

LIFE-STUDY OF HOSEA

MESSAGE ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD CONCERNING THE MINOR PROPHETS

Scripture Reading: Micah 5:2a; Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15; Micah 4:7b; Hosea 3:5

With this message we begin the Life-study of the Minor Prophets (except Zechariah, which we have covered in a separate series of messages). The burden of these messages on the Minor Prophets can be expressed in the following four statements:

1) From Bethlehem will come forth the Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from the days of eternity (Micah 5:2).

2) The Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights (implying resurrection) for the salvation of God to all the sinners (Jonah 1:17; 2:10; Matt. 12:40-41).

3) Christ is the Desire of all nations and will come as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings (Hag. 2:7; Mal. 4:2).

4) Christ will dwell in the holy mountain of Zion, to be a shelter and a stronghold to Israel, and rule among them from Jerusalem (Joel 3:16-17; Micah 4:7).

Micah 5:2 says, "You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, / So little to be among the thousands of Judah, / From you there will come forth to Me / He who is to be Ruler in Israel; / And His goings forth are from ancient times, / From the days of eternity." "The days of eternity" refers to Christ's eternity. Christ is the eternal One, but in His incarnation He became a man in time by being born in the small town of Bethlehem.

Matthew 12:40 and 41 say, "Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights, so will

the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. Ninevite men will stand up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something more than Jonah is here." As typified by Jonah, Christ, the Son of Man, was in the heart of the earth three days and three nights (implying resurrection) for the salvation of God to all the sinners. At the time of Jonah, God's redemption and salvation spread from Jerusalem to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. It was a surprise to the Jewish prophet Jonah that God would care for the Gentiles and send him to Nineveh, an evil city built by Nimrod (Gen. 10:9-11). The significance of the type of Jonah is that Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected to spread God's redemption and salvation to the far away Gentiles.

Haggai 2:7a says, "I will shake all the nations, and the Desire of all the nations will come." Malachi 4:2a declares, "Unto you who fear My name will the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." Today all the nations are full of darkness and unrighteousness. On earth there is darkness upon darkness, and there is unrighteousness upon unrighteousness. Who can deal with this situation? No one can. Our only hope, our only expectation, is that Christ is coming as the Sun to shine and to swallow the darkness and also as righteousness to be the righteousness to the nations. He will come with healing in His wings to heal the nations from darkness and unrighteousness. We are waiting for Him as the Desire of the nations and as the Sun of righteousness.

Joel 3:16 and 17 and Micah 4:7 speak of the millennium, the time of restoration. Joel 3:16b and 17a say, "Jehovah will be a shelter to His people / And a stronghold to the children of Israel. / Thus you will know that I am Jehovah your God, / Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain." Micah 4:7b says, "Jehovah will reign over them in Mount Zion / From then on, and even forever." These verses reveal that in the millennium Christ will dwell in the holy mountain of Zion to be a shelter and a stronghold to Israel and will rule among them from Jerusalem. In the time of the restoration Christ will not remain in the heavens but will come physically to the earth, to

the Jewish land, to the city of Jerusalem, to Mount Zion, to dwell there and to be a shelter and a stronghold to Israel. This is Christ's future.

In these verses we see many things concerning Christ: His eternity, His incarnation in time, His death, burial, and resurrection for the spreading of God's redemption and salvation to all the nations on earth, His coming as the Desire of nations and as the Sun of righteousness, and His being the One dwelling on Mount Zion to be a shelter and a stronghold to God's elect. As He rules among them, Christ will rule the whole earth from Jerusalem.

In this introductory word, let us now go on to consider the composition, the contents, and the central thought of the Minor Prophets.

I. THE COMPOSITION

The Minor Prophets are composed of twelve books, from Hosea to Malachi. In ancient times these books might have been considered one book. "The book of the prophets" mentioned by Stephen in Acts 7:42, in his quoting of Amos 5:25-27, might refer to this collective book. Although these books are minor, they complete the divine revelation concerning God's economy in His dealings with His elect—Israel—and the nations, which is covered in detail in the books of the Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. All the books of both the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets were called by the Lord Jesus "the Prophets," in which things concerning Him were written (Luke 24:44). This indicates that the central point of all the prophets is not chastisement or judgment but Christ. When we come to the books of the prophets, we should care mainly for Christ.

