

Major Messages from the Minor Prophets

Studies in the Minor Prophets

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Jersey Shore Baptist Church

Pastor Phil Erickson

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Message Two – Hosea

Introduction

A preacher cannot separate his personal life from his ministry. The life of a spiritual leader can be as much of a message as the words that he delivers on behalf of God. However, Hosea was a preacher that was asked by God to do far more than just live a life consistent with his message. He was asked to do incredible things in his personal life that were going to serve as illustrations to the people of Israel. God actually commanded him to marry a woman who would not be faithful to him, and to continue to pursue her even after she had strayed. This was to serve as a picture of God's unconditional love for Israel. Israel had played the harlot throughout her history, yet God still loved her and was willing to forgive her, and redeem her if she would sincerely turn back to Him.



Background Information

Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel from approximately 750 BC, until 710 BC. He was contemporary with (though younger than) Amos, who also prophesied to the northern kingdom during the reign of King Jereboam II. While Hosea and Amos were prophesying to Israel, Isaiah and Micah were preaching the Word of the Lord to the southern kingdom of Judah. The kings of Judah during this time period were Uzziah, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. (Hosea 1:1)

We don't know much about Hosea, other than the autobiographical information included in the text.

Wiersbe says this regarding Hosea:

Hosea ministered in the Northern Kingdom from about 760 to 720 B.C. Israel was enjoying great

prosperity, but Hosea could see that the nation was rotten to the core; for honest government, pure religion, godly homes, and personal integrity had vanished from the land. Judgment was inevitable. Hosea faithfully preached the Word, but the nation refused to repent and was finally swallowed up by Assyria.¹

Hosea's name means "salvation", and is very similar to the name "Joshua", which means Jehovah is Salvation. We know from the text that he had a father, named Beeri, of which we also know very little. We also know from the text that he married a wife, Gomer. She was to serve as a picture or type of the nation of Israel who had been unfaithful to God through her idolatries. Gomer was from "whoredoms" (Hosea 1:2 - 3), perhaps meaning that Gomer was already a harlot when Gomer had found her; and, she would become unfaithful to Hosea even after they were married. Hosea and Gomer would have three children: Jezreel, Loruhamah, and Loammi. Gomer and the three children would illustrate God's dealing with the northern kingdom of Israel.

In order to get a better understanding of the historical, spiritual and cultural context of Judah and Israel during this period of time, it would be prudent to read 2 Kings 14 – 17, 2 Chronicles 26 – 29, Isaiah, and Micah.

The word that best describes the northern kingdom of Israel during this period is the word "whoredom", which is used 13 times in this Book. Israel was very prosperous militarily and economically during the reign of Jeroboam II but she was also filled with idolatry and immorality; and the judgment of God was imminent. However, even though God would judge Israel for a season, He promises that He will eventually reclaim her as His bride.

The bottom line in understanding this book is that Hosea's relationship with Gomer is a picture, or illustration, of God's relationship with Israel.

Key Verses – Hosea 2:19 – 20

"And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD." (Hosea 2:19-20)

I God's Illustration of Israel (Chapters 1 – 3)

God spoke to Hosea and tells him to marry a woman that was immoral. John Phillips has an interesting comment regarding what Hosea must have been thinking after hearing what God told him to do:

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). Be amazed (p. 9). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

If Hosea was surprised by this voice, he must have been equally startled by what it said. “The Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms.” He could hardly believe his ears. Hosea was a young, God-fearing, idealistic, pure-minded, clean-living man, and the voice told him to marry a whore! Is this God speaking? he must have asked himself. Or is it a demon? Would this kind of message come from the holy One of Israel, the One who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” and before whose holiness the very seraphim hide their faces? Surely I must be mistaken.²

Note that God told the prophet to do something very unusual, which, on the surface, seemed ridiculous. Yet, Hosea obeyed the Lord:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

This is not the first time that God commanded a prophet to do something strange in order to illustrate what He wanted His people to see:

Prophets sometimes do strange things. For three years, Isaiah embarrassed people by walking the streets dressed like a prisoner of war. For several months, Jeremiah carried a yoke on his shoulders. The prophet Ezekiel acted like a little boy and “played war,” and once he used a haircut as a theological object lesson. When his wife suddenly died, Ezekiel even turned that painful experience into a sermon.³

Sometimes God will ask us to do things that seem very strange. We don’t hear the audible voice of God anymore as the prophets of old did, so we are forced to trust completely in His Word.

A Hosea’s Family Revealed (Chapter 1)

Hosea’s wife, Gomer, portrays Israel in its idolatry and immorality. There is some debate among students of the Bible as to whether or not Gomer was a harlot prior to her marriage to Hosea. Some claim that she was pure when Hosea found her, but she became a harlot subsequent to their marriage. Their basis for this claim is their belief that the Nation Israel was pure in their beginnings as well. I do not believe the context, or Israel’s history, supports this point of view. The text states that she was a “wife of whoredoms” (plural), which seems to indicate that she was a habitual offender. Notice that the word is used three times in verse 2. Israel was nothing when God found them, just as we were nothing but a bunch of sinners when God found us.

² Phillips, J. (2009). Exploring the Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary (Ho 1:1–2). Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). Be amazed (p. 11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Hosea's children symbolize God's rejection and judgment of Israel.

1 "Jezreel" – "God Scatters, or God Sows" (Hosea 1:4-5)

His name prefigured God's judgment on the ruling house of Israel

McGee says this regarding Jezreel:

Jezreel is the name of the son; it means "God will scatter." God says, "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel." Jezreel is the name of a city and also of a famous plain, the plain of Armageddon, or the Valley of Esdraelon. It has a long, bloody history and will have a similar future as the place where the last war will end. God is saying here that He is going to scatter the northern kingdom.⁴

Naboth was a Jezreelite that Ahab had murdered because he wanted his vineyard. (1 Kings 21) Jezreel was also the place where the house of Ahab and Jezebel was wiped out by Jehu. (2 Kings 9 – 10).

