deep need to respond to God.

**13:10-13** | Where now is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers—those of whom you said, "Give me a king and princes"? <sup>11</sup> I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath. <sup>12</sup> The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store. <sup>13</sup> The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son, for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb.

God's given Israel a way to escape death. They didn't need an earthly king, like Saul. They needed God's king. David was just a type of God's king, but not a very good type. The true king they needed to be waiting for was Messiah: Jesus, God's Son.

They need to be alive to this, but instead, when the time came for them to be alive to God and trust in him, they were like a **stillborn child**. They would not come out and live. They were responsible to respond to God and draw near to him and worship him, but they never came out and lived.

## ISRAEL'S DEATH

So what do we say to all this? Will Israel as a nation die? Yes. Northern Israel will be taken captive by Assyria. Judah will be enslaved by Babylon. But that's not the end.

God is the God of new beginnings. Do you believe that? There is death on the horizon for everyone of us. Ten out of ten people die.

We are all born dead in our sin, but God, rich in mercy saved us (Eph 2:1-10). What a glorious God. Were it not for grace we would be doomed.

The final image is one that would be well understood by the inhabitants of Palestine: a destructive wind from the desert. It represents the invasion that was to come from Assyria that would absolutely put Israel as a nation to death, so to speak.

**13:15-16** | Though he may flourish among his brothers, the east wind, the wind of the LORD, shall come, rising from the wilderness, and his fountain shall dry up; his spring shall be parched; it shall strip his treasury of every precious thing. <sup>16</sup> Samaria shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword; their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open.

Countryside and city, agriculture and culture, all will be ruined. This is actually what happened when Assyria became the wind, historically speaking. But to linger over that would be to fall prey to a facile form of reductionism, for the wind's first cause was the Lord—the ambivalent Lord. The same Lord who once nourished his people *in* the wilderness now brings terror and mortality *from* the **wilderness**. <sup>3</sup>

The result of the Assyrian "**east wind**" invasion is the slaughter of so many in Israel. It is so cruel and ugly at the time it happened, but it ultimately results in good for the overall plan of God. We must die before we can be raised from life. Israel would need to suffer the deaths of the most vulnerable through war and terrorism: their **little ones** and infants as well their **pregnant** wives.

The death of Israel will be devastating and awful. Life and eternity without God will be more awful than anyone can imagine!

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<sup>3</sup> Beeby, 173–174.

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## 4. THE DEATH OF DEATH (13:14)

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Now we come to one of the Mount Everests of verses. Here God declares that death is dead. There is a ransom coming that will purchase God's people from the power of death. Indeed, because of this ransom, death has no sting.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT PROMISE

God has to allow the nation of Israel to die essentially in order for the true Redeemer to come and purchase the true Israel back with his own blood. Because of this ransom, death is dead!

**13:14** | I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes.

Here is death's obituary! Here is the death of death. Israel has to go into captivity and be "put to death" so that Christ can come and conquer death. Therefore, when it comes to Israel, God says, "**Compassion is hidden...**" I'm going to let Israel be cut down. But out of that cut down nation is going to come a sprout, a Branch, named Jesus.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT REDEEMER

This verse is pointing directly to the New Testament Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He is the one who with his own blood ransoms Israel, and the true Israel of Jews and Gentiles together (Rom 11:17-24). Because of Christ's ransom, death is dead and the people of God of all ages are ransomed and redeemed. God promises a resurrection to Israel. God can restore that which has died.

The Apostle Paul has therefore very properly quoted these words in 1 Corinthians 15:55:

"Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:55).

Israel must "die" to come alive again. Therefore, Yahweh says, "**Compassion is hidden from my eyes**" (13:14b). The death and destruction of the nation is inevitable that the soul of the nation would be saved.

We need to see our need of Christ. We are as good as dead without him. As he says in John 15:5, "Without me you can do nothing." Because of the ransom of Christ's blood, we can live. Death has no sting and no power over anyone who trusts in Christ.