II. THE CONTENTS

The contents of the Minor Prophets include God's economy in His loving chastisement of Israel, Christ as the centrality and universality of God's economy, and a number of crucial points.

A. God's Economy in His Loving Chastisement of Israel

God's economy in His loving chastisement of Israel, in His governmental dealing with Israel, and in His judgment upon the nations issues in the manifestation of Christ as the centrality and universality in God's economy to bring in the restoration. According to Psalm 2, Christ, God's King, is the Lord, the Possessor, of the earth. The entire world is under Christ as the "General Manager." He is not only the Lord but also the Manager, managing the entire world situation. At present this is somewhat hidden, but one day He will be manifested. God's economy on this earth will eventually issue in the manifestation of Christ. When this manifestation takes place, all people will see that Christ is the centrality and universality of God's economy to bring in the age of restoration. This is the first aspect of the contents of the Minor Prophets, an emphasis which is also found in the Major Prophets.

B. Christ as the Centrality and Universality of God's Economy

In the Minor Prophets Christ as the centrality and universality of God's economy is emphatically unveiled. In the Minor Prophets (not counting Zechariah, which reveals other aspects of Christ) this unveiling, this revelation concerning Christ, has sixteen points. We will now briefly consider these points according to the sequence of the facts.

1. In His Eternal Origin

We have pointed out that Micah 5:2c says that Christ's "goings forth are from ancient times, / From the days of eternity." This refers to Christ's eternal origin.

2. In His Human Birth in Bethlehem

Micah 5:2a says that from Bethlehem would come forth the One who would be the Ruler in Israel. This is the only verse in the entire Old Testament which tells us that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem.

3. In His First Coming as the Messenger of God

Malachi 3:1-3 reveals that in His first coming Christ came as the Messenger of God. As God's Messenger, He brought people God's word, God's message. This word, this message, is actually Christ Himself. We may say that He is the letter sent by God to us.

4. In His Union with Israel as the Son of God Loved by God and Called Out of Egypt by God

Hosea 11:1 says, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, / And out of Egypt I called My son." This speaks of Christ in His union with Israel as the Son of God loved by God and called out of Egypt by God. The fulfillment of this prophecy is in Matthew 2. Not long after Christ was born, while He was still in His babyhood, Herod tried to kill Him. But according to the word of an angel, Joseph took Jesus and His mother and departed into Egypt and remained there "until the death of Herod, in order that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (v. 15).

5. In His Death and Resurrection for the Salvation of God to Sinners

A further aspect of Christ is typified by the prophet Jonah. Jonah was swallowed by a great fish and was vomited out of it for the spreading of God's salvation to the Gentile Ninevites (Jonah 1:17; 2:10). This is a type of Christ in His death and resurrection for the salvation of God to sinners, even to the Gentiles (Matt. 12:39-41).

6. In His Being the Desire of All the Nations

In Haggai 2:7 we see that Christ is the Desire of all the nations. Even though the nations do not know Christ, they still desire to have Christ. All the nations desire to have peace and a good life, but the situation in the world is the opposite of this. Christ is peace; Christ is also the good life. For the nations to desire these things means that they actually desire Christ. He is the Desire of all the nations.

***7. In Elijah's Being Sent before Him
to Prepare the Way for His Coming Back***

Elijah will be sent before Christ to prepare the way for His coming back (Mal. 4:5-6; 3:1a; Rev. 11:3-4).

***8. In His Being Sent by God
the Second Time with His Overcomers***

"There cause Your mighty ones to descend, / O Jehovah!" (Joel 3:11b). This reveals that Christ will be sent by God the second time with His overcomers. Today Christ is making overcomers, those who will be with Him in His coming back. When Christ comes back, He will come with His overcomers to fight against Antichrist.

