

# Hosea 4

The Lords Indictment of Israel

# Quick Review



- ▶ In chapter 1, YHWH asks our prophet Hosea to marry a “wife of whoredom”. This symbolic act helps to illustrate the relationship between, Israel and LORD.
- ▶ The marriage between Hosea and Gomer produces children. Their names explain the fate of Israel if she continues to be unfaithful. (Jezreel, “No- Pity” and “Not My People.”)



# Review



- ▶ Chapter 2 explains that Israel is giving credit to other gods for their prosperity and blessings. She is offering both sacrifices in the form of offerings and sexual rituals to *Baal*. YHWH says he will abandon her, leaving her barren, like a desert.
- ▶ In the other verses, YHWH shows mercy and explains that he will woo her back, just as he did when he brought her out of Egypt and formed her into a holy people.

## Hosea 4:1-3 (786-746 B.C.)

- ▶ **Hear the word of the LORD, Israelites, for the LORD has a dispute with the inhabitants of the land: There is no fidelity, no loyalty, no knowledge of God in the land.<sup>2</sup> Swearing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed.**

<sup>3</sup> Therefore the land dries up,  
and everything that dwells in it languishes:  
The beasts of the field, the birds of the air,  
and even the fish of the sea perish.

**Hear the word of the LORD, Israelites, for the LORD has a dispute with the inhabitants of the land:**



The Lord, here, sounds like a prosecutor or judge of Israel! And here are the indictments:

They are disloyal to YHWH, there is no faith or knowledge of the LORD.

Their actions are immoral and go against the Law of God.

The first indications of this are that the people treat each other badly. They lie, swear, cheat, steal, murder and they are adulterers.

# The miraculous revelation of YHWH at Sinai has been forgotten!

The people have forgotten God, His ways and His Laws.

They now pray and worship other Gods along side YHWH.

They look for blessings from carved pieces of wood.

What is the punishment for such crimes?

YHWH will remove his blessings on his covenant people.

## Verse 3

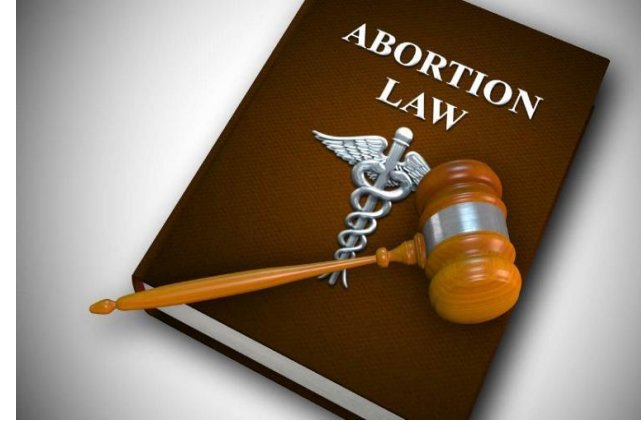
“Therefore the land dries up, and everything that dwells in it languishes:

The beasts of the field, the birds of the air,  
and even the fish of the sea perish.”

Can we see a correlation to this today?

When human hearts become self-centered and prideful, they have no concern for others or for the miracle of life and creation.

The land dries up, and everything that dwells in it languishes: The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and even the fish of the sea perish.



**HATE  
CRIME**





Judgement comes in the form of drought and *everything dies according to Hosea.*

- ▶ Those who are intent on living their lives in violence against others must learn that by bringing death to others, they bring terrible consequences upon themselves.
- ▶ The moral corruption essentially is seen as the cause of the end of Israel.

Who is responsible for the lack of faith, community, and fidelity to YHWH? (vs 4-6)



- ▶ But let no one accuse, let no one rebuke; with you is my dispute, priest!
- ▶ You will stumble in the day, and the prophet will stumble with you at night; I will make an end of your mother.
- ▶ ***Because*** of YHWH's accusations against the priests, they will stumble. It is a result of YHWH's actions. Because YHWH punishes the priest, he will ***stumble in the daylight*** when one usually does not stumble. (Wolf 77)

# “The prophet will stumble with you at night.” (vs 5)

- ▶ It is known that cultic prophets in Jerusalem stood side by side with the priests in their duties in the Temple. These prophets are different than those specifically called by YHWH.
- ▶ **False prophets** were a constant concern to Hosea, Amos and Jeremiah.
- ▶ **Stumbling at night** refers to visions, dreams etc. reportedly received at night by these “false prophets.”