The Valley of Jezreel has always been a battlefield and it will be the place where the great Battle of Armageddon will take place in the future. (Revelation 16:16)

2 "Lo-ruhamah" – "no mercy" (Hosea 1:6 – 7)

Her name describes God's attitude toward the northern kingdom of Israel, though the southern kingdom of Judah still found grace in God's sight at this particular time in their history. (Hosea 1:6 – 7). It has been suggested that Lo-ruhamah, and her younger brother were actually the children of someone other than Hosea. Note it does not say she bore "him" (Hosea) a daughter, as before.

*"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had **not obtained mercy**, but now have obtained mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10)*

Notice in verse 7, God states that He will spare the southern Kingdom of Judah. (See Isaiah 36 - 37; 2 Kings 18 - 19)

3 "Lo-ammi" - "not my people" (Hosea 1:8 – 9)

His name is symbolic of God's rejection of Israel.

*"As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were **not my people**; and her beloved,*

⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997). Thru the Bible commentary (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 616). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." (Romans 9:25-26)

B Israel's Future Restoration Foretold (1:10 – 1:11)

Though God's judgment on Israel would certainly be a reality, as pictured with Hosea's children, there would come a day when God would mercifully restore His people. Israel, as a nation, will someday be saved:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:25-29)

Israel became a nation again in 1948. Right now, the nation is still blind to the gospel but some day they will realize that they were wrong about their Messiah:

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." (Zechariah 12:10)

Notice that the prophecy here involves both the northern and the southern kingdom.

Notice also the phrase in verse 10 – *"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered;"*. This will be part of the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 22 when he attempted to offer up his son in obedience to God's command:

"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." (Genesis 22:16-18)

Notice the phrase in verse 11 – *"and appoint themselves one head"*. Israel is a great nation today, but her true greatness will not be realized until the Lord Jesus Christ is reigning in Jerusalem as their King.

Notice also in verse 11, *“for great shall be the day of Jezreel”*. As was stated previously, the Valley of Jezreel is also the Valley of Esdraelon, or Megiddo, or Armageddon. The Battle of Armageddon is the final battle of the Tribulation Period when the Lord will come down from Heaven and put down forever those that are in rebellion against Him:

“And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.” (Revelation 14:18-20 - See also [Revelation 19:11 – 21](#))

C Israel’s Faithless Transgressions Are Described (2:1 – 13)

See [2 Kings 17:1 – 23](#) for a description of the sins that Israel committed, which brought about the judgment of God.

✚ Notice in verses 1 – 2 the reminder of Gomer’s “whoredoms” and “adulteries”. The infidelity that Gomer was committing, (even to the extent of prostitution) was a picture of the spiritual adultery, or idolatry, that the nation of Israel was guilty of. Gomer had apparently left her husband for other men, and Israel had also forsaken God. They were worshipping false gods, but they were also worshipping the pleasures and possessions that the world was selling them.

Believers today are admonished not to adulterate their love for Him by committing fornication with the culture around them. Wiersbe states:

We must be careful not to love the world (1 John 2:15–17), be friendly with the world (James 4:4), become spotted by the world (1:27), or conform to the world (Romans 12:2). Each believer and each local church must remain true to Jesus Christ the Bridegroom until He returns to take His bride to the heavenly wedding (2 Corinthians 11:1–4; Ephesians 5:22–33; Revelation 19:6–9).⁵

✚ Also in verses 1 – 2, we see Gomer’s children being called upon by their father to plead with their mother, This symbolizes the fact that individual Israelites were called upon by God to demand that the nation repent. There is always a faithful remnant even within a

⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). Be amazed (p. 16). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

faithless nation. Notice the children's names here are "Ammi", which means my people, and Ruhamah, which means one who is pitied or one who receives compassion or mercy.

Note – As believers in a less than faithful America today, God wants us to plead with our nation to repent. We are to be salt and light in a dark and wicked world. Individuals within the nation will not be able to blame their sin upon the nation. As the nation gets darker, God's children should be shining brighter. We cannot allow ourselves to be swept up with culture.

- ✚ In verse 4, we see that the sins of the nation will negatively impact the individuals within it, even though they may not be guilty. We will not be judged for the sins of America, necessarily, but we will be affected by the judgment that America will face.
- ✚ Notice in verses 5 – 8, the people of Israel were pursuing possessions and pleasure, which they erroneously thought the world could give them, but they forgot that God was the true source of all of those blessings. God would have to take them away (verses 9 – 12) so they would remember.

The world may temporarily get away with pursuing pleasure, but God's people can only be blessed when they pursue God: (See [Matthew 6:23 – 34.](#))

- ✚ Notice in verse 8 "*she did not know*", and in verse 13 "*and forgot me*". People who forsake the Lord, eventually forget the Lord. America has long ago forsaken God, and now she is trying to blot out any remembrance of God.

The sin of ingratitude is closely associated with forgetting God. When we forget God, we forget that He is the One that supplies our blessings, and we fail to thank Him for them:

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Romans 1:21)

- ✚ Notice in verses 8 and 13, the reference to Baal and Baalim (Not Balaam the son of Beor from the Book of Numbers). Baal (or Baalim) was the Phoenician Sun god who was worshipped by a wicked portion of God's people since the time of the Judges. (Judges 8:33) The worship of Baal in the northern kingdom reached epidemic proportions during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Notice that they took the blessing that God gave them and "*prepared them for Baal*". (Hosea 2:8)
- ✚ Notice in verse 11, the people of Israel had forsaken God, but they were still going through the motions of religion, even though it was polluted and mixed with pagan worship. Today there are millions of people who participate in Christian religious ceremonies, but their hearts are far from God.