By dying on the cross for our sins, Jesus actually struck a death-blow to sin, death, and the devil. Now the outcome of the battle between the two kingdoms is certain. All that remains is for God to liberate the captives of Satan's kingdom and bring them into the kingdom of His Son. ~Phillip Ryken

### *The Bee Sting*

Death now has no sting! This has to do with a sting of a bee, stinger of a bee or a poisonous serpent/snake. After that day that Christ took the sting of death, death has no sting for the Christian. The stinger's removed. You know, frankly, for the Christian, in the



truest sense, when death plunged its stinger into Christ at the cross, it left its stinger there. And Christ bore the whole sting of death for us so that death for us has no sting. It's still an enemy; it still buzzes around and makes you dodge a lot. But it can't sting anymore. It left its stinger in Jesus Christ, and it's been flopping around in the throes of death ever sense.

Death doesn't harm us in any meaningful way. It invades our world, and we have to dodge a little bit, we have to recover from what it does, but it doesn't ever really harm us unless there is sin there. The sting of death is sin.

But if you are in Christ, he's taken your sin from you.

Death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains... Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot block a man's pathway for even a moment. The shadow of a dog can't bite; the shadow of a sword can't kill. ~C. H. Spurgeon

God put death to death by the death of his Son on the cross.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor 5:21).

### **Conclusion: Ralph Sr.'s New Life**

The great turning point in the whole long biblical story is Christ's resurrection. It is there that Jesus defeated death. He overcame death.

Never did I see this more powerfully than in my friend's dad, Ralphie John Castine, Sr. We called him Big Ralph because he was so tall, and he was a large man. My dad called him "Ralph the Mouth," but I would never dare call him that because I liked living too much. Ralph Sr. worked at a paper factory during the night shift, so I'd see him when he came home around 10am in the morning. I'd be playing in the backyard on a summer day, and he'd yell out, "Matt the rat!" I loved him very much despite his sarcastic humor.

I moved away for eight years to Louisiana, then moved back to my childhood home after my mom died. My best friend was still Ralph Jr., and I was shocked to hear that his dad was dying of Leukemia. I didn't know what to do but pray for Ralph Sr. to come to know Jesus.

Not much time passed and I was invited to Ralph Sr.'s funeral. I wasn't sure how I would handle it if Ralph Jr. asked where his dad's soul was. I'd have to tell him I didn't think it was with the Lord. I was devastated. I had prayed daily for Ralph Sr. to be saved, and it felt like I had no power to help him know Jesus, and now he was dead.

I went to the funeral, and Ralph Jr. introduced me to his uncle, who was a wrestler. Now a little side note – one of my favorite things about Ralph Jr. was that he was a lot shorter than me, and I loved to wrestle him and destroy him any chance I could. That is, until he visited me in Louisiana one day and he literally lifted me up and body slammed me. I said, to Ralphie: "Where did learn that?" He told me his Uncle was an Olympian wrestler. I never messed with Ralphie John again. I showed him due respect!

Back to the funeral. I finally get to meet his Olympian uncle who Ralphie tells me also now works for Athletes in Action. He's a born again Christian. His uncle tells me that he's reading the Bible every day for three months with Ralph Sr., and that about two months ago, Ralph Sr. gave his life to Jesus Christ. Whoa! I jumped so high I almost put a hole in the ceiling at the funeral home.

Because of the Gospel, this funeral home was a launching point of eternal life for Ralph Sr. Death is defeated, and Ralph Sr. has eternal life!

Listen, that's true for anyone who trusts in Jesus. Because of Jesus, death is dead. The devil has been stripped of his power. Hell is defeated! Christ is risen from the dead. Now he lives in you and me! And one day, Jesus will come again and my mortal body will put on immortality. Death is conquered. Death is now a portal to a life I cannot even now imagine. Life without pain, without sin, without despair. Truly we can sing: *Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered!*<sup>4</sup>

If you are without Christ, come to the one who overcame death for you today. Don't wait! Don't hesitate!

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<sup>4</sup> Keith Getty. See *What a Morning*. Hymn.