

## Israel Shamed for Their House of Iniquity

Let us turn to our Bibles to Hosea chapter 10. Hosea chapter 10. Hosea chapter 10 verses 1 through 8. Let us listen attentively to the word of God.

Hosea chapter 10 verses 1 through 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. Their heart is divided. Now they are held guilty, and he will break down their altars.

He will ruin their sacred pillars. 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? They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant.

Thus judgment springs up like hemlock in the furrows of the field. The inhabitants of Samaria fear because of the calf of Beth Avin, for its people mourn for it, and its priests shriek for it, because its glory has departed from it. The idol also shall be carried to Assyria as a present for King Jerob.

Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. As for Samaria, her king is cut off like a twig on the water. Also the high places of Avin, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed.

The thorn and the thistle shall grow on their altars. They shall say in the mountains, cover us, and to the hills fall on us. Let us pray." And these words of further judgment upon the northern tribes, God, may we see some of the particular sins that they had, temptations perhaps for us as well, Lord, as we see especially of the prosperity.

But you drill in beyond that, the misuse of the prosperity into, again, their false worship in the city of Bethel, which the prophet calls Beth Avin, the place of iniquity. This is the high-handed sin in which they perpetuate generation after generation, swearing falsely in making a covenant, gracious God. And so you bring judgment upon them like hemlock in the furrows of the fields, sprouting about here and there and everywhere, and a little bit here, a little bit there, until the time of Assyria wipes them out.

Our Lord and Savior, may we see here the importance and the power of your judgment for your church and for the vindication of your name, and that Israel is indeed shamed, and we pray that we would not be shamed, but rather always cling to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. So in these verses, Hosea warns the northern tribes of the coming Assyrian invasion, and more particular, naming names here, it will bring pain and shame because they did not fear the Lord, as they even admit in verse 3, we have no king because we did not fear Jehovah.

In fact, many in Israel admit they didn't, and they still did not repent. This lack of fear of God is shown in the persistent use of false worship and idols, in particular, they mix the Baal worship, as we talked about before, with Jehovah's worship, and other times it seems they

simply dropped God altogether and fully worshiped Baal and other related gods like Ashtaroath. As such, the Lord will take away their vain idols, those things that they took pride in and refused to repent of, and teach us a lesson, a reminder throughout the ages that God takes His name and His worship seriously.

## **Prosperity Yielded More False Worship**

The first point here, verses 1 through 4, we have a description of prosperity yielding more false worship. Verses 1 through 4, Israel empties his vine, he brings forth fruit for himself according to the multitude of his fruit, so he's got lots of prosperity, according to the bounty of his land, so several ways in which it describes that metaphor of bringing forth fruit that Israel, that is the northern tribes, the ten tribes, were prosperous. We see it again in chapter 2, verse 8, for she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.

God had indeed given them through His providence many good things, blessings upon the Old Testament people of God, and the northern tribes in particular, to the point of multiplication of silver and gold, in fact. But what we read for the rest of verse 8 of chapter 2 is, which they prepared for Baal. They did not honor God, they were prosperous, God gave them many good things as a people, and they turned around and worshiped all the more Baal, the local god of the Philistines and the like.

And the theme pops up several times, as you may recall, through the book of Hosea, reminding us of the dangers of wealth and prosperity of the Old Testament church, and thus for us today. It too is a temptation for us. We live, as you know, in one of the most prosperous nations of the world in history.

Rome, yes, was prosperous in their own way and very powerful, expansive, they had great elites and the like, but they didn't have a middle class the way we do. Most of them were poor and living around or walking around, and we have all this greatness that God has given us in our lives. And the temptation, therefore, is to forget God and to get lost in our blessings, which is what's happening, and it was happening in the New Testament tribes.

The prophetic books are filled with illustrations and metaphors, of course, as we see here of the picture of fruit and the like, but they stop short of particular detailing of sins. But here we have a little bit of detail there in chapter 2 and elsewhere of particular sins and how they misused and what they were specifically doing wrong. And that prosperity was particularly misused here in verse 1 in a twofold manner.