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:" (Isaiah 29:13)

*"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; **Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.**" (2 Timothy 3:1-5)*

D Israel's Future Restoration Described (2:14 – 23)

God has certainly judged Israel, both the northern and southern kingdoms through the centuries, but when they turn their hearts back to Him, He will restore them. Notice, however, in verse 14, the Lord allures them before they turn to Him. The Tribulation Period will be the time when God will focus His attention back to the Nation of Israel and allure them back to Himself:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Romans 11:25)

At the mid-point of the Tribulation, Israel will realize that Jesus was the true Messiah, and they will turn to Him in faith, and God will hide them in the wilderness away from the Anti-Christ. (See Matthew 24:15 – 21; Revelation 12:1 - 6)

✚ Notice in verse 15 the reference to the Valley of Achor. This was the valley that surrounded the City of Jericho. It was the place where they crossed over Jordan on their way into Canaan. You will remember that it was at Jericho that Achan stole the "accursed thing", which was a "goodly Babylonish garment"; and he also stole some gold and silver. Achan's name means, "troubler". He was called the troubler of Israel. The place where he was stoned to death by the congregation of Israel was named the Valley of Achor.

✚ Notice - verse 16 - 17 tell us that Israel will call God "Ishi", which means "husband" or "my man". She will no longer be in bed with Baal, or the Anti-Christ. "Baali" actually means, "my Lord". Hosea was her "Baali" (her master, her ruler), but now He is her man. "Ishi" speaks of intimacy and love. It seems that Gomer was won over by the love that was given to her by her husband, and Israel will be allured by the love and mercy that God demonstrates toward them.

✚ Notice in verses 19 – 20, the phrase “*I will betroth thee*”. The word, “betroth”, means to commit to marry, or engage. It was legally binding in the culture of Israel. Notice what God promises to do with His betrothed. He says, I will betroth thee:

- 1 for ever – God will never break His covenant with Israel.
- 2 In righteousness, judgment, lovingkindness, and mercies. This is the way God deals with Israel, and this is the way that Christ treats His Bride, the Church.
- 3 In faithfulness – God will never be unfaithful to His Bride.

Note – all of the above mentioned characteristics of God’ betrothal to Israel should also be our intention and commitment to the Lord, and to our spouses.

✚ Notice in verse 23 that God will bring about a complete reversal of the circumstances prophesied in chapter one. (Hosea 1:4, 6, and 9)

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

Remember. Jezreel means “scattered” or “sowed”. In chapter one, God says He will scatter Israel out of the Promised Land and into captivity, but here in chapter two (v. 23), God says He will “sow” Israel unto Himself.

The scene depicted here in verses 14 – 23 will have their ultimate fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom, which will begin immediately following the Battle of Armageddon. Jesus will be the King of the earth and He will reign from His capital city, Jerusalem.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:2-4 - See also [Isaiah 11](#))

E Israel’s Future Redemption Symbolized (3:1 – 5)

Just as Gomer was a picture of the idolatry of Israel, she also pictures in chapter 3, Israel’s return to God. This is a wonderful illustration of the grace that God bestows upon those that return to Him in repentance and faith.

New Testament Christians can learn and apply much from Hosea's prophecy. Though the prophecy of Hosea was particularly for the bride of God the Father, we must remember that the Church is the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as such we need to be faithful to Him. Spiritual apostasy is equated in this passage to harlotry. We must remain true to the fundamental doctrines and practices of the Bible.

✚ In verse one, Hosea is again commanded to love Gomer, even though she has apparently left him and is with another lover, or perhaps is being used as a prostitute. The phrase "beloved of her friend" seems to indicate that she is with another man. Gomer here is once again a picture of faithless Israel who has turned to other gods and drunkenness.

Note – The King James Bible correctly translates the Hebrew word, "ahiyshah" into "flagons of wine". Many other Bible versions, insist that this word should be rendered "cakes of raisins". Their argument in this particular verse states that these cakes of raisins were part of Pagan worship practices, which may, or may not, be true. The fact is clearly taught in Hosea, however, that Israel had a problem with drunkenness:

"Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart." (Hosea 4:11)

"And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me." (Hosea 7:14)

Also, the other passages where this exact phrase is found make it clear that KJB is right:

*"And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a **flagon of wine**. So all the people departed every one to his house." (2 Samuel 6:19)*

*"And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a **flagon of wine**." (1 Chronicles 16:3)*

The bottom line is that the nation of Israel was not only idolatrous, they were also immoral and drunken.

✚ In verse two, we see that Hosea purchases Gomer back from whoever now was in possession of her. The man must not have really loved her since he was perfectly willing to sell her to Hosea. We are not sure exactly what the circumstances were that brought Gomer into the possession of another, but it would make sense that she had left her husband, Hosea, sometime after her children were born and returned to her old ways. She ended up with a man that used her for what he could gain from her.

Notice the price that Hosea paid was 15 pieces of silver, which was about half the price of a slave in that day. Hosea also paid one and a half homers of barley, which was equivalent to about 9 bushels or a little more than 300 liters, which would provide for about a month's supply of bread. I am sure that Hosea would have been willing to pay much more to redeem Gomer, just as God was willing to pay the ultimate price to redeem His children:

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:" (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Gomer wasn't worth much by man's standards, and neither are we; but, we are very precious to the Lord.

✚ In verse three, Hosea states that Gomer would be "abide" faithful to him, and that he would continue to be faithful to her. It suggests that Gomer, though separated from her lover, would not be intimate with her husband either for a period of time. It seems to picture that there would be a time of testing and trial for Israel. History teaches us that Israel was uprooted from their land and taken into captivity in the Assyrian Empire. They were without God as a nation, and are still without God today.

