

LESSON TEXT: Hosea 1:1---3:5
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

There is something fascinating about the book of Hosea! There is something wonderful, warm, magnetic and comforting about it. Hosea's personal experience speaks to our own human predicaments; God's use of Hosea's heart-break to reveal his own tenderness and grace draws us with cords of love back from our waywardness to the Divine Husband.

Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom, Israel, in its death throes. He prophesied about 750-725 B.C.--God sent Israel into exile by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The nation was disintegrating from within during Hosea's ministry. Political instability (7 heads of state in about 12 years), social anarchy (the break all bounds), religious apostasy (9:10), and immorality (7:1-7) was not the exception--it was the rule! The people were obsessed with a spirit of harlotry (i.e., a spirit of promiscuity and prostitution). They took everything good from God and turned it into evil. It was not just their sexuality they perverted-- **it was everything, even religion!**

God told Hosea to take a wife of harlotry (i.e., a woman with such an attitude). He did. And she left him and their children and ran off with other lovers. When she wound up deserted by her lovers, sold into the slave market, God told Hosea, "Go again, love a woman who is...an adulteress; *even as the Lord loves the people of Israel.*"

Here in Hosea's book we see that to really love we must make ourselves vulnerable to being taken advantage of--God did! We must learn that the God of all grace is like that! We must not be threatened by learning that God is willing to make himself vulnerable and available to being taken advantage of. He is hurt over and over again, and still wants to love us and take us back. All that stands in our way is our pride and disobedience! **BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL AND ABSORB THIS WONDERFUL, WARM, MAGNETIC TRUTH!**

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her...and speak tenderly to her..." --God (Hosea 2:14).

QUESTIONS:

1. How in the world could an absolutely righteous God command a man to marry an adulteress? 1:2-3
2. Do we serve an ambivalent God--who can't make up his mind whether he is going to forgive Israel or not? 1:4,6,9,10,11
3. When did God fulfill 1:10-11? (See 2 Pet. 2:9-10; Rom. 9:23-26 & Hosea 2:3).
4. What is the Divine Lover's first approach to getting his "wife" to return to him? 2:1-5. How is the Valley of Achor a door of hope? 2:15
5. What is the Divine Lover's second approach? 2:6-15. Is life like this? Should we expect God to work on his "wife" this way now?
6. What day did the Lord's "wife" finally call him, "My husband"? 2:16 (see Isa. 54:5; 62:4; Jn. 3:27-30; Eph. 5:21-33, etc.).
7. What about the covenant with the beasts and the abolishing of war? (see Isa. 2:1-4; Micah 4:1C5:2; Isa. 11:1-9; Ezek. 34:25).
8. What was Hosea's experience with his wife to typify? 3:1
9. Who is David, their king, and what are the latter days? 3:5

"Marriage is our last, best chance to grow up."

--Joseph Barth

"It takes two to make a marriage a success and only one to make it a failure." --Herbert Samuel

"You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her, and your land Married (Heb. *Beulah*); for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." --Isaiah 62:4-5

LESSON TEXT: Hosea 4:1---5:14

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

One cannot help the impression that Hosea's society was obsessed with sex (chs. 4 & 5). Just go through the two chapters and underline the words harlotry, adultery, prostitution every time they occur. Next, underline the words and phrases characterizing the status quo of that society--swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery; breaking all bounds and murder following murder. The priesthood was feeding on the sin of the people, the people inquired of a thing of wood, and were a band of drunkards who loved shame. It was a wicked, greedy, cruel, stupid, shameless, self-destroying society--obsessed with sexual perversion!

The pornography industry in America is estimated to be a \$10 billion a year business. It provides the 3rd largest income for organized crime. It feeds on the sin of our people. The FBI estimates that last year in the U.S., recreational killers murdered 5000 people--most of the murderers were feeding on pornography. Police vice squads report that 87% of child molesters admitted imitating the sexual behavior they had seen modeled in pornography. Fully 70% of adult pornographic magazines sold end up in the hands of minors. A study released by the Univ. of New Hampshire, 1983, showed that the states which had the highest readership of pornographic magazines, also have the highest rape rates. According to Sen. Dodd of Connecticut, "By even the most conservative estimates, a child is sexually abused somewhere in this country every 2 minutes." Child pornography victimizes as many as 600,000 children from 3-18 years of age every year in the U.S. Is America obsessed with perversion of human sexuality? Is she self-destructing?