They increased the altar, we read there in the end of verse 1, and they embellished the sacred pillars, right? According to the multitude of the fruit, according to how much prosperity they had, they increased the altars, or he has increased, that is, speaking of Israel as a singular entity, and they have embellished his sacred pillars, that is, the sacred pillars of Baal. They're not increasing God's altars, as you know. The true worship was in Jerusalem, down south, in the temple, and there up north, they have a Baal temple, they have Baal worship, they have worship in the high places, they have Baal priests, as you recall, in 1 and 2 Kings, a number of them got slaughtered, 900, and there are still more priests.

It was astounding, if you think about it. So the increasing of the altars, in other words, they took God's blessings, as we read in chapter 2, verse 8, and turned around and gave them back to Baal, and increased and multiplied more altars to worship and honor this false god, which is a double shame upon them, instead of repenting. Thanking the Lord for the good things that He has bestowed upon them, they gave it back to the false god, two, three, four, fivefold.

We don't know how much more. And giving it back to the altars, increasing the altars, and embellishing the sacred pillars is surely a sign of public respect to their false god, like we give tithes and offerings or special offerings to the church to help with the building fund or something like that. Here's the altar fund and the pillar fund and the like.

That's what's going on here. The embellishing the sacred pillars, a similar idea is increasing the altar, and that is giving back to false worship, using prosperity for wicked ends. This is what's going on in the opening verse here.

And of course, God is not pleased with this. He's not describing it as something good or interesting, but rather more evidence of the sin of Israel, the perpetual and perpetuating of the sin of false worship with more altars. And of course, in America, we have prosperity.

People turn around and use it for what? False worship, or if they don't do that, they turn around and use it for other violations of God's holy will, more drinks, more drugs, more cars, more houses, or something along the lines, but not honoring God, not giving to His kingdom, not concerned or caring about it at all. They have either obsession or something along the lines that distracts them from their call to repent and follow the Lord God Almighty. Prosperity is given by the Lord for good things.

We're supposed to use it for our family, our friends, our neighborhood, our church, to bless them, bless generations, our children, our grandchildren, in fact, and not to be selfish with it. Here, we only read in particular of the false worship, but they probably use it in other false and dangerous ways as well. And he continues on here in verse 2, their heart is divided.

Now they're held guilty, and He will break down their altars. He will ruin their sacred pillars. Deuteronomy 6.5 reminds us of the importance of loyalty to God and His covenants.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. All right, Christ quotes that, and He repeats it in the New Testament. The Jews knew it because they challenged Him about that.

He said, this is the greatest commandment, and He quotes Deuteronomy 6.5. Deuteronomy is like the second or third, I think it's the third most quoted book in the New Testament in Christ and Isaiah and in Psalms before that. And they have a divided loyalty. Now, we can speak of divided loyalty whenever we sin, and there's a way you can say that in a very loose sense, because it can be confusing.

You read this, you're like, well, I've sinned. Is my heart divided? I have divided loyalties, don't I? No. Well, you may.

I don't know your hearts per se. I think the best of you, you're here, you haven't run around, done crazy things, you haven't disavowed your baptism with the church. That would be clearly divided loyalty of some sort.

But only, as I shall say, in an incidental way when we sin, have we have a divided loyalty in that particular instance. Not unlike a little child who sins or is disobedient, who runs off, right? We know that they don't have divided loyalty as such. We wouldn't say, you little rebel, what's wrong with you? It's like, okay, my kid had a problem.

We know he has a particular sin here, but elsewhere, he still loves the family, he's still here for dinner, he still stays home. They're my kid, that's my family, he hasn't disowned me and I haven't disowned him. And so we wouldn't say the child has divided loyalty as such.

He still identifies with the family, he hasn't run away from home. But if they rebel and reject the family and do their own thing consistently and constantly, and then after a while you're like, okay, there's a problem here. I mean, of course, we're thinking teenagers, young adults, they leave the home, there's no longer divided loyalty, they just simply broke the covenant and ran away.

It's like that in the Christian life as well. This is what Israel was doing. They're rebellious children throwing conniption fits, more like, again, rebellious teenagers.

They have enough maturity, as it were, and understanding of things, but they twist it, as we saw. They talk about Baal, and it's unclear at times if they mean God, because the word Baal is used for God, it means master, or if they mean Baal-Baal. But either way, they're still mixing the worship of Jehovah with the worship of Baal, and so their loyalties were therefore clearly divided in their worship of God.

