



Lesson 14 May 30th, 2020

Return to Love and Justice

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Study Scripture – Hosea 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14

Background Scripture – Hosea 11 - 12

Key Verse:

“Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment and wait on they God continually.”

Hosea 12:6

INTRODUCTION

Our Study Scripture introduces us like no other Scripture on the fact of the unconditional love of God. For this reason the prophet Hosea is regarded as the prophet of unconditional love for he opens up the eternal love of God for His people, and the anguish that He has when they go away from Him and chase after other gods.

It is made clear that the wrath of God is not the final word for His people. He regards them as His prodigal sons and daughters that He actively works to welcome back to Him. But the prophet Hosea had made it clear in chapters 1 through 10 that God required obedience or there would be judgment. But after that in our Chapter of study the divine, conquering love, the love of God that cannot be frustrated is made clear. This Chapter makes clear that the relationship of God to the nation of Israel and ourselves is based on the Lord God's eternal love. This is sovereign love. One writer dissects the love of God carefully and explains:

“He loves sovereignly with boundless love, because he loves. One cannot go behind that if he follows the teaching of Holy Scripture. When God tells us that he loves his people, he doesn't tell us why. He loves his people because he loves his people. As we have often said, the love of God is sovereign. All love that is true love is sovereign.

A young man who loves his wife because she cooks does not really love her properly. If he loves her and marries her because she's wealthy, then he doesn't really love her with sovereign love. If he loves her and marries her because she's beautiful, then of course, he doesn't really love her with sovereign love.

Love that is genuine love is sovereign love. You cannot explain it. Often, you will say, why did he marry her? I don't see anything in her. But he saw something within her, expressing what happened to him by loving her and marrying her. True love is sovereign love, and there is no rational explanation for its satisfying love to others.

So when God says he loves Israel, he doesn't say why. He says he didn't love her because she was more numerous than others and various other reasons. He loved her because he loved her”.

We therefore are looking at “agape love” in all its fullness. We will therefore see in this supreme kind of love the relationship between God and Israel. It remind of the relationship of a husband and wife. We will also see the relationship of a father to a son. We will see how God

redeemed Israel because of love and how He held them to His cheeks and drew them with cords of a man, with bonds of love. He therefore fed them, did all kinds of wonders for them though they did not know or respect what God had done.

As we examine this Study we see clearly that this is a kind of love that humans cannot easily explain for it exists because of the righteous and powerful nature of God who hates sin. God wants the best for His people and He treats them in an amazingly gracious manner. Clearly then we know that the grace of God did not begin in the New Testament times and there is therefore no age of Grace as such which is limited, for without grace man would never have been created and would never have been forgiven for his sin, saved and sustained.

We must note carefully however as we study that God wants Israel to respond to Him. Similarly, God wants us to respond to Him. We must not think that God lays laws on Israel and forces them to worship Him because of these laws. God gave His laws for their benefit and God does not want Israel to follow them out of duty or fear. We Christians do not serve the Lord God because we are forced to do so or because we are afraid of the laws of God. God's position rather is we do it because of the grace that God has shown us, for we recognize that we could never have saved ourselves. We recognize that we are saved because of another person, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ who offered the atoning sacrifice on the Cross. The Lord God takes us out of bondage, gives us the desire to sin no further, enlightens us, takes away the yoke of cares from us, and gives us a yoke that is light and easy

So the question is posed to Israel, Will they want to return to the land of Egypt? Will they want Assyria to be their king?

As we examine this love that passes human understanding we will see this greatest of anguish that a loving heart can experience when the loved ones become estranged, and they manipulate, resist, reject, lie, and secretly seek alliances with others, things which all lead to their destruction.

Note the irrationality of the nation of Israel and our similarly irrational behavior. In Deuteronomy 32 in the Song of Moses, Moses had declared several warnings to Israel and to us as well to try to stop us from the way of foolishness: He stated about Israel's relationship to God:

"He is the Rock, His work is perfect;

For all His ways are justice.

A God of truth and without injustice:

Righteous and upright is He.

They have corrupted themselves;

They are not His children,

Because of their blemish:

A perverse and crooked generation.

Do you thus deal with the LORD,

O foolish and unwise people?

Is He not your Father who bought you?

Has He not made you and established you?

(Deuteronomy 32:4-6).

Read chapter 32: 28-39 with Moses' lament and prophecy of Israel's behavior and their ultimate fate..



We see Moses instructing the nation in the character of God and pointing out that God loves them but will judge them, and in the end save the remnant of them.

The prophet Hosea in view of the prophecies of Moses therefore will recount the story of the downward steps in the great apostasy of Israel, the rejection of God by His people, their punishment, and their eventual regathering and restoration.