In 1985 a Joplin man was arrested for forcing a 16 year old girl to have sexual intercourse and pose for pornographic photographs. It was discovered he had operated a child-pornography scheme for 15 years, victimizing some 50 girls ages 9 to 16. Investigators also confiscated a shotgun and two handguns they said the man was holding when the arrest was made. Whatever happened to this case? **Will God have mercy on a society too stupid and morally flaccid to make laws against such rotten activities and enforce them?**

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the lack of faithfulness listed along with such terrible sins as killing, stealing and murder? 4:1-3. Faithfulness to what? (Isa. 26:9-10)
2. What does lack of knowledge have to do with social destruction? 4:1-6. Who is responsible? Is there a modern parallel?
3. What has increase to do with sin? 4:7
4. Are there religious leaders exploiting people's sinfulness today? 4:8. Should these charlatans be exposed and denounced? (See 2 Pet. 2; Jude 2; Jn. 10).
5. What is the significance of the word "Therefore" in 4:13b? What does idolatry have to do with wickedness? Who's responsible here?
6. How is it that people's deeds do not permit them to return to God? 5:4. Do people ever lose their moral responsibility to do differently?
7. Does God really withdraw from anyone? 5:6. So that he can't be found?
8. What are they like--"those who remove the landmark"? 5:10
9. Why did Ephraim go to Assyria for healing? 5:13. Could there be parallels in the 20th century kingdom of God (the church)?

"Since you have forgotten the law of your God,
I also will forget your children" --Hosea 4:6

A nation can survive wars, diseases, poverty, and
disasters---but no nation can survive indecent and
perverted morality!

---PTB

LESSON TEXT: Hosea 6:1---7:16

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Is it possible to be dying and not know it? Israel was dying and did not know it--or as Hosea puts it, "Aliens devour his strength, and he knows it not; gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not." (7:9). Israel was rotten, putrid, sickening. Israel was a cake not turned. Ever try to eat a pancake cooked on one side and raw on the other? Yukkk! Read Hosea chs. 6 & 7 carefully. You will find God characterizing his covenant people as fickle (6:4); faithless (6:7); murderous (6:8); robbers (6:9); liars (7:1); adulterers (7:4); drunkards (7:5); scheming (7:6); proud (7:10); stupid (7:11); self-mutilating (7:14); deceitful (7:16); and insolent (7:16).

Could the church of Christ ever become dead and not know it? Read 1 Corinthians 11:30! When the church gets greedy, uncaring about some of its members, and divisive, it is weak, ill, and dying! Read Revelation 3:1-6. The church at Sardis had the name of being alive, but was dead because no perfected (completed, finished) works could be found in it. Sardis saints always started things with a bang, but they never finished anything.

Sinners are dead, but do not know it! Paul described unforgiven sinners as dead in trespasses in sins (Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 2:13). In fact, Paul said that just to be carnally-minded (fleshly-oriented) is death (Rom. 8:6)! People do not have to do bad things to be dead--just to have a mind set on worldliness means they are dead. The church at Laodicea was dead and did not know it (Rev. 3:14-18). To be friendly to worldliness is to be at war with God, and when you're at war with God, you're dead and don't know it! WE NEED TO BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL AND LEARN A LESSON FROM ISRAEL!

"She (or he) who is self-indulgent is dead even while she (or he) lives"--1 Timothy 5:6

QUESTIONS:

1. Does healing always require tearing? Did Jesus? Does the Word? 6:1
2. How is man to know that when God strikes he will also bind up? 6:2-3
3. What kind of love is like a morning cloud or dew? 6:4. Is there a cure for it? 6:5
4. What is steadfast love? 6:6. Is sacrifice and offering contrary to love? What does Adam have to do with this subject? 6:7
5. Why does healing reveal corruption? 6:11C7:3. Always? When Jesus healed was corruption revealed?
6. How are people like heated ovens? 7:4-7. What heats them?
7. Could aliens be devouring the strength of an unaware church today? 7:9
8. Are there church people today flitting like doves from one worldly help to another? 7:11-13
9. How could worshiping with other religions be called evil and against God? 7:14-16. Aren't all the other religions of the world sincere? Is the New Testament that narrow-minded about other religions?

**"Suppose our bodies never healed?
Suppose we carried with us all through life the scrapes, cuts,
and bruises of childhood and everyday accidents?
There are people who never heal emotionally.
They carry with them through life the emotional bruises
that could be healed. Worse, there are others who experience no
spiritual healing of the inner person,
though it is readily available through the Great Physician, our
Lord Jesus Christ."
---1000 Windows, by Robert Shannon**

LESSON TEXT: Hosea 8:1---9:17

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

An old farmer said: "The thing about cows is if you push 'em, they push back. So if you want a cow to move left, you push right and she will push back to the left." God said Israel was like a "stubborn heifer" (Hosea 4:16). There's hardly anything more stubborn than a heifer!