Claiming they worship Him, but use the forms of Baal, we would call that perhaps half-hearted devotion. You really serious about God? Really? What is going on here? Especially, of course, in the case of sacrifices of children, as we know from other texts of the Old Testament there, they offered to Moloch, or in the book of Hosea, we had temple prostitution, clearly divided loyalties. I follow Jehovah, the God of the covenant.

Maybe they even argue we're better followers than those southern tribes. We've got the true deal here. No, you don't.

It's divided loyalties. We must be completely committed to the honor of Jehovah, not just on Sunday, but throughout the week, His name and His worship and His doctrines and His teachings, by honoring the first table of the law, encouraging each other to honor the first table of the law. God's judgment, therefore, comes upon the things in which they took delight in.

According to the bounty of His land, they have embellished the sacred pillars, they have increased the altars, and God says what? He will break down their altars, He will ruin their

sacred pillars. I'm going to tear down the very things that you rejoice in, because you will not honor Me as your God, you will not thank Me as your Lord, you will not take these increase in altars, excuse me, increase in bounty and blessings, and honor Me correctly and properly. But you go back to bail worship, so I'm going to destroy all that and take it away from you.

And of course, this is a hint at the coming ruin that comes from what? The Assyrian invasion on the north that will wipe them out. The fall of Samaria in 722 BC. They have a lack of fear of God in verse 3. It's quite astounding here.

When I first read it, I thought, because there's no quote marks, right? There's no quote marks in Hebrew. And so what you see here in English with a quote mark, they're like, we believe this is them, because he does say it, for now they say we have no king, because they do not fear the Lord. I thought perhaps it was ironic, but all the commentators don't think it's ironic, they take it as they are self-aware that they do not fear God.

We know we didn't fear God, so we have no king, and any king that we have can do nothing for us. As for a king, what would he do for us? How could he protect us from the Assyrian army that's coming? That's probably on the horizon, they probably know about it for a few years out, because lots of battles go on as kingdoms grow, and they hear lots of rumors over the years of what's going on up north, there's this new empire coming about, perhaps is what's going on here. But it's really quite something they acknowledge, they have no fear of God, we have no king.

As one commentator puts it, we have no king, for Jehovah deprived us of him because of our not fearing God. What then, seeing God is against us, should a king be able to do for us if we had one? And I think that's a good interpolation and understanding of that language there. They acknowledge they have not feared God aright, when they should have.

They admit to losing their earthly king, and that he won't do anything for them even if they had a king, because God is against them is the implication. They have no fear of the Lord, and yet they still did not repent. Imagine that, they speak this way, at least in their hearts, perhaps with their mouth, to one another, and nothing changed.

They're still honoring Baal, they still have the calves of Bet-Avon, right, the house of iniquity. They haven't torn all that down. We read about Joash, the young seven-year-old king and second kings, how he rose up with all the people, and they tore down all the worship of Baal.

That's what they should have done, but instead they just cry and bemoan, oh no, we don't have a king, God's against us, what's going to happen, what are we going to do? Really? They know what to do. Hosea's been there for several years, warning them up and down, the northern tribes, repent, repent. Fear of God is important, in other words.

Just like fear of fire is kind of important, we hope our children have this fear of fire, it's natural and instinctive response to what? Danger. And the Lord is indeed dangerous to what? To whom? Sinners. Sinners who do not turn from sin and trust in the Messiah.

Fear protects us, therefore, from the danger of sin as well. Christians are called, indeed, to have a godly fear. Those who are sinning, and Paul tells young Timothy in 1 Timothy 5.20, those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all that the rest may also fear.

It's not just an Old Testament thing, well that's the God of fear in the Old Testament, New Testament's the God of love. That creates two gods and two religions. That's not Christianity, it's the same God, it's the same love, it's the same fear, it's a godly fear, and it's a good thing to have.

We want it in our children, they ought to fear their parents in a good sense, respect and honor them in the highest sense of those words, short of, of course, God, they should honor God more than their parents. But fear is a good word, that's the word in the Greek, phobos, or phobos. Pastors today, of course, need therefore to teach the law and the fear that should accompany the law so that you would flee from sin and the judgment that comes from playing around with violating God's law and His worship.