Hosea is the first of the 12 Minor prophets and served as a prophet from both 750 B.C. to 722 B.C. shortly before Assyria conquered the 10 tribes which had split from Judah after Solomon's death and formed the Northern Kingdom otherwise called Ephraim.

It is indicated that Hosea, a native of the Northern Kingdom proclaimed a message of judgment on this Kingdom called Israel because she was unfaithful to Yahweh. But he proclaimed the hope that God would forgive and restore the people during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah king of Judah and Jeroboam 11 who ruled from the capital Samaria. One scholar gives us a brief history so we will not stand the context of this prophetic Book:

“Hosea began his prophetic work during the last years of Jeroboam’s reign. That reign appears to have been prosperous-- both Amos and Hosea condemn the extravagance of Israel's wealthier citizenry. However, Jeroboam “did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh” (2 Kings 14: 24).

He was succeeded by his son, Zechariah, who reigned for only six months before being assassinated. In the three decades of his prophetic ministry, Hosea saw a total of seven Kings- - all bad-- come and go”.

God is angry with the nation. They were chasing the wind. They were trying hard to re-enter bondage. They were following the path of Jacob who in order to get what he wanted out of life did things the wrong way. He did want and longed for spiritual things such as the birthright and the blessing but he did not want to wait on God and trust in God to give him what God promised. Because of his carnal nature he had to run for his life, travel a very long distance through a dangerous and rough country, get trapped in servitude or bondage for many years to get a wife he loved, sneak away from where he labored like a thief in the night, and then as he returned home he had to engage in some serious and devious planning to protect him and his family from what he thought was a vengeful brother.

All this could have been avoided but the sufferings he underwent could not when he wanted to construct his life the way he wanted and leave God out of the planning.

So Hosea faced a Northern Kingdom or Israel which slid deeper and deeper into idolatry. Their great material prosperity and military success occurred while the people were at a very low point spiritually, with immorality and idol worship rampant. Many other sins abounded. There was selfishness, arrogance, religious hypocrisy, social injustice, violent crime, blood shedding, political rebellion, dependence on foreign alliances, and open spiritual ingratitude to God.

At the time Hosea spoke, the nation of Assyria was becoming a great conquering power, and faced the other powerful nation of the times, namely, Egypt. Israel and Judah lay between these two great enemies and rivals. The situation was therefore difficult and dangerous for both Israel and Judah, and both royal houses were very anxious and worried about their future. Some favored alliances with Egypt, while others favored submission to Assyria.

Let us remember that any alliance with either of these two great powers would inevitably bring increased paganism. Assyria demanded that all its subordinate allies recognize the worship of



its national God, and even demanded that this worship be formalized in the capital city of its allies or tributaries. Of course, reliance on Egypt would also bring increased worship of its gods, including the infamous Calf worship.

Hosea, the contemporary of Isaiah, therefore prophesied in one of the darkest period in Israel's history, during its rapid spiritual decline, and preceding its fall and destruction. He strongly criticized their murders, fornication, sexual immorality, lying, perjury, thefts, the idolatry and rebellion.

The situation in Israel was so dire, that God instructed this righteous, morally upright, and obedient prophet to marry an unfaithful wife, a wife of prostitution. Through this image of an adulterous wife, God described Himself as a loving and faithful husband to Israel, for whom He had provided abundantly. Israel however had been a faithless, disloyal and adulterous wife, in other words, a wife of prostitution. She had betrayed and abandoned her husband, despite the long, careful, merciful, and lavish loving He had bestowed on her. She had chased after many lovers, including the Baals, in her lust for the material things of life. (Hosea 2: 5-9).

The relationship between God and Israel was that of a man who was married to an unfaithful woman, who constantly prostituted herself.

Israel had given credit to the false gods for good harvests, increased flocks, material prosperity, and military successes, when it was God who had provided for her. Now that she faced the power of Assyria, she was debating whether to form a protective alliance with either Assyria or Egypt, instead of depending on God for protection. Hosea, speaking for God, therefore charged Israel with not knowing God. In Hosea 4:1, 6 he said:

"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....."

"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 continued to point out the seriousness of this lack of knowledge, for this lack led to the broken Covenant. In chapter 6: 6-7 he states:

"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But they like men have transgressed the Covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me."

The lesson was quite clear. God had created Israel. He was a Father even before He was her husband, and she was his wife. There was therefore no time when she was entirely her own and independent of her husband. Her entire life as a nation was a gift from God, and the nation owed its very being to the call and protection of God.

This was therefore a case of unmerited grace. Without this divine grace, there would not have been an Israel. The nation therefore owed everything to God. They had not come about because of a reward for anything they had done. They did not deserve anything. And the formation of the nation preceded everything that they could say they did for God.