But stubbornness or rebellion is a **very** serious matter with God. The law of Moses directed parents to have a rebellious child stoned to death (Deut. 21:18-21). God said through the prophet Samuel that "rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23). The writer of Proverbs said, "An evil man seeks only rebellion." Jeremiah pronounced God's sentence upon Hananiah, "Behold I will remove you from the face of the earth...because you have uttered rebellion against the Lord" (Jer. 28:16).

Israel manifested its rebellion against God by breaking his covenant (8:1-2); making kings without God's approval (8:4a); taking God's blessings and making idols of them (8:4b-5); mindless frivolity "sowing wind" (8:7); going up to Assyria for help (8:9-10); mocking truth by erecting other altars (8:11-13); and by trusting in its fortresses (8:14).

Often, the only solution to rebellion is to let the rebel suffer the consequences of his stubbornness. When Israel rebelled completely against Jehovah and turned to Baal, and became detestable (Hosea 9:10), God said, "Ephraim's sons, as I have seen, are destined for a prey; Ephraim must lead forth his sons to slaughter" (9:13). We are reminded of the Prodigal Son. We are reminded of the Jewish nation in rebellion against God's Messiah (Matt. Chs. 23-24). We are reminded of the ancient Roman civilization portrayed in Rom. 1:18-32! We are reminded of those Christians in the 7 churches of Asia Minor rebelling against Christ (Rev. chs. 2-3)! **BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL, IF YOU DARE, AND LEARN HOW GOD TREATS REBELLION!**

QUESTIONS:

1. How can people transgress God's commandments and still say, "My God, we know thee"? 8:13
2. Does God expect everyone to be able to recognize that an idol is not God? How? What about modern idols? 8:5
3. Why was Israel called a useless vessel? 8:8 (see 2 Tim. 2:20-26).
4. If an Israelite was to worship God by taking sacrifices to one altar, why wouldn't many altars be even better than a few? 8:11ff
5. What 3 aspects of Israel's existence were to be turned into mourning? 9:1-6. Does God really go around making people sad? Why?
6. Why would God say the prophet is a fool? 9:7. (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:18ff; 4:8-13).
7. What is God saying about seeing Israel at its beginning as grapes in the wilderness? 9:10a
8. What profound spiritual truth is revealed in Hosea 9:10b?
9. Does God's statement: "I will love them no more..." shock you? 9:15

"When Jesus comes the second time it will be with his mighty angels in flaming fire to render vengeance on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel." 2 Thess. 1:8-9

"I have thought about it a great deal, and the more I think, the more certain I am that obedience is the gateway through which knowledge, yes, and love, too, enter the mind of a child."
---Annie Sullivan, teacher of Helen Keller, in a letter to Ms. Keller on March 11, 1887

LESSON TEXT: Hosea 10:1---12:14
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

“There is a way which seems right to a man,
but its end is the way to death.”
---Proverbs 14:12; 16:25

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

On rare occasions in the world of sports (esp. football and basketball) a player will take the ball and run toward the wrong goal and score points for the opposition. Nearly everyone has suffered the trauma of turning down the wrong way on a one-way street in an American metropolis. Then there are some of us so sure we know our way on vacation that we don't need to take a road map (until, inevitably, we turn off on the wrong road). Then there was “Wrong-Way-Corrigan” (Robert Corrigan, 1938) who decided to fly solo trans-Atlantic from Brooklyn, USA, to Dublin, Ireland--could not get a permit or passport, but flew it anyway, and jokingly said he thought he was flying from Brooklyn to Los Angeles and just “went the wrong way.”

In the U.S. Navy, on board ship, when the “General Quarters” alarm is sounded, sailors rushing to their battle stations are instructed, “up--starboard and down--port (meaning if you're going upstairs, go on the right, if down--stairs, go on the left). You'll only forget that once!

Hosea speaks for God, “The more I called them, the more they went from me...My people are bent on turning away from me...” (11:2,7). The great granddaddy of all Israel, Jacob, knew where he was headed as a baby--for the spiritual birthright (Hosea 12:2-6). And Jacob was so determined to reach the right goal, he strove with God and strove with the angel and prevailed.