In the universe there are two sources: God and Satan. God is embodied in Christ, and Satan will eventually be embodied in Antichrist. Both Christ and Antichrist will have an army. In His coming back Christ will descend with His army, composed of the mighty ones, the overcomers. This indicates that at the time of His coming back, Christ and His army will defeat Antichrist and his army.

***9. In His Arising as the Sun of Righteousness
with Healing in His Wings***

As we have seen, according to Malachi 4:2 Christ will arise as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings.

***10. In His Going Forth as the Dawn
and Coming as the Rain,
as the Latter Rain Which Waters the Earth***

Hosea 6:3b says, "His going forth is as sure as the dawn, / And He will come to us as the rain, / As the latter rain which waters the earth." In 10:12 we are told that Christ will come and rain righteousness upon us. Christ's going forth has not stopped. He is still going forth as the dawn. Also He will come as the rain, even as the latter rain. How much Christ is to us! He is the dawn, the rain, and the latter rain.

***11. In His Second Coming as the Angel
of the Covenant, Whom Israel Desires***

“The Angel of the covenant, whom you desire, behold, He will come, says Jehovah of hosts” (Mal. 3:1b). This speaks of Christ in His second coming as the Angel of the covenant, whom Israel desires. The covenant of which He is the Angel is the new covenant.

***12. In His Coming as the Mighty One
with His Overcomers
to Defeat Antichrist and His Army***

In Joel 3:11 Christ is unveiled in His coming as the mighty One with His overcomers to defeat Antichrist and his army.

13. In His Judgment of the Nations

Christ is also unveiled in His judgment of the nations—the judgment of the living (Joel 3:2a, 12, 14; Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 10:42; 17:31).

***14. In His Dwelling in the Holy Mountain of Zion
within Jerusalem to Reign among Israel***

Joel 3 unveils Christ in His dwelling in the holy mountain of Zion within Jerusalem to reign among Israel to be their God, their shelter, and their stronghold (vv. 16-17, 21b).

***15. In His Reigning in Zion as David Their King,
as Ruler in Israel, in the Millennium***

David was a type of Christ as the King. In the Minor Prophets Christ is unveiled in His reigning in Zion as Israel's King, the Ruler in Israel, in the millennium (Micah 4:7b; 5:2b; Hosea 3:5a; Zeph. 3:15b; Rev. 20:4, 6).

***16. In His Shepherding of Israel,
Becoming Great and Being Their Peace***

Finally, Christ is unveiled in His shepherding of Israel, becoming great and being their peace (Micah 5:4-5). In the millennium Christ will be not only the King and the Ruler but also the Shepherd.

C. Some Crucial Points

Let us now go on to consider some crucial points in the Minor Prophets.

1. Being Prepared to Meet Our God

Amos 4:12 says, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel." There is no other verse in the Bible which tells us to prepare to meet God. Are you prepared to meet your God?

2. God Pardoning Our Iniquity and Passing Over Our Transgression

These books speak in different ways concerning God's forgiveness. According to Micah 7:18 and 19, God pardons our iniquity and passes over our transgression, treading our iniquities underfoot and casting all our sins into the depths of the sea. This reveals how willing God is to forgive our iniquities.

3. The Outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost

Another crucial point, prophesied in Joel, is the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (2:28-32a; Acts 2:16-21). This outpouring was a great matter, for it initiated the church life.

4. The Righteous One Living by His Faith

The matter of the righteous one, or the just one, living by his faith was not initiated by Paul but was prophesied in the Minor Prophets. "The righteous one will live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). This word was quoted by Paul in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. To live by faith implies having life by faith. Thus, the righteous one has life and lives by his faith.

5. God Being Light to Us and Bringing Us into the Light

God is light (1 John 1:5). The Lord Jesus said that He is the light of the world (John 8:12). But even in the Minor Prophets it is prophesied that God would be light to us, His people, and would bring us into the light (Micah 7:8-9).

III. THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

The central thought of the Minor Prophets involves many things, beginning with God's judgment. God will judge the world (Joel 3:2a). Sinners should prepare to meet God (Amos 4:12). Christ as the eternally divine One came to the earth and was born to be human (Micah 5:2). He entered into death and resurrected from it for the extending of God's salvation to all the nations (Jonah 1:17; 2:10; 3:2). Sinners who repent and believe in Him will be forgiven of their sins and justified by God to have the divine life that they may walk in the divine light and become the mighty ones of Christ, sent with Him by God in His second appearing (Amos 4:12; Micah 7:18-19; Hab. 2:4; Micah 7:8-9; Joel 3:11b). He will arise as the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2) and come as the Angel of the covenant (Mal. 3:1b) to reign in Zion (Micah 4:7b) and shepherd Israel (Micah 5:4). Then the millennium of the restoration will be brought in (Micah 4:1-3; Hosea 14:4-8; Rev. 20:4, 6; Matt. 19:28). When we put all these points together, we have the central thought of the Minor Prophets.

The Minor Prophets are minor, but the revelation they bring in is major. The central point of the divine revelation in the Minor Prophets is the same as that in the Major Prophets.

The crucial emphasis of the revelation released by all the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi is that God wants to have an organic union with His chosen people, like the union of Adam with Eve. In the writings of the prophets, God expresses His desire to have an organic union with His chosen people, making Himself their life and making them His expression. In this way God and His chosen people become a couple, a compound person, just as Adam and Eve became a couple. Originally Adam was alone, but later Eve came out of Adam. Eve was built from Adam's rib to match Adam, to marry Adam, and to be Adam's counterpart (Gen. 2:21-22). Eventually, the two became one in nature and in life. This is a type of what God desires. God's desire is to be united with His chosen people to be a universal couple, which in Revelation 22:17 is called "the Spirit and the bride." Because

this is God's intention in His eternal economy, both the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets speak of God as the Husband and of God's chosen people as the wife. This thought is fully developed in the New Testament, but it was unveiled first through the prophets. It is very important that we see this in our study of the Major and Minor Prophets.

God's intention, God's desire, makes Christ the centrality and universality in God's economy. In the New Testament Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:11). Christ is everyone and in everyone. Eventually, the whole church is nothing but Christ.

We have seen that part of the contents of the Minor Prophets is that God's economy in His loving chastisement of Israel, that is, in His governmental dealing with Israel, and in His judgment of the nations issues in the manifestation of Christ as the centrality and universality of God's economy to bring in the restoration. God's instrument to chastise Israel has been, and still is, the nations.

World history is displaying the fulfillment of what was prophesied through the prophets. After their prophecies, given seven or eight centuries before Christ, God came in to chastise Israel by sending Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to destroy Jerusalem. Since that time, Israel has not been recovered. Israel has been under Babylon, Medo-Persia, the Macedonian-Grecian Empire, and the Roman Empire, which continues to influence the entire world. For twenty-six centuries Israel has been suffering under a long, divine chastisement. Today God is using the Arab nations to chastise Israel.

This chastisement has been for the purpose that Christ would be manifested as everything, as the centrality and universality in God's economy. This manifestation will bring in the age of restoration. Thus, God is moving, working, and managing the world affairs to fulfill His eternal economy, that is, to make Christ everything to mankind for the bringing in of the kingdom, the age of restoration.

LIFE-STUDY OF HOSEA

MESSAGE TWO

THE INTRODUCTORY WORD AND THE SYMBOL OF A WIFE OF HARLOTRIES

(1)

Scripture Reading: Hosea 1:1—2:1

In this message we will first give an introductory word and then begin to consider the symbol of a wife of harlotries.

I. THE INTRODUCTORY WORD

A. The Meaning of the Name Hosea

In Hebrew Hosea, the original name of Joshua, means “salvation (of Jehovah),” denoting that Jehovah is the salvation (Num. 13:8, 16).

B. The Time of Hosea’s Ministry

The time of Hosea’s ministry was 785-725 B.C., a period of sixty years.

C. The Object of His Ministry

The object of Hosea’s ministry was the adulterous and apostate kingdom of Israel. Adulterous refers to Israel’s condition, and *apostate* refers to Israel’s position. As to their condition they were adulterous; as to their position they were apostate. That was the situation of Israel as God’s wife.