# A variety of interpretations of meaning for verses 4-6.

1. The “mother” according to footnotes in the NAB might refer to Israel. Thus the entire nation would be punished or suffer the consequences of a failed priesthood.
2. “Mother” could refer to the woman who gave life to the priest. This is a reference to the hereditary nature of the priesthood, or the idea of an entire family suffering for the “sins of the father.” (NRSV, *Hermeneia*)
3. The line of hereditary priests would come to an end if the mothers could not bear sons; verse 6 supports this idea.

**My people are ruined for lack of  
knowledge. (vs 6)**

My people are ruined for lack of knowledge!  
Since you have rejected knowledge,  
***I will reject you from serving as my priest;***  
Since you have forgotten the law of your God,  
I will also forget your children.

# What kind of knowledge do the people seem to lack?

- ▶ Running to carved idols in hope of receiving blessings indicates the people **do not know God**.
- ▶ Have they forgotten how they were saved from slavery in Egypt?
- ▶ Have they not heard the stories of creation or the promises of blessings in Deuteronomy?
- ▶ The actions noted in this chapter suggest they do not know the Law or the Ten Commandments at all.

# Hosea 4:7-11



▶ The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against me, I will change their glory into shame.

**<sup>8</sup> They feed on the sin of my people, and are greedy**

for their iniquity.<sup>9</sup> Like people, like priest:

I will punish them for their ways, and repay them

for their deeds.<sup>10</sup> **They will eat but not be satisfied,**

**they will promote prostitution but not increase,**

Because they have abandoned the LORD, devoting

themselves to prostitution.

# Now the priests are many and prosperous

- ▶ Verse 7 suggests that there is a direct correlation between the number of priests and the amount or number of transgressions. The implication is that they were all behaving badly.
- ▶ The “true” Yahwist priest has an office of “glory”. The sacrifices and Baal cults are called “shame” and “guilt.”
- ▶ Yahweh says he will turn their glory into shame.

OFFERINGS





## **8 They feed on the sin of my people, and are greedy for their iniquity**



- ▶ These priests benefit from the multiple sin offerings of the people. They are able to reserve for themselves a portion of the offerings. But there may not be incentive to discourage the sins of their people. They are greedy. They are profiting from the practices of Baal worship. Both the people and the priests will be punished. Their sacrifices will not bring the hoped for blessings.
- ▶ People and priests have abandoned the source of life and have sought Baal's blessings instead.

# Sin Offerings

- ▶ If the anointed priest or the whole congregation commits a sin through ignorance, the sin-offering is a young bull without blemish.
- ▶ Should the ruler sin, his offering is a male kid without blemish.
- ▶ **But when a private individual sins, his offering must be either a female kid or a female lamb without blemish, or, if he is too poor to provide one of these, a turtle-dove.**
- ▶ Sin-offerings were brought on the Day of Atonement also. The high priest begins the festival with two sin-offerings—a bullock as his own offering, and a male kid for the congregation.

# Sins of the priests

- ▶ The priests are sinning both against God and the people.
- ▶ Their punishment is that the food they consume from the people's offerings will not satisfy them. They will remain hungry..
- ▶ Whoever dedicates himself to the cult of Baal, expecting fertility or population increase from the “sacral marriage” will become a dying generation.  
(Wolf 81)

# More activity with Baal cults- Hosea 4:11-12

- ▶ Aged wine and new wine take away understanding.<sup>12</sup> My people consult their piece of wood, and their wand makes pronouncements for them, *For the spirit of prostitution* has led them astray; they prostitute themselves, forsaking their God.

# “New Wine and aged wine take away understanding”

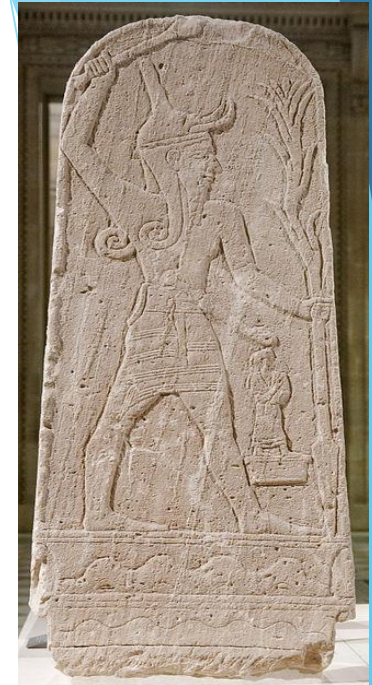
- ▶ The Hebrew word for “new wine” here is a generic term for any beverage made from grapes. It is a non-fermented juice and is not intoxicating. It is however an element of the first harvest banquet. This is an occasion for another Baal festival and more “orgiastic” fertility rites.
- ▶ The rites themselves may have an “intoxicating element.” (Jerome Biblical Commentary 258)