We want to, therefore, approach God with a holy awe, which was clearly missing amongst the people of God and the northern tribes here, it's really something. And he continues on to describe other sins that they have done, they have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant, it's not very specific exactly what they're talking about, it's probably a reference to their commitment to the Mosaic covenant, the worshiping of God and thus in breaking the covenant, that is in worshiping idols, clear violation of the second commandment that God's going to judge them, they shouldn't have done that, that's an overt breaking of God's covenant and lying and saying we're going to follow it, but not really, not really. Hosea 7.1 we read of other violations of the covenant, that is sins.

When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria, for they have committed fraud. A thief comes in, a band of robbers takes spoil outside, it continues on, I think verse 3 or 4, they are all adulterers, so they're stealing, they're breaking marriages, they have false worship, they had other sins going on here. And so in the language here, they have spoken words and swearing falsely and making a covenant, it's probably a reference to that, although it just may be another list of all these other sins, they're lying to one another in their covenants perhaps.

But at the end of the day, we know because God had wiped them out, and by the time of Christ, the northern tribes in particular, that they had an out-and-out rejection of God's and his worship. A high-handed sin was the language I used, and God will take care of it. The prophet is of course calling them out to repent.

In this language here, every time he points out their sin, he's not laughing at them, it's an urging, a crying out to them, you must repent, you must come back to God and flee from sin and admit your error.

## **False Worship Yields Shame**

False worship yields shame, verse 8. And so there's this progression, right? Prosperity yielded more false worship, and that false worship now yields more shame, more serious

shame, verses 4 through following, 4b. Judgment springs up like hemlock in the furrows of the field.

So the judgment is growing, there's a picture here, that word hemlock could be wormwood or poisonous weed, but the point being, of course, judgment is coming, little bits here and there, I think, and ultimately the full judgment when they'll be completely wiped out by the Assyrian army. The fear of their false gods is kind of a funny picture, verse 5 and 6, verses 5 and 6. The inhabitants of Samaria fear because of the calf of Beth-Avin. They're fearful of it.

What are they fearful of? That it's going to be taken away from them by the Assyrian army. Verse 6, the idol also shall be carried to Assyria. You're going to lose your precious Baal.

Again, Beth-Avin means the house of iniquity or trouble, and they had great pride in their Baal worship there, apparently. It's an allusion to Bethel, the house of the Lord. The Beth means house.

And so in that description there of Bethel, he gives his own term for it. You're not Bethel or the house of the Lord, you're the house of iniquity, okay? So it's not a compliment, obviously. And so he's going after their pride of false worship, which is, of course, a dangerous thing.

And if you recall in 1 Kings 12 and following, we have Jeroboam's great sin. Jeroboam was the first king of the northern tribes. Rehoboam was the king of the southern tribes at the split after Solomon passed away.

And Jeroboam didn't want them going down to Israel and worshiping God. Oh no, that would make a disaster for my new kingdom because they would be comfortable being down south and they wouldn't be comfortable with a new king down there. And it's divided loyalties what he's really worried about there instead of honoring God.

So he makes up his own religion, this kind of parallel to Judaism religion or Old Testament religion, God's religion, in Jewish garb, in this case more pagan garb of Jewish garb. And it's been a pain in the backside of the northern tribes and the southern tribes since that day forward, over and over again, especially the high places they talk about, where they would worship Baal and not at Jerusalem, they would go up there instead. This is the background, this is the history.

Another place besides Bethel had calves probably, but we read there specifically Jeroboam made these calves and placed them in the northern tribes for them to worship God. We're going to worship God through this calf, isn't this wonderful? And the judgment there that I mentioned before, it's kind of humorous. The other part of humorousness is this, the people mourn for it, the priests shriek for it.

Oh no, this is terrible, we're going to lose our golden calf because its glory has departed from it. Oh no, of course, Hosea doesn't think it's real glory, they think it's glory. It's not really glory, it's terrible stuff.

The idol shall be carried away to Assyria. Their god is going to be picked up and walked away with. Bye.

What kind of a god is that? That's no god, that's a false god, it's a fake god. We read that in Isaiah, right? Your god can't see, your god can't hear, your god can't answer prayers. All that in a simple sentence, the idol also should be carried to Assyria.

