

My Favorite Thing About HOSEA

HOSEA 11:1-9

July 31, 2021

Why are the “minor” prophets of the Old Testament called “minor”? Were their messages less important than Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel? Not at all.

The “Majors” are longer – with an average of 36.5 chapters – and their content has broad global implications, while the “Minors” are shorter – with an average of 5.5 chapters – and their content is more narrowly focused.

That brings us to HOSEA the first of the “minors”. **My Favorite Thing About HOSEA is the concept of AND/BOTH.**

Under Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was prosperous and successful. However, after he died in 753 BC, the nation sank into near anarchy, going through 6 kings in about 30 years.

Syria and Egypt were constant threats, but it was Assyria who would seal her fate.

The Spiritual Situation in Israel was far worse than their political situation. The people were spiritually and morally bankrupt. They were self-satisfied and proud. The religious leaders were wholly devoted to idolatry and all forms of idolatrous worship flourished. Dishonesty, distrust, deception, injustice, violence, bloodshed and the oppression of the defenseless were common in all levels of society.

It was into this that God called Hosea to reveal **BOTH** His hatred of sin **AND** His desperate and unchanging love for the people who did not love Him back.

We are going to approach this a little backwards by looking first at the 2 sermons Hosea preached.

Sermon #1 {Ch. 4 -11}

The LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land:

There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God. There is only cursing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery; you stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you.

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge.

You are stubborn like a young cow. Ephraim loves his idols, so I’m going to leave him to it. Even when they are no longer drunk, they continue to prostitute themselves and even their leaders love to participate in these shameful practices. They will be swept away by the whirlwind and they will be brought to shame by their sacrifices.

Israel prostituted itself in every possible way: Physically. Politically. Spiritually. ONLY when they began to experience the consequences of their choices did they even pause:

When you realized you were sick and wounded, did you come back to me? NO! You went to Assyria, but he cannot help you.... I am going to go away until you recognize your guilt and seek me. The consequences of your choices will cause you to seek my face and you will say, *“Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.”*

Notice that there is no mention of their sin. No mention of repentance. No acknowledgement of guilt.

Are they REALLY Sorry? No. Are they REALLY repentant? No. Are their hearts broken for the sins they have committed? No. Do they desire a different way of life? No.

They were sorry for one reason and one reason only.... They were experiencing consequences.

God was completely aware of the reality of their “repentance” What am I going to do with the both of you? Your love is like the morning mist that disappears when it gets hot. Therefore, I am going to tear you to pieces through my prophets and kill you with the words of my mouth. My judgments will flash like lightning.

I desire mercy **NOT** sacrifice and an acknowledgment of Me **NOT** burnt offerings!

You never consider the fact that I know all about your wickedness because you do it right in front of my face!

You are so arrogant that even the painful consequences of your choices do not cause you to return to me!! You’re like a silly dove, fluttering first to Egypt than to Assyria. Destruction is coming because you have rebelled against me. I **LONG** to heal you, but you tell people lies about me. Your heart does not long for transformation, you just lie on your beds and cry because of the consequences. You continue to go to pagan festival and turn away from me. It was I who trained you and gave you strength, but you have turned against Me. You say, **“We know you”**, but you reject what is good. You have set up kings that I did not choose..... Sow righteousness and reap the fruit of unfailing love. It is time to seek the Lord until He comes and showers righteousness on you, **but instead**, you have planted wickedness and reap evil. You eat the fruit of deception. You depend on your own strength and your many warriors, but the roar of battle will rise against you and your fortresses will be destroyed.

- **When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. ² But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images. ³ It was I who took Ephraim by the arms and taught him to walk; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. ⁴ I led them with cords of human kindness and ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them. ⁵ "Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent? ⁸ "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. ⁹ I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man-- the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath {Hosea 11:1-9}**

"How can I give you up, Ephraim... how can I hand you over, Israel... my heart is changed within me and all my compassion aroused... "

Sermon #2 {Ch. 12-14}

The Lord has a dispute with you Judah and I will punish Jacob according to his ways. Return to me, observe kindness and justice and put your hope in Me.