Israel was clearly guilty of gross disloyalty and treachery, and her sins would therefore not go unpunished. Israel had started as a nation only because of the grace of God, and they could survive only because of the grace of God. They therefore had to repent and be redeemed.



This brings to mind our position in Christ. We were saved not because we deserved it, or because we worked for it. We are called because of God's grace. Any disobedience to God, rejection of His commandments, or any inclination of the heart to the ways of the world, is nothing less than spiritual adultery. When we move away from God, we have become an unfaithful wife or a harlot just as Gomer and Israel had become. God is the jealous God and requires nothing but total loyalty. We cannot serve God and Mammon. We must be on the "narrow way", or else we will be on the "broad way" which leads to destruction. Punishment and destruction must come to those who break Covenant.

In Roman 11 Paul issues a warning to Gentiles, specifically, in verses 18-26:

"Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also bear not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

Knowing the nature of our God and why He bestowed His grace on us, gives us the basic instruction on how to avoid severe punishment from Him. We must know God. When we know God, we really have no room in our hearts for the Baals of this world.

Let us realize that the Book of Hosea is very relevant today. Quotations from Hosea are found in Matthew 2: 15; 9:15; 12:7; Romans 9: 25, 26. Various allusions to it are found in Luke 23: 30; Revelation 6: 16; 1 Peter 2: 10.

When we are found following materialism, and the ways of the world, it simply means that we do not know God, despite what our mouth might profess.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. God contemplates the early history of Israel and recounts the benefits He had given to them. God's relationship to Israel had been that of a Father to a Son. He had personally loved Israel and had showed His love to them by bringing them out of Egypt. It's interesting that after Yahweh detailed Israel's sin and punishment the tone now would become personal and affectionate.

Chapters 11 and 12 therefore are two of the most loving, moving, and tender chapters in the Bible showing us the heartbeat of God's yearning love for His people.

We read now however that when Israel was a youth or a child then God loved him and established the covenant relationship with him. God who loved, called His son Israel out of Egypt and Moses was sent to Egypt and given the instruction:

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My Firstborn.

So I say to you let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed, I will kill your son, your firstborn".

Israel had only been taken out of bondage because Yahweh had intervened.

Note that God, in presenting Himself as a parent, laid the basis for future punishment, when the parent disciplines and chastises the child. See Hebrews 12.



It is interesting to note the significant fact that in the first four verses God speaks in the first-person and He uses “I” nine times and 18 times in all 14 verses showing the redeeming power of God toward the nation Israel for He had drawn them with bonds of love.

There is a messianic prophecy in this verse, for here God points out that just as He took Israel, His Son, in love out **of Egypt**, so also it would be applied to Messiah, His Son. The prophecy seems to refer primarily and typically to Israel, and antitypically and fully to Messiah. See Matthew 2: 15 for the application to Messiah. God here included the Messiah, and Israel, Messiah's possession, in one common love. This is an exceptionally great position in which Israel was placed, for they were included in a common prophecy with the Messiah Himself. Note that the people of the Messiah, and Messiah Himself, are considered as one, just as the Head and the body are called one.

Clearly the perverse behavior of this child nation was exhibited from the start for they gave Moses a very difficult time and did not listen to Moses constantly turning aside when Moses told them to trust in their God and be faithful to Him. Even after they were delivered from Egypt they were turning away from God preferring to worship the old gods of Egypt.

Verse 2. Many times the prophets sent by God called the people to Him. However the people rejected the call of the prophets to Covenant obedience, and turned instead to false gods, including the Baals. The people of Israel responded to the preaching of the false prophets, but not to the preaching of the true prophets. The more the true prophets called, the more they went from them. They participated fully in idolatry. They followed the Baals who were fertility gods whose worship promised great harvests, great wealth, and many children. Worshiping with these pagan Baal worshipers meant participating and enjoying all kinds of sexual practices with males and females and without any consideration for marriage bonds. This was materialism and sexual indulgence at its highest peak and the people loved it. They did not think that Yahweh could compete with what the Baals offered. Baal offered so many apparent benefits. To them Baal was the one that was responsible for the things of the flesh that they enjoyed. Baal did not mind providing to Israel or to you what the flesh yearned for. Does that remind you of how we think and do things that occupy our minds and actions?

3. God now refers again to Israel when Israel was a child. There is the image of God personally teaching Israel how to walk, just as parents teach their infants, who are unable to help themselves. The child Israel was well cared for, and had no problem finding food, clothing and protection; God held them up so that they would not stumble. God healed them and restored them time after time, even after He had judged them. But they were not aware that it was God who had held, helped and restored them.