# The allure of other gods

- ▶ Without knowledge of YHWH, who cannot be depicted as an idol, the people are drawn to flamboyant celebrations of Canaanite fertility and storm gods.
- ▶ They practice divination or oracles from their wooden wands and idols rather than from YHWH.



Z. Radovan, Jerusalem

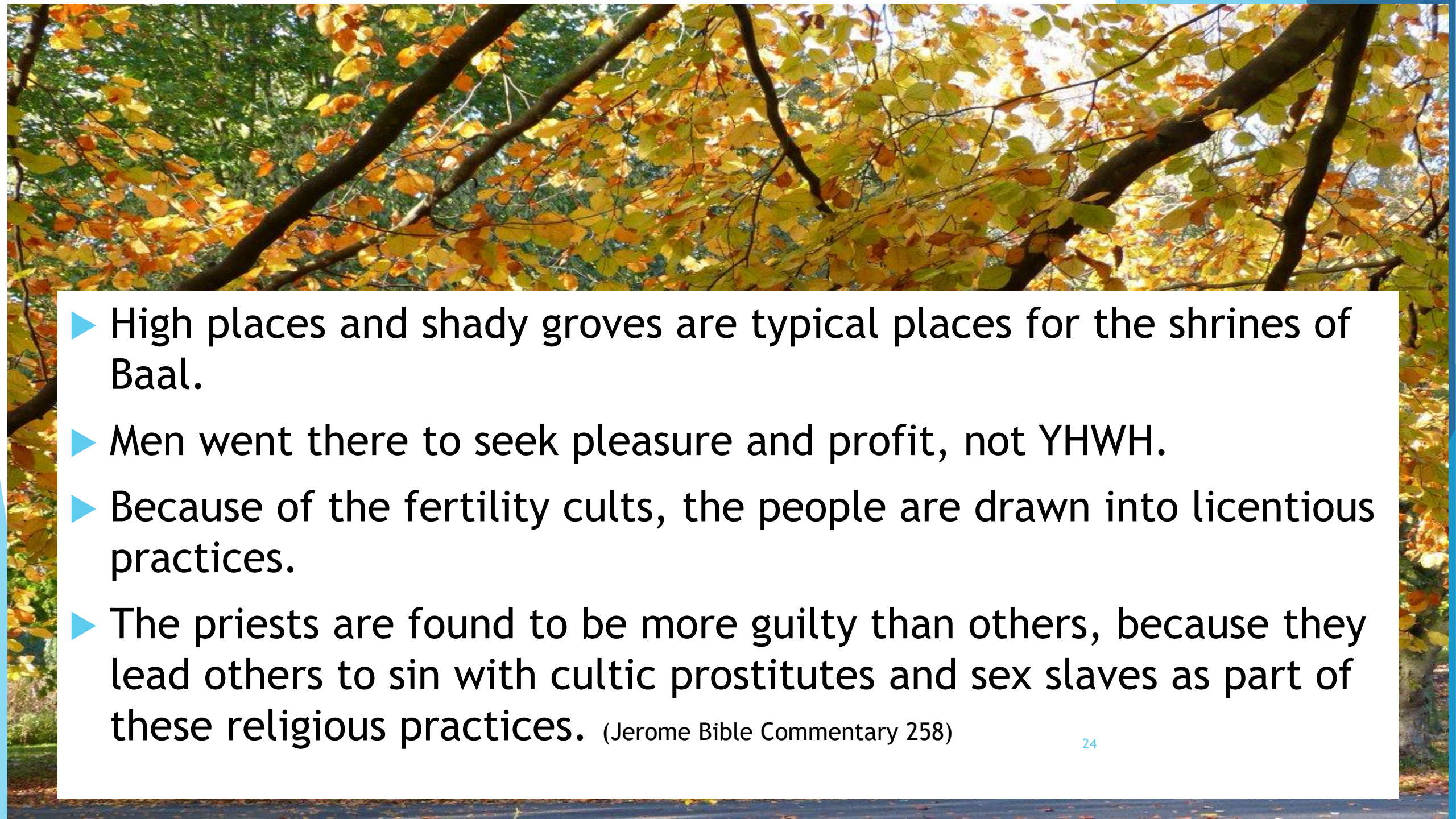


# The Idolatry of Israel is wide spread..

## Hosea 4:13-14

- ▶ On the mountaintops they offer sacrifice and on the hills they burn incense, beneath oak and poplar and terebinth, because of their pleasant shade. Therefore your daughters prostitute themselves, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery.

<sup>14</sup> I will not punish your daughters for their prostitution, nor your daughters-in-law for their adultery, Because the men themselves consort with prostitutes, and with temple women they offer sacrifice! **Thus a people without understanding comes to ruin.**

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- ▶ High places and shady groves are typical places for the shrines of Baal.
  - ▶ Men went there to seek pleasure and profit, not YHWH.
  - ▶ Because of the fertility cults, the people are drawn into licentious practices.
  - ▶ The priests are found to be more guilty than others, because they lead others to sin with cultic prostitutes and sex slaves as part of these religious practices. (Jerome Bible Commentary 258)



# A people without understanding comes to ruin...

- ▶ Without religious instruction and knowledge of God, the people are drawn into the practices of their Pagan neighbors. (Popular culture)
- ▶ What we have seen in these verses is a steady decline in morality and civility among the Israelites.
- ▶ Rather than searching for YHWH and “the good”, the search is for pleasure and personal gain regardless of the cost to themselves, others or country.
- ▶ The lack of instruction and a good example via the priests is the cause, according to Hosea.

# Hosea 4:15

## Israel, Do not contaminate Judah

- ▶ Though you prostitute yourself, Israel,  
do not let Judah become guilty!  
Do not come to Gilgal,  
do not go up to Beth-aven,  
do not swear, “As the Lord lives!”

# Gilgal and Beth-aven

- ▶ It seems Hosea is concerned that the tribes of Judah might be lured to the shrines of Israel.