Ephraim said, ***"I have become rich and have found wealth all by myself. There is nothing I have done that I can be punished for!"*** But I have been your God since I brought you from Egypt and I will make you live in tents again. I have spoken through the prophets, but you don't listen! Ephraim's bloodguilt will remain on him!

Ephraim, you were great... once, but now you sin more and more. You make molten images of silver and you encourage the people to worship the calves!!

You will be like the dew that soon disappears. Like chaff that is blown away. Like smoke from a chimney.

I cared for you in the wilderness, but when you came into the Land, you became satisfied and then your heart became proud and you forgot all about Me. Now your iniquity has been stored up.

Israel is guilty. She has rebelled against God and YET He still wants her. He loves her. He still pleads with her to come back to Him. Remarkably, He even gives her the words to say:

- ***Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount war-horses. We will never again say "Our gods" to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion. {14:2-3}***

And IF she had returned to Him?

- ***I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a Cedar of Lebanon, he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. Men will dwell again in his shade. He will flourish like the grain. He will blossom like a vine, and his fame will be like the wine from Lebanon. O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me. {14:4-8}***

Can you see the AND/BOTH in these sermons? God is rightly angry because of what HIS PEOPLE are doing to themselves and each other AND His heart is breaking as they continue to do as they please DESPITE the consequences.

Hosea wasn't just called to preach a few sermons; he was called to become an object lesson ---- He was told to go and marry a woman with a dodgy reputation – a woman of the streets....

This relationship was to be a living, breathing representation of the relationship between God and Israel. A nation that had played the harlot and a God who passionately loved her and desired more than anything for the relationship to be restored.

It was God who went searching for relationship. It was God who delivered Israel out of Egypt. It was God who sustained and walked with her in the desert. It was God who brought her into the land He had promised. He had shown tender love and faithfulness toward Israel and expected undivided affection and faithfulness in return.

But in this situation, there is no advantage in being *“all powerful”*.

You cannot *‘make’* the object of **YOUR** affection love you back. Guilt, manipulation and coercion don’t work. A marriage relationship is based on 2 people **CHOOSING** to love each other. Choosing to remain faithful to that one other person ---- for life ---- not just when it feels good. Anything less than free choice is not love.

Israel had promised to be faithful,

- **Exodus 24:3** - When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do."
- **Joshua 24:24** - And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him."

but she was, in fact habitually unfaithful. She chased after other lovers and rejected God, **WHILE STILL EXPECTING HIM TO BE FAITHFUL TO HER!!** God was forsaken by the people on whom he had showered so much blessing.

She was guilty of spiritual adultery.

She wanted His blessings **BUT** she didn’t want Him.

She wanted all the *“perks”* of being the chosen of God **BUT** she didn’t want any of the responsibility.

She didn’t want to experience consequences **BUT** she also wanted to do whatever she wanted to do.

Despite all that Israel had done to God, He loved her. He wanted to bring her home. He wanted to restore her. So, Hosea was told:

“Go and get your wife. Bring her back to you and love her, even though she loves adultery. Because I still love Israel even though the people have turned to other gods and offered them choice gifts.” {3:1}

- I will win her back once again and I will speak tenderly to her.
- In that day she will call me 'my husband'.
- I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips.
- I will betroth her to me forever; I will betroth her in righteousness and justice, in love, compassion and faithfulness, and she will acknowledge Me.
- I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show love to the one I called 'not my loved one' and will say to those called 'not my people', 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God'.

The book of **HOSEA** is a story of a run-away bride and the God who pursues her.

It was out of his personal experience of loving someone who abused his love and ran after other lovers, that Hosea begins to understand how the unfaithfulness of Israel has affected the heart of God.

Within its pages we see consequences for sin **AND** God’s heart revealed as He desperately attempted to get His people to choose life.

Hosea bore God’s last message to the Northern Kingdom, but his appeals went unheeded. Despite God’s single-minded efforts, the people were unrepentant and unchanged. They held to their rebellious course of action and would reap the harvest they had **CHOSEN** to sow. In **722 BC** Assyria destroyed Israel and the 10 tribes were dispersed among the nations.