God teaching them to walk reflected a particularly powerful moment in the life of a father and it was also an important time in the life of every child. So God took Israel up in His arms, but Israel failed to knowledge Yahweh's care.

Verse 4. God did not treat them as if they were animals. He did not lead them about by cords such as those that men used to pull animals. He gently led them with the attachments of love, using very humane methods. He removed any yoke or impediment they faced, so that they could eat the food He had given to them with great ease. This seems to refer to God's delivering Israel from the Egyptian bondage and feeding them in the wilderness. Clearly, this was personal and compassionate love.

We also should remember that God feeds us day by day.



Verse 5. God continued to build His case against Israel by now stating that Israel had not behaved with gratitude. They had rejected the relationship with Him and had returned to Egypt-like bondage. They had gone to seek help in Egypt against Assyria. (2 Kings 17:4) Instead, they should have remained where they were, and sought help from their God. Since they sought help from the Gentiles, the Gentile Assyrians would rule them. It is amazing that Israel wanted to go back to the places that had enslaved them. Then they also wanted to go back into bondage to another pagan power so that their new slave master would be Assyria. Their attitude and perception is amazing for Assyria, which had destroyed many nations and treated many peoples very poorly, torturing them by skinning them alive and taking away all their wealth, would be the ones who would put down a revolt in 722 B.C. killing many Israelites and taking the rest of them into exile in Assyria. One wonders where they would end up and how they could not see this despite the warning from the prophets.

Verse 6. As punishment, the sword would destroy their cities, their villages would be cut off and be consumed. Once, God had fed them, but now the sword would feed on them. There would be inescapable judgment. Military defeat would result, because they had sought help from Egypt, which was the symbol of slavery and exile. Yahweh's punishment would ruin Israel, devour the districts and consume the people. No matter how they would scheme against Assyria their schemes really involved unfaithfulness to Yahweh and Assyria would be a tool to carry out Yahweh's judgment.

They were determined to turn away from God so discipline was inevitable as Moses had warned. When an individual has been delivered by God how could they want to return to the place from which they came, falling into the bondage of sin and the bondage of judgment?

Verse 7. Clearly the people of Israel had not only backslidden and rejected their true God but they were 'bent' or completely inclined to backsliding. Though the prophets had called them away from idol worship to the worship of the true God, the Most High, they had refused. They did not want to repent, preferring the demonic idols. Some would undoubtedly call on Yahweh the Most High in desperation but they would have to turn to Baal for relief for Yahweh would not help them and neither would Baal be able to help them. They would find themselves alone and helpless as Moses had warned.

Judgment was what they deserved and what they should have.

You would think that that is what the LORD would do but let us now look at God's response.

Verse 8. This verse contains one of the Bible's strongest expressions of divine emotion. God felt such great compassion for Israel, that when He thought about the severity of His wrath on Israel, He did not want to bring this complete judgment on them. In His holy wrath He had completely destroyed the cities of Admah and Zeboiim with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities were examples of complete divine destruction, examples of final discipline.

God's compassion was so strong, that He appears to be agonizing over a very difficult decision. This language is used to show the strength of God's feeling for Israel. We know that God knows what is right, and always does what is right in decisive fashion. But here it is shown that though Ephraim deserves it, because of His love, He would never wipe out Israel, but would restore a remnant. One writer explains:

“Now here is a son that has been disobedient to the Lord God and is actually hung on turning from him. And so obviously there is a problem here, and God in a compassionate kind of



intervention, interrupts his words concerning moral cause and political effect in order to express what is being done within the being of God.

And in emotional terms he speaks of the conflict between justice and mercy. Justice demands that Israel be destroyed, but God is also merciful. And here the two are in conflict: the justice of God and the mercy of God. In the Old Testament we read *Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other*, in the provision made in Holy Scripture. And so *“How can I give you up, O Ephraim?”*

So God asked how He could surrender Israel and make Israelites like the cities that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. This writer therefore says and note that this is relevant for our behavior and how God treats us:

“Justice knows only one answer: give them up, bash them.

But there is something else within the heart of God. And so he says, *My heart is turned over within me*”. Or, as the Hebrew text may be translated, *“My heart has turned itself against me”*, and God feels in his deepest being the conflict in this case between justice and mercy. At the end of the 8th verse he says, *“All my compassions are kindled”*.

That Hebrew word translated, *kamar*, translated here kindled, is a word that means “to grow warm, tender”, “to be or to grow hot”.

See Genesis 43:30 for an incident using this expression when Joseph finally meets Benjamin that he had so longed to see and he broke down and wept.