✚ Verses four and five state that Israel would "abide many days" and be without:

- 1 a king- Israel would be removed from her land and would be assimilated into the Kingdom of Assyria, but there would no longer be a Jewish king over them.
- 2 a prince – a ruler or governor
- 3 a sacrifice – the sacrificial system within Judaism would stop
- 4 an image – the altar upon which an idol or image was placed for worship
- 5 an ephod – refers often in Scripture to the high priest's clothing, but here it seems to refer to idolatrous worship.
- 6 Teraphim – images or idols – plural

I believe the idea here is that for a time Israel would be without any form of national identity or worship. Today, Israel has been partially regathered as a nation within the land, but they have not yet received their Messiah, the Lord Jesus, as their King. They are without a temple and do not now have a sacrificial system. Someday, when Israel returns to the Lord, they will truly be what God intended for them in the first place.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:11)

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Romans 11:25)

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:" (Romans 11:26)

Notice in verse five, the Scripture says that Israel will see the Lord their God, **and David their king**. The northern kingdom of Israel split away from the southern kingdom of Judah in the days of King Rehoboam, the grandson of David. When Israel seeks the Lord, however, the nation will no longer be a divided nation.

II God's Indictment of Israel (Chapters 4 – 7)

From this point on in the Book of Hosea, there will be no discussion of the personal life of the prophet. The focus will now be exclusively on the spiritual condition of Israel and the judgment that will come as a result.

A God's Accusation (Chapters 4 – 5)

Hosea 4:1 tells us that God has a problem ("controversy" – meaning strife or contention) with Israel. When God has a problem with us, He tells us. It is refreshing to know that God does not pull any punches. He comes right to the point. God sent the prophet Hosea to warn Israel about His problems with them.

A practical point that we can learn from this passages is to be direct and honest with people that we have a "controversy" with. All too often, we will talk about someone instead of speaking to them.

1 Generally - Against the People (Chapter 4 & 5)

In this section God will rebuke the nation as a whole for their forsaking Him. It is interesting to note that they turned their back on God at a time when they were very prosperous. (4:7) Throughout this section, God will remind them of what they have done, and will also warn them of the consequences that will follow.

a Lack of the Knowledge of God (4:1 – 6)

Much of the indictment found in chapters 4 and 5 is against the nation as a whole, but God will also place specific blame upon the priests.

The nation had forsaken God:

*"Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land."
(Hosea 4:1)*

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." (Hosea 4:6)

"They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD." (Hosea 5:4)

The words, "knowledge" and "known", in these verses has to do with intimate knowledge of God through a relationship with Him.

Note – this is why we study the Scriptures. Our faith and our faithfulness are increased when we sincerely seek to learn the Word of God. But the preachers must preach.

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:14-17)

b. Laws of God Are Broken (4:2)

When the knowledge of God is removed from the land, there will naturally be a forsaking of God's Law. Notice in v. 2 that five of the Ten Commandments are mentioned as being broken. (see Exodus 20:1 – 17)

c. A Love for Pleasure is Unrestrained

Gluttony (v. 10a)

"For they shall eat, and not have enough..."

"For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." (Proverbs 23:21)

Immorality (vs. 10 – 14)

Drunkenness (v. 11)

"Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart." (Hosea 4:11)

Idolatry (vs. 12 – 13; 17)

"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." (Hosea 4:17)

Note – Ephraim is another name sometimes used for the northern kingdom of Israel.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Note – God concludes chapter 14 with a warning to Judah (4:15 – 19)

Hosea warns the southern kingdom to not go down the same road as Israel.

2 Specifically - Against the Priests (Chapter 4:4 – 6; 8 - 9; 5:1)

The “priests” in the northern kingdom were not Levitical priests. When Jeroboam became the king, he expelled the Levites out from the cities in the north, and he ordained his own priests:

"And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD: And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made." (2 Chronicles 11:13-15)

Note on v. 8 – “they eat up the sins of my people” is probably a reference to the priests consuming the sin offerings of the people.

The spiritual condition of the people of God is often a reflection of their spiritual leaders. Why was there no knowledge of God in the land – because the priests and prophets were not proclaiming the truth. God holds the leaders to a higher standard, and they, no doubt, will be judged more harshly. “...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:48)

Spiritual leaders are commanded to study the Word of God:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

They are also called to preach the Word of God:

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;

reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

Ezekiel stated that God had given him the responsibility of warning the people:

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul." (Ezekiel 3:16-21)

Notice 5:4 and 15

"They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD. ... I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." (Hosea 5:4, 15)

The people were determined to reject God's Word and rebel against God's commandments, and as a result, God was just as determined to forsake them, at least for a time, until they get low enough to see the error of their ways. People cannot be saved until they fully realize that they are hopelessly lost. God's judgment is really His way of bringing His people to a place of repentance.

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)

In verses 8 – 15 of chapter 5, God pronounces the nation to be guilty, and He sentences them (and Judah also vs. 10, 12, 14) to their punishment, which will begin with the Assyrian captivity, and will continue until they turn their hearts back to God, and His Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

B Israel's Appeal is Rejected (Chapters 6 – 7)

1 Israel insincerely appeals for a national reformation, but they do not back up their words. (6:1-3)

It seems as if Israel thought that their shallow repentance would produce immediate results. (v. 2) People live an entire life ignoring God, and then expect Him to fix their problems overnight, and when He doesn't perform for them as they wish, they give up.

Note – all that the prophet says here in vs. 1 – 3 would have truly come to pass had Israel follow[ed] on to know the Lord as stated in v. 3. Someday, all of this will come to pass as Israel will turn back to the Lord through faith in His Son. Notice the reference in v. 2 to the resurrection on the third day.

2 God rejects their hollow words. Though Israel may have meant well, their repentance was short-lived.

They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt." (Hosea 7:16)

a. Faithfulness was only temporary, like the morning cloud or early dew.