D. The Place of His Ministry

The place of Hosea’s ministry was the northern kingdom of Israel. By the time of Hosea’s ministry, Israel had been divided into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

E. The Subject

The subject of the book of Hosea is Jehovah as the salvation to the adulterous and apostate Israel in receiving her back and restoring her. This book reveals that in spite of Israel's adulterous condition and apostate position, Jehovah is willing to be salvation to her. Eventually, He will receive her back and restore her.

F. The Central Thought

The central thought of this book is that regardless of how adulterous Israel is as the wife to Jehovah and how apostate Israel is as the people to Him, He still desires that she would return to Him. If she would return to Him, He would still receive her, bring her back, and restore her.

Israel was given up by God at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and also later when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The children of Israel became desolate and homeless, wanderers among the nations. Although they have been somewhat established in the land of Palestine, God still has not received them back or restored them.

G. The Revelation concerning Christ

The book of Hosea reveals Christ in His first coming and in His second coming.

1. In His First Coming

In His first coming Christ would be in union with Israel as the Son of God fleeing to Egypt and being called out of Egypt (11:1; cf. Matt. 2:13-15). This indicates that although Israel became exceedingly evil, Christ still became organically one with them through incarnation to be a real Israelite. Christ is the Son of God, and the Israelites were sons of God. Christ joined Himself to them in this matter of being sons of God. In His humanity He was a genuine Israelite.

2. In His Second Coming

In His second coming Christ will go forth as the dawn and come to Israel as the rain, as the latter rain which waters

the earth (Hosea 6:3b; 10:12). At that time the people of Israel will be the earth watered by Christ as the rain.

H. The Sections

The book of Hosea has three sections: a wife of harlotries (chs. 1—3); a people of apostasy (chs. 4—13); and the restoration of Israel (ch. 14).

II. THE SYMBOL OF A WIFE OF HARLOTRIES

A. The Prophet Hosea

Taking Gomer, a Wife of Harlotries

The prophet Hosea took Gomer, a wife of harlotries (1:2-9). This symbolized that God took Israel as His wife—one who gave herself to harlotries and who departed from Jehovah. God told Hosea to do what He Himself had done, and Hosea did as God had commanded him.

1. *Gomer Bearing Hosea a Son Named by God Jezreel*

Gomer bore Hosea a son named by God Jezreel (vv. 3b-5), symbolizing that God will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel (2 Kings 10:1-11) upon the house of Jehu and will bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel (2 Kings 15:10-12).

2. *Gomer Bearing Hosea a Daughter Named by God Lo-ruhamah*

Gomer also bore Hosea a daughter named by God Lo-ruhamah (Hosea 1:6-7). This name, which means “she has not obtained compassion,” symbolizes that God will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that He should forgive them at all. However, on the house of Judah Jehovah will have compassion and will save them by Jehovah their God, not by bow, by sword, by battle, by horses, or by horsemen.

3. *Gomer Bearing a Son Named by God Lo-ammi*

After weaning Lo-ruhamah, Gomer bore a son named by God Lo-ammi (vv. 8-9). This name, which means “not My people,” symbolizes that Israel is not God’s people and God will not belong to her.

4. *Promise of Restoration*

Hosea 1:10—2:1 is God's promise of restoration to the children of Israel. This promise is a matter of grace. Grace follows sin. Where sin abounds grace abounds even more (Rom. 5:20).

a. The Number of the Children of Israel Being Like the Sand of the Sea

In the restoration the number of the children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered (Hosea 1:10a).

b. Being Called Sons of the Living God

"In the place where it will be said to them, You are not My people, / It will be said to them, You are the sons of the living God" (v. 10b). Sons of God indicates regeneration. When God makes a new covenant with Israel (Jer. 31:31-34), they will have God written into their hearts. This means that they will be regenerated. God will put Himself into them as their life to make them the sons of God. Thus, Israel will be not merely the people of God but also the sons of God.

c. The Children of Judah and the Children of Israel Being Gathered Together and Appointing for Themselves One Head

In the restoration the children of Judah and the children of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one head, and they will go up from the land of their captivity, for great will be the day of Jezreel (meaning "God sows" or "God will sow"), the day for the people of Israel to be sown in the holy land by God (Hosea 1:11; 2:22-23). Today God has sown the children of Israel back in their fathers' land, and no one can pluck them out again.

d. God Charging Them to Say to Their Brothers, "Ammi," and to Their Sisters, "Ruhamah"

Eventually, the Lord will charge the children of Israel to

say to their brothers, "Ammi" (meaning "My people"), and to their sisters, "Ruhamah" (meaning "she has obtained compassion"). Thus, Israel will be perfected. Under the victory of God's love, Israel will become His people and obtain His compassion.