There is another incident when the expression was used and this was when Solomon had to judge between two harlots living together and one of the harlot’s children had died and the other harlot falsely claimed that the surviving child was hers. When Solomon decided to get a sword and divide the living child into two to give half to one woman and half of the child to the other woman the true mother of the child was deeply stirred over her son and told Solomon to give the living child to the other woman and by no means kill him. That was the term used when the woman was so deeply stirred over Solomon’s decision that she could not bear to see the child killed.

Note that none of us deserve salvation. We are only saved because of the tender mercies of God, and because of the oath that God has made to save some. God the Father has promised to give some of the people to His Son, and He will honor that promise.

Remember therefore that God is not a man. He is God. He is angry and has wrath like men, but as God He has reminded us that He is, ***The Holy One in your midst***, and therefore when He acts there is no lowering of the standards of righteousness and judgment for as the Holy One He can be perfectly compassionate and perfectly holy at the same time.

Note carefully that God has also displayed visibly He is perfectly compassionate, perfectly holy, and is the perfect judge in the Cross of Jesus Christ. He can display sovereign eternal love and at the same time satisfy His righteousness and uphold His law. So in Romans 3:31 Scriptures explain how God’s righteousness and His law met together and he punished unrighteousness as deserved but in doing that provided salvation by His gift of redemption in Christ Jesus where there was propitiation in His blood through faith. The Lord Jesus bore the sins and punishment of the people of God and so was able to give eternal life to those that believed on Him as Lord. The Father did not lower the standards of righteousness for He is the Holy One in the midst of the people of God.



Verse 9. God therefore swore that He would not act as He had threatened in times past and destroy Israel. He would not deal with Israel as a man would deal with them. A man would react to their many and serious provocations by long ago destroying them.

But God, unlike man, would not forget His Covenant of everlasting love, and would therefore restore the faithful remnant. God would still be their God, for the faithful remnant, and not for the obstinate and the impenitent.

He would not enter into the city as an enemy to destroy them completely, as He had entered Sodom and the related cities and utterly destroyed them. He would be in the midst of them, but not as one coming in wrath to utterly destroy.

Verse 10. God will not come in wrath to His people but instead He will make a public display of His mighty power by the roaring and frightening of Yahweh's enemies. The people of God who will walk after their God who had roared with come because they wanted to be safe in His presence. The pagans and all the enemies of Yahweh would be terrified. But the people of God with come from the west and from the coastlands to which they had run. They would come trembling but they would know that they would be safe.

HOSEA 12

Israel has not kept the ways of its father Jacob but has fallen into the ungodly practice of Canaan (Hosea 12:1-14) In spite of all the manifestations of love, and all the chastisements received from its God, it has continued its apostasy and idolatry, and therefore perfectly deserves the threatened judgment. Hosea shows the compassion of God which would not permit Israel to be utterly destroyed but will redeem it even from death and hell (Ch. 13-14:1). To this there is added, lastly, in Hosea 14:2-9, a call to conversion, and a promise from God of the forgiveness and abundant blessing of those who turn to the Lord. This serves are both warning and encouragement to Christians today that if you are in the wrong with God, he will continue to be your Hope, and even if punishment ensues, it is meant as a means to bring about repentance.

Verse 1. Ephraim is convicted of acting foolishly and in trusting upon man's graces, (represented by Egypt and Assyria), when he was in dire straits. The trouble is Ephraim deceives himself with vain hopes of assistance from man, when he is at variance with his God. Essentially, Ephraim is behaving in a stubborn fashion, God is frustrating all their actions making them come to naught, and Ephraim continues to go along the same path because of greed.

Because of greed and self-indulgence Ephraim is cheating their souls and only causes vexation for themselves. Ephraim multiplies his correspondences and leagues with his neighbors, which will all prove deceitful to him, and they will prove desolation to him. Those very nations that he makes his refuge will prove his ruin. As Christians today, we have been given work to do from God, to bring God's creation to salvation, but we can never be taken in by the world's allurements. That will surely lead us to where Ephraim is right now. The men of Ephraim thought to secure the Assyrians in their interests by a solemn league, signed, sealed, and sworn. They made a covenant with the Assyrians, but they found there was no way of holding the



Assyrians to save them; that potent prince would be a slave to his word no longer than he pleases.

They thought to secure the Egyptians to be their confederates by a rich present of the commodities of their country, not only to purchase their favor, but to show that their friendship was worth having highly prized oil was carried into Egypt. But the Egyptians, when they had got the bribe, dropped the cause, and Ephraim was never the better for them. Only God can be trusted, even when He threatens punishment upon you. You as Children of God know full well that His mercies will follow thereafter.

