



Hosea - The Prophet With a Broken Heart!

By Keith Greer

The book of Hosea has 14 chapters with 197 verses. The name Hosea means "deliverance" or "God is salvation." At the time Hosea wrote, the nation enjoyed a time of prosperity; but inwardly, they were morally corrupt and guilty of spiritual adultery. The prophet offered them salvation if they would turn from idolatry to the God of heaven. But God wanted them to repent on His terms -- not theirs. Judging from his knowledge about the northern kingdom, it appears that Hosea may have lived in Israel, not Judah.

How would God prepare this prophet for the task at hand? To understand this book, we must understand the relationship between Hosea and Gomer. Their relationship paralleled God's relationship with Israel. Early on in Hosea's life, he fell in love with this woman and pledged to her his undying love. Sadly, Gomer became a harlot. The marriage produced three children: Jezreel, meaning "God will sow and scatter," Lo-Ruhamah, meaning "not pitied," or "no mercy," and Lo-Ammi, meaning "not my people." Hosea put Gomer away for her harlotry, but later she returned. How must a faithful, loving husband feel when he sees his wife behaving so shamefully? Though he was deeply pained and ashamed -- he still loved her!

In a similar manner, God was married to Israel. He loved her deeply and provided for her all the things she needed. Even in the face of the earlier heartache she caused Him, God still loved her. So what did Israel do? She engaged in spiritual harlotry. "Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples, for you have played the harlot against your God. You have loved for reward on every threshing floor." {Hosea 9:1} What would this do to God's heart? Israel's unwillingness to repent left Him little choice -- he had to put her away for her unfaithfulness. He accomplished this via Assyrian captivity. Now, do you see why Hosea is called the prophet with a broken heart? How could God's people, after all he had done for them, behave in such a way? This is the background for Hosea's prophecy.

Israel followed a course that led her into certain downfall. Such a course would lead any people to the same end. Read about it and weep.

Lack of knowledge. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priests for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children." {Hosea 4:6} Whenever people do not understand God's will and purpose for them, destruction lies at the door. Ignorance is not bliss, as some maintain; it only sets the stage for further departure. Knowledge was theirs for the taking, but Israel chose to reject it. God chose to reject them.

Self-Pride. "The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah stumbles with them." {Hosea 5:5} Self-sufficiency brings many a person to a bitter end. Israel had grown to depend on herself, and not on God. Pride causes one to reject his true condition. Israel's lawless actions separated her from God, and she was too proud to admit that it was her own fault.

Instability. "O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do with you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away." {Hosea 6:4} There was nothing stable about Israel's relationship with God. Why? Because they willfully disobeyed His will, there was no sure foundation on which to build. A people easily swayed from God is unstable, having no confidence or trust in Him.

Hypocrisy. "For I desire mercy not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offering. But like men they have transgressed the covenant; there they have dealt treacherously with Me." {Hosea 6:6,7} God hates a hypocrite -- a person who says one thing and does another. One who puts on a show for the benefit of others. By the way they conducted their lives, God's people made a mockery of their relationship with Him. Others could clearly see Israel's true condition.

Religious Infidelity. "They are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity; he will punish their sins." {Hosea 9:9} God's people were deeply involved in spiritual adultery. They forgot that they were God's people and the commitment they made to Him. They followed after the pagan gods and idols of the land in which they dwelt. Early in their relationship, God warned them about how He would deal with such actions. What message did they send when they turned their backs on Him and turned to false gods who could not help, or do anything for, them.

Forgetfulness of God. "For Israel has forgotten his Maker, and has built temples; Judah also has multiplied fortified cities; but I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces." {Hosea 8:14} Israel had forgotten the One who made her great. How did they conquer the land? How did they strike fear into the hearts of their enemies? Who brought them out of bondage and gave them this good land? Who sustained them during these things? When things go well, God's people always seem to have difficulty remembering Him. When things go sour, their minds quickly return to God to request His help!

Backsliding. "My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him." {Hosea 11:7} Rather than being drawn closer to Him, God's people were getting further away. Israel had continued to slide back into her ungodly ways. Why? When we observe all the different roads they took on this course, the end result is clearly and easily understood. Israel determined to go its own way and to leave God's way. Instead of moving forward, they took many steps backward.

How did they go so wrong? Why did they have to come to such an end? Hosea gave the answer. "They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; it shall never produce meal. If it should produce, aliens will swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up; now they are among the Gentiles like a vessel in which there is no pleasure." {Hosea 8:7,8} Israel, like many today, believed she could act according to her own desires and motives, but suffer no consequences. Sadly, it was not so then, and it is not so today. When the morals and religious beliefs of a person or nation break down, nothing good comes of it. Israel threw away all her advantages. God gave her a law to show the better way, warnings to show the dangers of going beyond the guidelines, numerous

examples of His great love, and last but not least, he often displayed His awesome power for their benefit!

Let us see how this great prophecy closes. "Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them." {Hosea 14:9} Hosea's prophecies could not help them unless they heeded the warnings and returned to God. Unfortunately, they chose to ignore Hosea's words. What about us? Can we travel down the same path they did so long ago and not realize the same fate? We need to understand these principles and properly apply them to our lives; else, someone may be writing about our unwillingness to repent!