

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" ---- Volume IV Number 9

Hosea: "Helping Others See the Evils of Apostasy"

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the 45th email sermon in a series we are sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. This message is a message about the horrible consequences of turning from God AND the hope we have in His forgiveness. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, or use components of it!

May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

Hosea: "Helping Others See the Evils of Apostasy"

Introduction to the Minor Prophets: The Minor Prophets are so named because of the LENGTH of their writings, NOT the insignificance of their revelation. The Jews accepted these twelve books as a part of the Hebrew Old Testament; the early Christians believed these to be part of the "canon" or accepted books of God's Holy Word.

Some of the most well known Bible verses and phrases are found in the Minor Prophets. They are a rich source for teaching us about a genuine faith and a God-pleasing lifestyle.

These 12 books were written over a period of some 400 to 500 years. The periods of Old Testament history in which they occur include the "Divided Kingdom," "Remnant Kingdom," and the "Restored Kingdom." Joel is the earliest, about 835 BC, and Malachi is the latest, about 425 BC.

SOME BACKGROUND ON HOSEA

Time: Approximately the last half of the 8th century BC, or about 750 to 710 BC

Recipients: Primarily the Northern Kingdom - usually called "Israel" or "Ephraim"

Theme: Helping Others See the Evil(s) of Apostasy (or Adultery in the spiritual sense)

Form: An analogy between Hosea's marriage to unfaithful Gomer and Israel's apostasy

Key Words: NIV: Prostitution-9; Adultery(ous)(ies)- 9 KJV: Harlot-3; Whoredoms--5

"Israel" is used some 36 times, "Ephraim" 36 times, "Samaria" 6

Key Themes/Verses in the 14 chapters of Hosea:

1. Three children whose names describe God's will toward His people -- 1:4, 6, 9 (2 Kings 10:30-32)
2. "Hedge of Thorns" -- 2:6. God's efforts (our prayers?) to block the path to total apostasy.
3. Love for the unfaithful, personified in Hosea's marriage to Gomer -- 3:1
4. The description of the waywardness of God's people -- 4:1-6
5. Blame placed upon the ungodly leaders -- 5:1, 10
6. Plea for the wayward children to repent -- 6:1-6. Note references in I Sam. 15:22-23 and Matt. 12:7
7. Further descriptions of the sins of the nation -- 7:8, 11, 16
8. Judgment comes upon the unfaithful -- 8:6, 7
9. More of the judgment of chapter 8 -- 9:7-9
10. Prosperity only feeds their waywardness -- 10:1, 12-15
11. An analogy of a loving parent now ignored and rejected -- 11:1-6
12. Misinterpreting prosperity as God's stamp of approval -- 12:2-8
13. Growing idolatry leads to punishment -- 13:4-8, 14 Compare to I Cor. 15:55
14. Hope for a better day -- 14:1-9

1. The Sad Situation

Hosea 1:1-11

1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel:

2 When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD."

3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

4 Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel.

5 In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel."

6 Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer show love to the house of Israel, that I should at all forgive them.

7 Yet I will show love to the house of Judah; and I will save them-- not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but by the LORD their God."

8 After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son.

9 Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-Ammi, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

10 "Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'

11 The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be reunited, and they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel. (NIV)

A. The names of the three children describe the current estrangement due to Israel's unfaithfulness

1. "Jezreel" -- God will punish Israel for the sins of Jehu and the people 1:4-5 and 2 Kings 10:30-32

2. "Lo-ruhamah" -- Means "No more mercy, love" -- 1:6

3. "Lo-ammi" -- Means "No longer my people" -- 1:9

B. Even in the midst of declaring judgment, God promises a "better day" 1:10-11

A nursery worker about to plant a number of young saplings, some straight and some crooked, thus reasoned with himself--"These straight saplings will no doubt grow up to be fine trees without much attention on my part; but I will see if, by proper training, I cannot make something of the crooked ones also. There will be more trouble with them, no doubt, than with the others; but for that very reason I shall be the better satisfied should I succeed."

ARM FAST FACT --- ARM'S ABA -- American Bible Academy

A comparison of 2003 ABA statistics with the first seven months of 2005:

In 2005, **an average of 136** ABA courses have been mailed from ARM **every day!**

In 2003, **an average of 83** ABA Bible courses were mailed from ARM every day.

In 2005, an ABA Bible course was mailed from ARM to a prisoner **EVERY 10.6 minutes!**

In 2003, an ABA Bible course was mailed from ARM to a prisoner **EVERY 17.4 minutes!**

2. The Sorrow of the Savior

Hosea 6:1-6

1 "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.

2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.

3 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."

4 "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears.

5 Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you.

6 For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. (NIV)

A. Even as God describes their horrible lifestyle, he yearns to heal them. 6:1, 2

Sometimes the shepherd must break the leg of the wayward lamb. He cries as

he inflicts physical pain upon his beloved creature. Then he lovingly binds the leg of that lamb and CARRIES the lamb as long as necessary for the leg to heal. Then he lovingly releases the lamb. The closeness during that period of time has so created a bonding that the lamb now chooses to stay close to its leader. Sometimes God allows us to endure pain, to be broken, in order that, in the end, we will cling to Him, our only Hope.

B. God yearns for us to be GENUINE in our devotion. 6:6 Compare 1 Sam. 15:22-23 and Matt. 12:7

Mankind has always found it far too easy to create rituals to overshadow relationships. God wants not ceremony but sincerity, not liturgy but love, not mechanics but mercy.

A bit of stained glass may be glowing with angel forms and pictured saints, but it always keeps some of the light out, and it always hinders us from seeing through it. And all external worship and form has such a tendency to usurp more than belongs to it, and to drag us down subtly to its own level.

3. The Sunshine of the Someday

Hosea 14:1-9

1 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall!

2 Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.

3 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."

4 "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.

5 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;

6 his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon.

7 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.

8 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."

9 Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them. (NIV)

A. As horrible as it is, there is hope! Remember Hosea 1:10-11? It broke thru in chapter one; it closes the book.

B. God's people must admit that GOD ONLY is their hope. Note verse 3.

1. Assyrian alliances will not be reliable
2. Hand-crafted idols must be rejected entirely

C. A better day is predicted -- always the result of TRUE repentance and TRUE submission to the Creator.

9 Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them. (NIV)

In the Belgian Congo, the weather was hot and dank. No breath of air stirred; leaves hung from the trees as though they were weighted. In the garden not far from the missionary home, a small boy played under a tree.

Suddenly, the father called to him: "Philip, obey me instantly--get down on your stomach." The boy reacted at once.

"Now crawl toward me quickly," his father continued. The boy again obeyed. After he had come halfway, the father said, "Now stand up and run to me." The boy reached his father and turned to look back. Hanging from the branch under which he had been playing was a 15-foot serpent.

Are we always as ready to obey? Or do we say, "Tell me why?" "Explain to me?" "I will later." Let it be, Speak, Lord, Thy servant hears."

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www.raphahouse.org**

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