Verse 2. Judah is contended with too for they like Ephraim came from the loins of Jacob. Judah was doing better than its other brethren until it started to lose sight of who was sustaining them. And even though they didn't slide as quickly into apostasy as Ephraim, they still were doing sin in God's sight and as such God has to correct them before it becomes worse. This position was similar to the churches of Asia whom Christ approved and commended, and yet he adds, *Nevertheless I have something against thee.*

Both Ephraim and Judah are reminded of the despicable acts and the life of trickery of their father Jacob, whose seed they were and whose name they bore (and it was their honor). He prized the blessing despite his bad behavior. His life became extraordinary because of the things which he did, and which God did for him. His children should be the more ashamed of themselves for degenerating from so illustrious a progenitor and staining the lustre of so great a name. Jacob despite all he did loved God and sought him. They should look at the life of Jacob and yet they might be engaged and encouraged to return to God, the God of their father Jacob, in hopes for his sake to find favor with him. He had called this people Jacob, threatening to punish them; *but how shall I give them up? How shall that dear name be forgotten?*

Verse 6. God is always pleading with His people to return to Him. He that was the God of Jacob is the God of Israel and He is our God. From Him have the children of Israel unjustly and unkindly revolted, and so the prophet asks them to turn once again to God through repentance and faith, turn to Him as His chosen them, and love Him again, obey Him, and depend upon Him.

The rewards if we turn and keep close to God are made clear. Those that are converted to Him walk with Him in all holy conversation and godliness. This new behavior involves having mercy in relieving and succouring the poor and distressed, judgment or impartiality in rendering to all their due; being kind to all; doing wrong to none, being devout and being honest. Not only practicing these occasionally, but careful, constant, and conscientious in the practice of them. Let those that walk with God be encouraged to live a life of dependence upon Him. Those that live a life of conformity to God may live a life of confidence and comfort in Him, owing it to God. Let our eyes be ever towards the Lord, and let us preserve a holy security and serenity of mind under the protection of the divine power and the influence of the divine favor, looking, without anxiety when troubling event occur, and by faith keeping our spirits sedate and even; this is waiting on God as our God in Covenant, and this we must do continually.

Verse 7. When God is coming forth to contend with a people, that He may demonstrate His own righteousness, He will demonstrate their unrighteousness. Ephraim was called to turn to



his God and keep judgment. Now, to show that he had need of that call, he is charged with turning from his God by idolatry and breaking the laws of justice and judgment.

God calls Ephraim a merchant, as the people of Canaan were also known as merchants, and even though we might recall their actions, Ephraim acts as a fraudulent merchant, who strove to become great by oppression and cheating. However thoroughly this may apply to the worship of the Israelites, it is not to this that the prophet refers, but to fraudulent weights, and the love of oppression or violence. And this points not to their attitude towards God, but to their conduct towards their fellow-men, which is the very opposite of what, according to the previous verse, the Lord requires, and the very thing which He has forbidden in the law, in Leviticus 19:36; Deuteronomy 24:13-16, and also in the case of violence, in Leviticus 6:2-4; Deuteronomy 24:14.

Though God had given His people a land flowing with milk and honey, yet He did not forbid them to enrich themselves by merchandise, and they succeeded the Canaanites in that as well as in their husbandry. If Ephraim had been fair merchants, it would have been no reproach at all to them, but an honor and a blessing. But just as the unjust and evil Canaanites had done, Ephraim does so too, deceiving and oppressing.

There is oppression by fraud as well as oppression by force. It is not only princes, lords, and masters, that oppress their subjects, tenants, and servants, but merchants and traders are often guilty of oppressing those they deal with, when they impose upon their ignorance, or take advantage of their necessity, to make hard bargains with them, or are rigorous and severe in exacting their debts.

To oppress is bad enough, but to love to do so is much worse. Ephraim had reached a certain state of being. His conscience does not check and reprove him for it, as it ought to do; if it did, though he committed the sin, he could not delight in it. But his corruptions are so strong, and have so triumphed over his convictions, that he not only loves the gain of oppression, but he loves to oppress, sins for sinning-sake, and takes a pleasure in out-witting and over-reaching those that do not suspect him of evil intentions. When we are giving to sin, the slope become steep, and it is only God who can pull us out, but we can see that some people just love sin and so do not hear God's pleas for repentance.

Verse 8. Wicked men will have something to say for themselves now when they are told of their faults, some frivolous turn-off or other wherewith to evade the convictions of the word. Ephraim stands indicted for a common cheat. Now see what he pleads to the indictment. He does not deny the charge, nor plead, *Not guilty*, yet does not make a penitent confession of it and ask pardon but insists upon his own justification.

Ephraim had gotten to a point where they looked at what they had, though gotten through deceit and sin, are convinced that there is no harm or danger, despite God warning them that they have broken His laws to get them to this position. Carnal hearts are often confirmed in a good opinion of their evil ways by their worldly prosperity and success in those ways. But it is a great mistake.