"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." (Hosea 6:4)

Note – are you doing today what God told you to do yesterday? Perhaps you started to obey, but somewhere along the line, you got away from God's commands and His call.

b. They offered sacrifices, but did not show mercy or truly know God.

"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."
(Hosea 6:6)

They assumed a few religious rituals would cure their problems, but they never truly entered into an intimate relationship with God.

Note – this verse was quoted by Jesus in Matthew 9:13; and 12:7. The same principle is inferred by Proverbs 21:3, and it was also taught in Micah 6:6 – 8.

"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." (Amos 5:21-24)

"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (1 Samuel 15:22-23)

c. They transgressed the covenant, and became defiled, even influencing the southern kingdom of Judah.

"Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people." (Hosea 6:11)

d. When God would have healed them, their iniquity was even worse.

"When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without. And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face. ... Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned." (Hosea 7:1-2, 8)

e. Idolatry, alliances with pagan nations, rejection of God's efforts to discipline them...all these things were the charges brought against Israel!

"Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned." (Hosea 7:8)

Note – our churches today are filled with Christians who disobediently “love the world”.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

f. The corruption in Israel was at the highest levels. (6:9; 7:3, 5, 16)

III God's Punishment for Israel (Chapters 8 – 10)

A Warning of Coming Judgment (Chapter 8)

"For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof." (Hosea 8:14)

Note – Israel's judgment would come through the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BC. Judah, however, would be spared judgment temporarily, and though the Assyrians threatened them, their final destruction would not come until 586 BC through the Babylonians.

V. 1 seems to indicate that the judgment was coming swiftly – "as an eagle". The trumpet would indicate the start of a battle. The "He" in this verse is probably referring to the Assyrian Empire.

Vs. 2 & 3 – Israel will cry out to the Lord for help, and claim that they have been in a right relationship with God. But according to verse 3, it is too late. Israel had clearly forsaken ("cast off") God.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23)

Vs. 4 – 6 – Israel had approved of kings that were not according to his will. (Hosea 7:5 & 7). They had made idols, and the idols ("calf") had now forsaken them. God was going to judge Israel and destroy the idol that they were trusting in.

The calf became the national religious idol of the Northern Kingdom. The specific calf referred to here was symbolic of either the Golden Calf that Aaron made (Exodus 32) or the calves that Jeroboam set up in Israel, after he split the northern kingdom away from Jerusalem and the Temple (1 Kings 12:25 – 33). The calf represented idolatry; it was a worship system not ordained by God. The people of the northern kingdom claimed they knew God, but they worshipped Him the way they wanted to, and not the way He commanded in the Law.

Vs. 7 – 10 – Israel was about to reap more than she sowed. (v. 7) My dad used to say, "You're in for a whirlwind of trouble, Boy."

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Galatians 6:7-8)

I've observed that a saved person who is surrendered to God will reap more good than he sows, and less evil than he sows. However, the opposite is true for the wicked.

The reference to Assyria in v. 9 is speaking of Israel's attraction to Assyria. They desired the world, and the world would eventually gobble them up.

Their crops failed, and whatever did grow was taken by the enemy.

They were going into captivity. They would be a defeated, conquered, and humble nation under the control of other Gentiles.

Vs. 11 – 14 – Israel was going back to where they came from – not geographically, but they were going back into bondage. (Egypt)

Notice Hosea 8:12:

"I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing."
(Hosea 8:12) [Boy, does this verse apply to us today!]

They had forgotten their Maker (v. 14), but they were without excuse. They had the Word, and they had the warnings of the prophets.

America has the Word also, and they also have the warnings of God's preachers, but, just like Israel, America has forgotten about their Maker.

B Assyrian Captivity Foretold (Chapter 9)

"My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations." (Hosea 9:17)

Again in chapter 9, we see the repeated assertion that judgment was imminent to the northern kingdom because they had completely forsaken their God. Remember, Hosea prophesied in Israel prior to the destruction and captivity by the Assyrian nation, but the judgment did come in his day. He witnessed it. Though his message was probably ridiculed with scorn by the people of Israel, Hosea lived to see everything come to pass exactly as God warned through him.

Note – we will also see the Lord do all that He says He will do. People mock us, and think we're fanatics. They don't believe the Lord is ever going to come back, but He will. (2 Peter 3)

Note – much of what we will examine here in chapter 9 has already been dealt with in previous chapters. Israel didn't need anything new from God, they just needed to obey what God had already told them.

1 The Prosperity's Coming Conclusion (verses 1 – 6)

When Hosea began to prophesy to the people of Israel, they were a very wealthy and prosperous nation. They were consumed with pleasure. Drunkenness and sexual immorality were the rule of the day, just as it is in America today.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

The reference to the threshing floor and the winepress is significant. According to some Bible teachers, these were the places, during the times of harvest, that prostitution took place in an attempt to please Baal. The system of immoral, Pagan worship had permeated the culture of Israel. The Israelites were crediting Baal with their prosperity.

Hosea tells them, that all of the prosperity was about to end.

The references to Egypt are probably meant to remind people of their former captivity in Egypt. In other words, the people knew their history. They knew that they were at one time taken into captivity in Egypt. This time, it would not be Egypt, but Assyria. It is possible, however, that the multiple references to Egypt may mean that the people were oppressed by both the Assyrians and the Egyptians, or that some of the people of Israel escaped from the Assyrians by going into Egypt. Either way, they would not be enjoying the prosperity that they had in Israel.

Note – Memphis was an ancient capital of Egypt.

You will notice that after the judgment comes, their pleasure is turned into mourning:

"The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning." (Lamentations 5:15)

"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." (James 4:9)

God does not want us to mourn, but he does want us to be moral, and when our joyful, abundant life crosses over into sinful pleasures, we have gone too far. Eventually, however, if we do not turn back, our laughter will also be turned into sorrow.