Bye bye, there goes your religion. You lost your idol, you lost your religion, you lost Baal worship. Of course, Israel knows if you lose Jerusalem, and they did, the Babylonian captivity, they still had God, and God was still with them, because it was never ultimately about the temple.

The temple was going to pass away. The best of the Jews knew that. So this is a judgment upon their false religion, upon their false god.

If they persist in this gross disobedience, God will conquer them, and He does indeed, and the Assyrian armies conquered them, and there was no mercy brought upon them. The shame of Israel, verse 6b, Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. Now clearly, there's multiple layers of this shame.

The first and most obvious is the shame of losing their religion. My god got captured and was carried off into captivity. What kind of a religion do we have? Oops.

But being invaded by foreigners is shameful already. Their own counsel to perpetuate sin is a shame as well, because that's what they kept doing. And sin will always bring shame, it should bring shame.

It whether you feel like you have shame or not, whether your neighbors around you and your families are shameful or not, and they feel the shame or not, it doesn't really matter. Our societies, we know, more and more have less shame about public nudity, about public profanity, and all these other things. It doesn't matter what they think.

It's objectively true, it's shameful, and it should bring shame, and they are shamed. And I hope, and I think there were some elect among them, and they had the proper subjective shame, that is personal shame, they actually felt it. And we ought to feel it as well when we sin, because shame has a function in the Christian life.

It's there to draw us away from sin. Fear does that. Shame, in a similar fashion, is designed by God to keep us away from sin and foolish acting and foolish speaking, and to turn us back to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

And so, therefore, we should not use or misuse or downplay the use of shame. People do that, unfortunately, in churches in which we are preaching against sin, and they're like, don't shame these people, they're not going to come to your church. Well, I mean, in one sense, I'm not pointing at them, I'm talking about sin.

I don't usually use someone's name in a sermon as such. No, they're concerned about losing their friendship with them, perhaps, and the sin is in the way in that case. They ought to feel shame for that sin.

Both individually and collectively, as churches themselves. Again, the northern tribes and their worship before God was both a political thing, a social thing, as well as a religious activity. It represents the church in that sense.

And so, the lesson for us is also, you know, societal. We don't want paganism running amok in our society. But religiously as well, churches can fall down the same path and have done it over the generations into false worship.

We think, of course, the most obvious example, the mainline churches that we know of, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, where they dance around, you know, pagan trees and have pagan goddess worship and crazy things like that in the sanctuary. But even lesser things than that, not as gross, I should say, but still serious in their own ways, could be attempting for the rest of us. The king is cut off, verse 7, as for Samaria, right, that's the hub of the northern tribes, her king is cut off like a twig in water.

So, that's pretty clear imagery there that, oh, he's pretty useless. So, the head of corruption, in other words, will be removed by the Assyrians because he is, to whom much is given, much is required. Jehosh, the young king of the southern tribe, used his power for good, and it was a blessing upon Judah and Benjamin that we read there in 2 Kings.

Here on the flip side, the northern kings did wicked. And if they didn't do anything, they didn't stop the wickedness when they had the power to stop it. That would be part of their sin.

But often, they were actively involved, as we saw with Ahab and his sons and his grandson, each generation of the northern tribes, they all perpetuated wicked Baal worship. Because to whom much is given, much is required, and God will take out their king and their deliverer. Because the king back then, of course, was supposed to be the one who stood for them and fought for them.

They lose him, they've lost their empire, or their country, in this case, the northern tribes. Now, even today, the civil magistrate has much influence on religion, although we don't think of it that way in the American scene, because we think of religious freedom often, and all the rhetoric we have in politics, regardless of the party affiliation or whatever else, we all talk that way, or they all talk that way. But whether by formal law or by public example and word, they can influence good or bad religion, and they have.

We see politicians use church, use Bibles, you know, they have their picture there, they want to be seen, we are with the religious people. Okay, well, he's not a believer, but he can still influence it, good or bad. God can still use them one way or the other.

Predictions of loss, verse 8, also the high places of Aven, the city of Israel, shall be destroyed. God will take them out. And the destruction brings forth two images here, of the thorn and the thistle growing at the altars, because of the disuse and destruction.