It is folly to call the riches of this world substance, for they are things that are not, Prov. 23:5.

It is folly to think that we have them of ourselves, to say I have made myself rich; what substance I have is owing purely to my ingenuity and industry.

It is folly to think that what we have is for ourselves.

It is folly to think that riches are things to be gloried in, and to say with exultation, I have become rich.

It is folly to think that growing rich in a sinful way makes us innocent, or will make us safe, or may make us easy, in that way; for the prosperity of fools deceives and destroys them. See Isa. 47:10; Prov. 1:32.

Carnal hearts are apt to build a good opinion of themselves upon the fair character they have among their neighbors. Ephraim for a while was very secure. Maybe their neighbors only knew them to be diligent in business, but God knew they were deceitful in business, for it could not be hidden from Him. Even if their neighbors thought something strange was going on and dismissed it, God does not judge as man does, He has previously set His standard for His people to live by.

Verse 9. The Lord meets the delusion of the people, that they had become great and powerful through their own exertion, by reminding them that He has been Israel's God from Egypt to this place, and that to Him they owe all prosperity and good in both past and present. Because they do not recognize this, and because they put their trust in unrighteousness rather than in Him, He will now cause them to dwell in tents again, as in the days of the feast of Tabernacles, i.e., will repeat the leading through the wilderness. It is evident from the context that mō'ēd (the feast) is here the feast of Tabernacles.

The days of the feast are the seven days of this festival, during which Israel was to dwell in booths, in remembrance of the fact that when God led them out of Egypt, He had caused them to dwell in booths (tabernacles, Leviticus 23:42-43).

The simile, "as in the days of the feast," shows that the repetition of the leading through the desert is not thought of here merely as a time of punishment, such as the prolongation of the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness as forty years really was (Numbers 14:33). For their dwelling in tents, or rather in booths (sukkōth), on the feast of Tabernacles, was intended not so much to remind the people of the privations of their unsettled wandering life in the desert, was to call to their remembrance the shielding and sheltering care and protection of God in their wandering through the great and terrible wilderness (Leviticus 23:42-43).

We must combine the two allusions, therefore: so that whilst the people are threatened indeed with being driven out of the good and glorious land, with its large and beautiful cities and houses full of all that is good (Deuteronomy 6:10.), into a dry and barren desert, they have also set before them the repetition of the divine guidance through the desert; so that they are not



threatened with utter rejection on the part of God, but only with temporary banishment into the desert.

Verse 10. They are reminded how the Lord had proved Himself to be the God of Israel from Egypt onwards, by sending prophets and multiplying prophecy, to make known His will and gracious counsel to the people, and to promote their salvation. To speak to, not because the word is something imposed upon a person, but because the inspiration of God came down to the prophets from above.

Israel, however, has not allowed itself to be admonished and warned, but has given itself up to sin and idolatry, the punishment of which cannot be delayed.

Verse 11. Gilead and Gilgal represent the two halves of the kingdom of the ten tribes; Gilead the land to the east of the Jordan, and Gilgal the territory to the west. Gilead is called “a city i.e. a rendezvous of evil-doers” in Hosea 6:8, so is it here called distinctly full of worthlessness and wickedness; and therefore it is to be utterly brought to naught. In the Hebrew texts there are synonymous references to denoting moral and physical nonentity (compare Job 15:31). Here the two notions are so distributed, that the former denotes the moral decay, the latter the physical. Worthlessness brings nothingness after it as a punishment.

Gilgal, which is mentioned in Hosea 4:15; Hosea 9:15, as the seat of one form of idolatrous worship, is spoken of here as a place of sacrifice, to indicate with a play upon the name the turning of the altars into heaps of stones (Gallim). The desolation or destruction of the altars involves not only the cessation of the idolatrous worship, but the dissolution of the kingdom and the banishment of the people out of the land.

Verse 12. In order to show the people still more impressively what great things the LORD had done for them, the prophet recalls the flight of Jacob the tribes-father, to Mesopotamia, and how he was obliged to serve many years there for a wife, and to guard cattle; whereas God had taken Abraham and hence Israel out of Mesopotamia, redeemed Israel out of Egyptian bondage, and had faithfully guarded it through a prophet. The flight of Jacob to Aramaea, and his servitude there, are mentioned simply to show the distress and affliction which Jacob had to endure, according to Genesis 29:31

Verse 13. God had rescued them from misery, had raised them to what they were, not only out of poverty, but out of slavery which laid them under much stronger obligations to serve Him and under a yet deeper guilt in serving other gods. God brought Israel out of Egypt on purpose that they might serve Him, and by redeeming them out of bondage acquired a special title to them and to their service. He preserved them, as sheep are kept by the shepherd's care. He preserved them from Pharaoh's rage at the sea, even at the Red Sea, protected them from all the perils of the wilderness, and provided for them. He did this by a prophet, Moses, who, though he is called king in Jeshurun (Deut. 33:5) yet did what he did for Israel as a prophet, by direction from God and by the power of his word. The ensign of his authority was not a royal scepter, but the rod of God; with that he summoned both Egypt's plagues and Israel's blessings.