"The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." (Proverbs 10:22)

2 The Peoples' Total Apostasy (vs. 7 – 13)

Verses 7 and 8 may be speaking of the total corruption of the religious leadership of Israel, but I am inclined to believe that these verses are really speaking of the nation's attitude toward

God's true prophets. Men like Hosea were seen as raving lunatics because they were preaching of impending judgment.

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

The days of Gibeah in verse nine refer to the horrible act recorded in Judges 19.

Verse 10 refers to an incident recorded in Numbers 25.

The reference in verse 13 to Tyrus, refers to Tyre, Israel's neighbor to the west, which was also a very prosperous nation. (see Ezekiel 27 – 28)

3 The Prophet's Imprecatory Prayer (vs. 14 – 17)

You know that things must be pretty bad if the prophet gets to the place where he is completely fed up with his own people, and is actually praying for their destruction. This portion is reminiscent of some of the imprecatory psalms, but in those the psalmist was asking for judgment against the enemies of Israel. Moses was fed up with the people, but he still prayed for God's mercy on them.

Turn to Exodus 32:7 – 14; Numbers 14:11 – 20 – Moses intercedes for the people.

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:" (Romans 9:1-3)

C God Reiterates the Coming Judgment and the Reason for It (Chapter 10)

This chapter does not interject anything new to the equation. God has pronounced judgment on his people and it was coming, but here God is reiterating His case against Israel.

Verse 1 – Notice the reference to the empty (fruitless) vine. This is one of several agricultural images found in this passage. Israel has been symbolized throughout the Bible as a vine or a vineyard (Isaiah 5:1 – 7) According to John 15, any branch that does not abide in the vine will cast away. However, according to Romans 11, the natural branches can be grafted back in, though this illustration is about an olive tree, I believe it also applies here to the vine. Note – Israel is also referred to symbolically as a fig tree and an olive tree.

Notice the phrase “fruit unto himself” in verse 1 - 1 Corinthians 3:1 – 17 speaks of works that are selfish, that will produce no eternal reward. The idea is that all of Israel’s fruit was for selfish consumption, not for the glory of God. Israel was very prosperous, but they failed to give God the credit for their prosperity, and they also failed to serve God in and with their prosperity. They forgot about God, and God was about to remind them of Himself.

Verse 2 - Notice the reference to the divided heart.

“Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.” - (Psalm 12:1-2)

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” - (James 1:5-8)

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” - (James 4:7-10)

“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” - (Luke 9:62)

These Israelites were divided. They claimed to love God, but they also loved their idols and their sin.

Verse 3 – Notice the phrase “we have no king”

“And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.” - (John 19:14-15)

According to MacArthur, “The last 5 kings of Israel were usurpers. Impotent and unworthy of respect, they were incapable of enforcing the laws of the land.”⁶

⁶ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). The MacArthur Study Bible (electronic ed., p. 1262). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

Verse 4 refers to the fact that the people were making covenants with every intention of breaking them. Divorce, crooked business transactions, etc. were the order of the day in Israel, much like they are in America today.

Verse 5 – notice the reference to Bethaven. This is a substituted name for Bethel (house of God). Bethaven means house of wickedness. This was one of the two places where Jereboam set up his golden calves. (1 Kings 12:25 – 33)

Notice also the phrase “the glory is departed” - cross reference 1 Samuel 4 – When Hophni and Phineas took the ark of God into battle against the Philistines and lost it to them, Phineas’ wife stated that the glory had departed from Israel. The glory represented the power and presence of God. Hosea is here stating that God’s glory had departed from Israel as well. It is interesting that the glory in Hosea 10:5 seems to be referring to the calves that Jeroboam had set up. Even though, these idols never represented God’s glory, to the people they were representatives of God.

Verse 6 tells us that the calf in Bethaven would be carried away to Assyria and given to King Jareb. Charles Ryrie believes that Jareb was “Probably Tiglath-Pileser III (who reigned from 745 – 727 BC). In her troubles, Israel sought help from the Assyrian.”⁷

Verse 7 tells us that Samaria’s king is “cut off”.

Verse 8 – the high places, including where the calves were would be broken down and run over with thorns.

Notice the phrase “fall on us”

“But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” - (Luke 23:28-31)

In Revelation 6:12 – 17, after the sixth seal is opened up, the people will cry out for the mountains to fall on them as well.

Verse 9 – this is the third reference to Gibeah in Hosea. (Hosea 5:8, 9:9) See the notes from chapter 9 for more information about Gibeah.

⁷ Ryrie, C. C. (1994). Ryrie study Bible: King James Version (Expanded ed., p. 1298). Chicago: Moody Press.

Verse 10 and 11 speak of the chastisement that Israel will receive at the hand of the Lord. Israel will be chastised as any father chastises his child.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." - (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Notice the reference to the "two furrows". Some believe that this refers to a double punishment. It could also be a reference to the two calves, or Israel's divided heart.

Verse 11 refer to the relative easy existence Israel enjoyed for many years "treading out the corn", but they were about to be given a heavy yoke of bondage along with Judah also.

Verse 12 - Notice – Even in the midst of the prophecy of judgment, God gives them an opportunity to repent, though I believe this verse coupled with verse 13 may refer to God's repeated warnings and the people's refusal to heed them and to continue on in their sin.:

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." (Hosea 10:12)

Notice also, however, the following verse which teaches the principle of sowing and reaping:

"Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men." (Hosea 10:13)

Israel did not turn to God, and they reaped the consequences. Praise the Lord, though, someday they will look upon the one they pierced, and will turn to Him in contrition and repentance.

Verse 13 - Notice the phrase "thy way":

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." - (Proverbs 14:12)

Verse 14 – Shalman is probably a reference to Shalmanezzer (2 Kings 17:3 – 6 – who reigned from 727 – 722 BC)

Verse 15 – Notice here that God places the blame squarely on what was done in Bethel – the calves.