- ▶ Hosea believes that the priests of Israel hopelessly given themselves over to the Canaanite cult. If they are to abandon the lure of the cult, they must cease any pilgrimage to Gilgal or Beth-aven.
- ▶ Both are locations of national shrines. Beth-aven is a derogatory name for the city of Bethel. The name Beth-aven means “house of wrong”.
- ▶ “As the LORD lives” was a phrase used in a fertility ritual **to greet a god who had been absent or dead.** Using YHWH’s name in this setting suggests that YHWH is one god among many. (Blasphemy)

# One last condemnation

## Hosea 4:16-19

- ▶ For like a stubborn cow, Israel is stubborn; Will the LORD now pasture them, like lambs in a broad meadow?  
<sup>17</sup> Ephraim is bound to idols; let him alone!  
<sup>18</sup> When their drinking is over, they give themselves to prostitution; they love shame more than their honor.<sup>19</sup> **A**  
**wind has bound them up in its wings;** they shall be ashamed because of their altars.

# Ephraim is bound to idols...

- ▶ Israel is covenanted to idols rather than to YHWH.
- ▶ Hosea seems to think it is a lost cause to try to save her.
- ▶ Now the nation, *not just the priests* are given over to shame. The spirit or the “wind” has captured them and engrossed them with urges for shameful acts.
- ▶ The madness of idolatry is bringing material, political and economic ruin on Israel.
- ▶ (Jerusalem Bible Commentary 258)

# What should we take away from this chapter?

- ▶ A strong priesthood and religious education are important for society's well being.
- ▶ Being a living example of faith in God (or not) does affect others. (Walk the walk, talk the talk)
- ▶ Without knowledge of faith and the practice of one's faith it might be difficult to resist temptations of popular culture.

# Verses to ponder...

- ▶ **My people are ruined for lack of knowledge. (vs 6)**
- ▶ **Thus a people without understanding comes to ruin. (vs 14)**

# Let us pray

## Psalm 85:7-13

Show us your unfailing love, LORD, and grant us your salvation.

<sup>8</sup> I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly.

<sup>9</sup> Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.

<sup>10</sup> Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

<sup>11</sup> Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,  
and righteousness looks down from heaven.

<sup>12</sup> The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.

<sup>13</sup> Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.