And of course, their fear and trepidation and shame, where they cry out that the mountains would cover them up, because it's so bad, how bad the destruction of the Assyrian army was. Now, Aven here, clearly a shorthand for Beth Aven, right? So, Beth is house, Aven is iniquity. So, God will destroy their iniquity, the places of iniquity, the high places of iniquity, the sin of Israel, which was false worship.

It's ongoing, over and over again. Every generation, and he sent prophets every generation, and they taught their kids and their grandkids to worship in the high places, and not just worship in the high places, which was already bad. You have that problem with Jehoash, who, the young king, he got rid of all the Baal worship, except he didn't stop the worship of God in the high places.

So, at least they're worshipping Jehovah in the high places, although they should be in Jerusalem worshipping Jehovah. But here, in particular, in the northern tribes, they went to the high places and worshiped whom? Baal. That's doubly bad, or triply bad, or that much worse.

That's why he calls it iniquity, and he's just drilling that point home. All the high places, not just Beth Aven, but everywhere, is this false worship of Baal, I will wipe it out. If you won't wipe it out, I'll wipe it out.

When I wipe it out, you're going to regret it, you know? It's like your parents did that, right? My father did that. If you don't take care of it, I'll take care of it. You don't want me taking care of it, right? That's what's going to happen here, and it did happen, as I said, in the fall of Samaria.

I lost my place here. So, this picture, then, of the destruction of the Assyrians, the desolation and fear, in verse 8, that the Lord punishes the false worship, it's described twofold here. The thorn and the thistle shall grow on the altars.

They're not going to grow on an active altar that's being taken care of, that's being cleaned, that's being used to slay animals with the blood and everything else, but rather it's a picture of a deserted altar, probably broken down altars, surely, and the like. That's the picture there. There's no people there, which implies they were taken away by the Assyrians, and all their prosperity was turned into mothballs.

That's how we would say it today. And, again, it happens in the churches when they lose. It's a sad thing in England, I think, I don't know if it's happened over here, because I have contacts in England, where some of the churches are being bought by Muslims.

So, they're not going to have thistles and thorns grow in their buildings, that's true, they're being used as opposed to being destroyed, but it's a shameful use. More false worship. They don't even pretend to be Christian.

At least they kind of pretended to be Jewish, right? Continual disobedience brings about fear, is what we see at the end of verse 8. They shall say to the mountains, cover us, and to the hills, fall on us. That's a snapshot of how bad things are with the Assyrians. The Assyrian

army is the kind of army that when they wiped you out, and if they really didn't like you, they would take all your heads and pile them up.

So, the whole world would see that we took them out, and these people resisted us instead of getting in. They were brutal, and that brutality is reflected here, I think, and certainly the fear of the Jews when they see the armies coming, they would rather have a mountain fall on them than to be wiped out. And so, that highlights how serious the matter was at the time.

God still brings to shame iniquitous worship, the house of iniquity. We don't see it today with the same visible effects, of course. In the New Testament, we read of those dying and sick in 1 Corinthians 11, as you recall, because they were frivolous at the Lord's Supper.

Yet, the punishment still applies today. If children growing up indifferent to Christianity are being succored by false teachings, or any of us are, then indeed, there is a curse and a punishment upon them because their parents didn't teach them seriously to take Christianity seriously and to listen to true doctrine, but went to false churches, churches that tickled the ear, entertainment and the like, and the kids will grow up and suffer the consequences of it. It's going to affect them, and that's a sad thing, but it's still a judgment upon them because the kids are still moral agents who can read the Bible like the rest of us, hear these things, and make these sad decisions, unfortunately, but God will vindicate His worship even today.

I can't say that you're sick, therefore, you've done something wrong in worship. That isn't necessarily always the case, but clearly, I think God still takes His Word and His worship seriously. Therefore, we should learn to keep His worship pure, and His teachings as well.

Let us be humble, therefore, brothers and sisters. Let us pray for all our churches, for ourselves, that we would not turn into houses of iniquity, but rather houses of praise and honor of our Lord and Savior. Let us pray.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, blessed Jehovah, Keeper of the Covenant, may we honor You in all that we do in our lives, to be sure, but especially, God, in this time of worship and honor and praise of You in formal public worship, God, that the world may see that we fear You and that we take these things seriously, God. Help us, we pray, to flee sin and to embrace our Lord and Savior, God Almighty. Amen.