IV God's Restoration for Israel (Chapters 11 – 14)

A God's Commitment and Compassion for Israel (Hosea 11:1 – 11)

1 His Love for Israel in the Past (vs. 1 – 4)

Verse 1 – Egypt in the Bible is always a picture or type of the world. However, the deliverance of the nation of Israel out of Egypt is a picture of salvation. Here the Bible declares that God delivered Egypt because of his love for them. McGee said, "Love is not the basis of salvation, but it is the motive of salvation."⁸

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." - (John 3:16)

It is important to realize that God did not save us because we were good, but because He loves us. Israel was not good when God delivered them out of Egypt, they were idolatrous then; but that did not stop God from loving them.

The spiritual picture here is not of Israel, the unfaithful wife, but of Israel, the rebellious son. (See Exodus 4:22 – 23) This verse in Hosea was referenced by Matthew as being fulfilled prophetically by the Lord Jesus when he came out of Egypt as a child:

"And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." - (Matthew 2:15)

Verse 2 – The wording in verse two is curious. It is difficult to ascertain the meaning of all of the "theys". Possibly, this is what God is saying:

"As they (the prophets – see also verse 7) called them (Israel), so they (Israel) went from them (the prophets): they (Israel) sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images." - (Hosea 11:2)

The fact that Israel burnt incense unto graven images and sacrificed unto Baal is indisputable.

"And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth." - (Judges 2:13)

⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997). Thru the Bible commentary (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 650). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him." - (Judges 10:6)

Verses 3 – 4

The first phrase in verse three literally means that God taught Israel how to walk. He first had to carry them out of Egypt and then he taught them to walk. He was gentle to them. He nourished them and he bound Himself to them with love. He took the bridle out of their mouth. (Psalm 32:9; James 3:3) God loves us, but he does not force us to love Him. He did everything possible and impossible to bring salvation to us, but He doesn't force himself into our lives, He stands at the door and knocks. (Revelation 3:20) Whether you let Him in, or not, is up to you.

It is interesting that love has always been the strongest appeal. It is said that Napoleon made the statement, "Charlemagne, Alexander the Great, and other generals have built up empires, and they built them on force, but Jesus Christ today has millions of people who would die for Him, and He built an empire on love." That is His only appeal to you— don't think He will use any other method. He will judge you, but He will not draw you to Himself except by love. That is the strongest appeal that can possibly be made. The band is a band of love.⁹

"We love him, because he first loved us." - (1 John 4:19)

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:" - (2 Corinthians 5:14)

2 His Love for Israel Is Proven (vs. 5 – 7)

God demonstrates His love for Israel by chastising them. They would go into captivity again. However, this time it would be in Assyria. The people simply would not listen to God's prophets and so God would have to judge them, but it was in love.

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." - (Hebrews 12:6-8)

⁹ McGee, J. V. (1997). Thru the Bible commentary (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 651). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

(Proverbs 13:24)

The word, "backsliding" means turning away. Israel was "bent" (meaning habitually guilty) of backsliding.

3 His Continued Love for Israel is Promised (vs. 8 – 12)

Even though God's judgment would be very harsh, God promises to not completely destroy Israel, and that He would not forsake them forever.

The judgment would Israel's captivity in the land of Assyria:

"In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria." - (2 Kings 15:29)

Admah and Zeboim were two of the cities that were utterly and forever destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah:

"And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:" - (Deuteronomy 29:23)

He also references Judah here in this section. The "city" in v. 9 could be a reference to Jerusalem and prophetic of the fact that Assyria would not be permitted to enter Jerusalem:

"Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD. For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." - (Isaiah 37:33-36)

Wiersbe comments as to why God promised to not utterly consume Israel:

What motivated God to spare Israel from total destruction? Not only His deep compassion, but also His faithfulness to His covenant. *"For I am God, and not man"* (Hosea 11:9). *"God is*

not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will he not make it good?" (Num. 23:19)

God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3) is unconditional and will not change; therefore, the nation of Israel is preserved. But His covenant with Israel at Sinai had conditions attached, and if the people failed to meet those conditions, God was obligated to withdraw His blessings. Israel's possession of the land and its blessings is based on the Abrahamic Covenant, but their enjoyment of the land and its blessings is based on the Mosaic Covenant. God was faithful to both covenants: He preserved the nation, but He disciplined them for their sins.¹⁰

B Israel's Continued Rebellion Against God (Hosea 12:1 – 13:16)

1 God Remembers Israel's Beginning (vs. 1 – 6)

Verse 1 – Israel was feeding on and chasing after vanity ("the wind"). They were worshipping idols.

Notice that Israel was trying to please both the Assyrians and the Egyptians. Yet, they were not at all concerned with pleasing their God. The reference to oil has to do with Israel sending olive oil as payment for their protection and to appease them.

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." - (Psalm 20:7)

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!" - (Isaiah 31:1)

Verse 2 – God includes the southern kingdom in this rebuke. The references here to Israel's past include both Israel and Judah.

Verse 3 refers to Jacob's birth. (Genesis 25:21 – 28)

Verse 4 refers to Jacob's wrestling with the angel at Bethel. (Three times that God appeared to Jacob were when Jacob was on his way to Laban - Genesis 28:10 – 22; when Jacob was told to leave Laban - Genesis 31:11 – 13; and when Jacob was about to meet up with Esau - Genesis 32:22 – 32).

¹⁰ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). Be amazed (p. 39). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

In verses 5 and 6, God reminds Israel of their history with him in the past, and he pleads with them to return to Him.

2 God Refers to Israel's Stumbling-block (vs. 7 – 8)

Israel had become very wealthy and prosperous, but they had forgotten who gave them what they had.

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." - (Luke 12:15)

"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight." - (Proverbs 11:1)

"Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good." - (Proverbs 20:23)

3 God Returns Israel Back (vs. 9 – 14)

They used to dwell in tents, and they will again.