That is the essence of our lesson in Hosea, chapters 10, 11, and 12Cknowing the right goal, going the right way, and by the help of God, holding fast to it. **BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL--THAT IS PART OF GOD'S HELP TOWARD THE RIGHT GOAL!**

QUESTIONS:

1. Does affluence always produce sin? 10:1-2. (See Matt. 19:23; Lk. 18:24ff; 1 Tim. 6:6-10; 6:17-19; Prov. 23:4; 28:6,11,20,25; 30:8-9)
2. How could people get so attached to a calf? 10:5-6
3. How many have you ever seen reap what they sow? Why do so many get by with sowing wild oats? 10:11-15
4. If the goodness of God leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4), why was Israel so bent on turning away from the God who loved them so? 11:1-7
5. If you were God, would you be reluctant to give up on a nation like these Israelites (remember how they treated God)? 11:8-9
6. If what Israel was doing was pursuing the wind, what of those today who pursue the same things? 12:1
7. What is the point of the reference to Jacob's striving with God? 12:2-6
8. What does being rich prove? 12:7-9. Was Israel practicing pragmatics?
9. What was the bitter provocation Israel gave the Lord for which he would punish them? 12:10-14. Is there an application here for the church?

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the
gate is wide and the way is easy
that leads to destruction, and those who
enter by it are many. For the
gate is narrow and the way is
hard that leads to life, and
those who find it are few.”
---Jesus Christ, in Matthew 7:13-14

LESSON TEXT: Hosea 13:1---14:9

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

If we are faithful (truthful) to confess our sins, and commit ourselves to walking in the light (reality), God is infinitely faithful (truthful) to forgive and cleanse us from all sin.

That is the message of Hosea 13-14! Nearly every Old Testament prophet ended his written message with the promise by Jehovah of forgiveness, restoration, and spiritual abundance to be fulfilled in the first coming of the Messiah (see Isa. chs. 60-66; Ezek. chs. 40-48; Dan. chs. 9-12; Hosea 14; Amos 9; Joel chs. 2-3; Obad. V. 17-21; Micah chs. 4-7; Zeph. 3; Haggai 2; Zech. chs. 9-14; Malachi chs. 3-4).

God says through Hosea that when people sincerely (faithfully--- truthfully) desire the Lord to take iniquity away from them, admit that worldly power is unable to save them, and turn away from all their idols, he will heal their faithlessness and love them freely. Some people are surprised to find free grace extended by the God of the Old Testament. That is because they have never really *studied* the O.T. prophets---those books (as well as other books of the OT) are replete with offers of **grace** from God (see Isa. chs. 53; 55; Micah 7:18-20; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 3:1-10; 12:10-14; 13:1-9, etc.).

Grace has always been God's way with people. Adam lived by grace even before he sinned. And after he sinned, God extended grace to all the human race who would believe and trust his word. **Grace is goodness**; it is freely given to those who want **goodness**. That's the catch! Most people think of **grace** as being *license* to enjoy wickedness without the consequences. But what God desires to give us is **GOODNESS**. Since God is *infinite goodness*, he desires to give us *himself* through his word. The problem is, most people want grace as they define it---not as God has defined it in his word. The essence of God's **grace** is **holiness---rightness---goodness**.

“And he (God) said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, The Lord, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious....” --Exodus 33:19

QUESTIONS:

1. What makes people worship animals? 13:2. Do they still do so today? What are the consequences of animal worship?
2. Why do people forget God when they become full? 13:6 (see 2 Cor. 1:9; and 12:8-10; Phil. 4:11-13; Prov. 18:11; 19:1; 22:1; 23:4-5; 28:6; 28:25; 29:8-9; Deut. 8:11ff).
3. When God offered himself as their ruler, why did the Israelites cry for kings and princes? 13:9-11
4. If God was angry about their demand for kings and princes, why did he allow it? 13:11 (compare Matt. 19:8).
5. How was Ephraim an unwise son? 13:12-13. Are there any unwise sons now? Does this apply to nations or to the church?
6. As Hosea reveals it, how does one return to the Lord? 14:1-3
7. If we confess that the Lord alone saves, must we confess who does **not** save? 14:3
8. How does God heal faithlessness? 14:4
9. If God's love is free, what about counting the cost? 14:4
10. Hosea is describing what the new Israel (the church of Christ) was to be in 14:4-9---name 8 characteristics of the new Israel.

**“Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see**

**’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!**

**Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
Tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.”**

---John Newton, 1725-1807