Moses, as a prophet, was a type of Christ (Acts 3:22), and it is by Christ as a prophet that we are brought out of the Egypt of sin and Satan by the power of His truth. Now this shows how very unworthy and ungrateful this people were. In rejecting their God, who had brought them out of Egypt, God in His commandments, particularly mentioned first, why they should have no other gods before Him. In despising and persecuting His prophets, whom they should have loved, valued, and studied to respond to and reach God's goal for which He sent them, they should have respected that prophet by whom God had brought them out of Egypt and preserved them in the wilderness. The benefit we have had by the word of God greatly aggravates our sin and folly if we put any slight upon the word of God.

Verse 14. The object of this is to call to the nation's remembrance that elevation from the lowest condition, which they were to acknowledge with humility every year, according to Deuteronomy 26:5., when the first-fruits were presented before the Lord. For Ephraim had quite forgotten this. Instead of thanking the Lord for it by love and faithful devotedness to Him, it had provoked Him in the bitterest manner by its sins (to excite wrath, to provoke to anger). For this should its blood-guiltiness remain upon it, and this would be repaid to it by its Lord, i.e., by Jehovah.

CONCLUSION

HOSEA'S CHALLENGE TO US

Note that God is tender and gracious. We could not create ourselves, nor were we ever able to ask to be created. He created us, sustains us and protects us.

We should therefore live a life of complete gratitude to God. Our religion should mean grateful loyalty, and entire self-surrender to the God who has graciously kept us.

The man who has surrendered himself to this gracious God, has nothing to offer any other god. He therefore can never rely on anyone for help outside of God. To depend on a 'foreigner' means submitting to that foreigner's will and his ideals. The man of God would find that impossible.

It is therefore important to see that though Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was living in a time of unequalled material prosperity and military success, from God's point of view this was the worst of times. Hosea gave complete details of the sins of the people and warned them that God would use their enemies as His instruments of justice.

We today are experiencing tremendous prosperity. For us, these are very good times. It seems that we are at the pinnacle of success, and that God is really blessing us. But when we look around we realize that morally we are pretty close to the bottom. We advocate homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle, we murder babies whose birth is considered inconvenient, we change marriage partners as we change our clothes, we reject all the Commandments of God, we eliminate references to God in our schools, and there is no thought of godly morality in our business practices.

TV, film and radio preach the virtues of adultery, fornication, abominable sexual practices, violence, and every kind of evil we can imagine. Producers compete to create grosser and more violent and morally offensive spectacles. As a result, violence even among children increases rapidly.



Our nations glorify war, and we would prefer to lend money to the poor to buy arms, rather than give them money to buy good things, or even Bibles. In fact, even the men that fight for the nation are sometimes very shabbily treated and forgotten when the danger passes. Our leaders are extremely immoral, and they practice the fine art of making promises that they have no intention of keeping.

Paganism has become popular, and many, even practicing Christians, believe in astrology and seek guidance from the occult and from the stars. We worship the gods of materialism, self-consciousness and greed.

As a result, we become harsh and unforgiving, and often applaud the moves by governments to cut assistance of any kind to the poor. We become like the gods that we worship, cold, unresponsive, impersonal, harsh, and unhelpful.

It might be too late for us. Israel ignored all the warnings. They thought that their successes in life, and their hypocritical worship was sufficient. They never humbled themselves, sincerely prayed, sought the face of God, and turned from their wicked ways. They thought they would always be safe and accepted by God.

They were wrong. Christians are not supposed to be self-centered. They must be honest and depend only on God. They are not to depend on money and the things and people of the world. They must know God intimately.

Let us be blunt. If you say you are a Christian and are living according to the ways of the world and doing the things that Hosea accused Israel of doing, you are an unfaithful, adulterous person. Hosea called the people of Israel people of whoredom, and as such, were people who would never escape the judgment of God.

If you find yourself guilty, just remember that God is forgiving, and ready to receive the repentant child. He is calling on you to turn to him. Hosea put it well in chapter 14.1-2

“O Israel, return unto the Lord by God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips”.

Our plea goes out. You must repent and turn. We cannot do the things that Israel did, and then make excuses for these sins. Let us not be deceived. Our omniscient, omnipotent, and thrice holy God is observing our ways. We therefore say with Hosea in verse 9:

“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”