They used to serve others as shepherds and they will again. Verse 12 is a reference to Jacob serving Laban for seven years for Rachel.

God had delivered them in the past through the voices of the prophets, but now Israel was no longer listening to the prophets. They were sacrificing to their idols. (v. 11)

God had brought Israel out of bondage, but because they did not continue serving the Lord, after centuries of warnings, God's patience will eventually run out, and God will bring them back into bondage.

[Read all of Deuteronomy 28](#)

4 God Recalls Their Worship of Baal (13:1 – 3)

Ephraim was the half tribe of Joseph, but they were a prominent and powerful tribe in Israel. But they fell with all of Israel into the worship of Baal. Many times in Hosea Ephraim symbolically references all of Israel. But here Hosea could be directing this rebuke to just this particular tribe. Joshua came from Ephraim, and so did Jereboam I, the first king of the northern kingdom. Jereboam was the one who placed the calves in Bethel and Dan.

"Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have

not hearkened to receive instruction. But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin." - (Jeremiah 32:32-35)

Notice the reference in v. 2 to "kiss the calves":

"Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." - (1 Kings 19:18)

5 God Regrets Their Ingratitude (vs. 4 – 11)

a. They did not appreciate His provision. (vs. 4 – 8)

Notice v. 4 – Israel was to have an exclusive relationship with God. He had been their God since Egypt.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." - (Exodus 20:3)

"And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth." - (Exodus 23:13)

"Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any." - (Isaiah 44:8)

The New Testament states that the only Saviour is Jesus.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." - (Acts 4:12)

Notice vs. 5 – 6 – God had fed Israel in the wilderness. He took care of them as they wandered and he also blessed them abundantly once they entered into the land. But they forgot to be thankful to the Lord. It is the old story: when we are hungry, we cry out to God; and when we are filled, we no longer need Him,

Romans 1: 18 – 32 references the downward progression of man's relationship with his God. It begins with a lack of thanksgiving:

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." - (Romans 1:21)

God, however, is not like us. He always remembers:

"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." - (Hebrews 6:10)

vs. 7 – 8 – reveals the consequences of ingratitude. God compares the judgment to that of a lion, a leopard, and a bear who lost her cubs. Satan is referred to in Scripture as a roaring lion:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" - (1 Peter 5:8)

Satan is waiting to devour God's people (to sift them like wheat as he desired to do to Peter – Luke 22:31), but he cannot touch us unless God allows him. Perhaps the judgment Israel would experience was actually at the hand of Satan through the Assyrians but by the permission of God. Remember, Paul's thorn in the flesh was the messenger of Satan (2 Corinthians 12:7).

b. They did not accept His providence. (vs. 9 – 11)

Israel failed to realize that all they needed was God. The reference here is to their demanding a human king to reign over them instead of God. (See 1 Samuel 8) God gave them what they wanted, but He stated that they were rejecting Him.

God would take away Israel's last human king, Hoshea, when the Assyrians invaded. (2 Kings 18:9 – 12)

The practical application that we should make from this passage is that we should do a better job of appreciating the abundance of God's provision, and also allow God to reign supreme in our lives. We need to get off of the throne, and let God rule our lives.

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." - (Romans 6:12-13)

6 God Releases His Judgment (v. 12 – 16)

Notice v. 12 – God refers to Ephraim's (Israel's) iniquity as being "bound up" and "hid". This means that it is fully documented or recorded as in a scroll, and as in a treasure that is hidden. God has all of the facts, all of the evidence. There will be no error in His judgment.

To the repentant sinner, however, God has a divine forgetter:

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." - (Isaiah 1:18)

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." - (Hebrews 10:16-17)

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." - (Psalm 103:12)

Notice the reference to the travailing woman in v. 13. God often refers to the pain of childbirth as a type of judgment. The pain comes on suddenly and increases swiftly, and there is absolutely nothing that can be done to stop the process once it has started. God is telling Israel that though they may "feel fine" now, in a very short time they would be in great travail.

Verse 14 is a very interesting verse. It is loosely quoted by the Apostle Paul:

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." - (1 Corinthians 15:54-56)

The context in Hosea seems to be entirely different than the way Paul used it, however. God is seizing control of death and the grave in Hosea, and He is telling Israel that they will not be delivered from either.

Verses 5 – 16 reference the coming judgment of Israel. (See 2 Kings 17)

C God's Unconditional Love for Israel (Chapter 14)

Though Israel, like Gomer, turned her back on the One that loved her, in the end His love will win her over.

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. ... They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found." (Hosea 14:4, 7-8)

"...For the love of Christ constraineth us." (2 Corinthians 5:14)

After being down and abused by this world, it will be the recognition of God's love for us that will finally win the battle for our hearts. *"We love him because He first loved us"*.

1 God's Plea for a Repentant Prayer (vs. 1 – 3)

Although God has said several times in the previous chapters of this Book that His patience with Israel had completely run out, here he appeals to them once more to turn back to Him. There are several considerations here.

- a. God knew what the nation would do in the immediate future.
- b. Within the nation there was a remnant that were faithful to Him.

Elijah mistakenly thought that everyone within Israel was apostate:

"And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." (1 Kings 19:14)

But God said:

"Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:18)

- c. God also knew what Israel would do in the future – both the northern and southern kingdoms. The plea here could be to Israel in the future.

Read Romans 11

2 God's Promise to a Remorseful People (vs. 4 – 8)

The description given here will not be fulfilled nationally to Israel until the Millennial Kingdom, which takes place after Israel turns back to God:

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; ... All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." (Zechariah 12:10-12, 14 – also Read Isaiah 11)

3 God's Principle to a Returning Person (v. 9)

Notice here that God promises blessing to the individual that turns to Him. The rest of the nation may complete turn away, but I can still serve God individually.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20)