We all need to learn a twofold lesson from Hosea 1. First, God loves Israel with an everlasting love. There will be no change in His love. Second, although God is loving, He is also a God of purity and righteousness. He cannot tolerate any kind of uncleanness or unrighteousness. Wherever these things are found among God's people, God's chastisement comes in. For this reason, even though Israel has been re-formed as a nation, they are still under God's chastisement. Nevertheless, as they are being chastised by God, they are still loved by Him. It is the Lord's lovingkindness that they have not been consumed (Lam. 3:22). Because of His compassion, Israel remains.

We too have been chosen by God and loved by Him with an everlasting love. However, we should not indulge ourselves just because God is loving. We must be in fear and trembling as we enjoy His love. If we are even a little mistaken, God will come in to chastise us. Yet His everlasting love is always victorious. On the one hand, His dealing with us is a matter of His chastisement; on the other hand, it is a matter of His love. His love will gain the victory.

LIFE-STUDY OF HOSEA

MESSAGE THREE

THE SYMBOL OF A WIFE OF HARLOTRIES

(2)

Scripture Reading: Hosea 2:2—3:5

In this message we will continue to consider the symbol of a wife of harlotries.

B. The Harlotries of Gomer as the Wife to the Prophet Hosea

The harlotries of Gomer as the wife to the prophet Hosea symbolize the adulteries of Israel as the unchaste wife to Jehovah (2:2-13).

1. Jehovah Wanting the Returned Israelites to Contend with the Adulterous People of Israel

Verse 2a says, “Contend with your mother; contend.” This indicates that Jehovah wanted the returned Israelites (the daughters) to contend with the adulterous people of Israel (the mother).

2. Jehovah Denying That Israel Is the Wife and That He Is Her Husband

In verse 2b Jehovah says, “She is not my wife, / And I am not her husband.” This implies a kind of divorce. The situation forced God to do something abnormal. However, God’s divorcing Israel was based upon His strong determination to receive her back again. In a sense, God divorced Israel, but He did this with the intention of receiving her back again. What God does concerning Israel is based upon what He is.

3. Jehovah Warning Israel

In verses 2c through 4 we have Jehovah's warning to Israel. First He charged her to turn away her harlotries from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts (v. 2c). If she failed to do this, He would strip her naked as in the day she was born and make her a wilderness and a dry land and slay her with thirst (v. 3). Moreover, on her children He would not have compassion, for they were the children of harlotries (v. 4).

4. Israel Having Gone About as a Harlot and Acting Shamefully

Verse 5a tells us that Israel has gone about as a harlot and acted shamefully. She even went so far as to say, "I will go after my lovers, / Who gave me my bread and my water, / My wool and my flax, / My oil and my drink" (v. 5b). She said that her daily necessities were supplied by her lovers, that is, by her idols. That, of course, was a lie.

5. Jehovah Hedging Up Her Way with Thorns and Building Up a Wall against Her

In verse 6 Jehovah says, "Therefore I will now hedge up / Her way with thorns; / And I will build up a wall against her, / So that she will not find her paths." Quite often the great God would do many small things in order to frustrate us for the purpose of dealing with us. As Paul says in Romans 8:28, all things, great and small, work together for our good. As we will see, this was the situation with the prophet Jonah. The great fish, the castor oil tree, and the worm were all used by God to deal with Jonah.

6. Israel Pursuing Her Lovers but Not Overtaking Them

Hosea 2:7a goes on to say, "She will pursue her lovers / But will not overtake them; / And she will seek them but not find them." This shows Israel's stubbornness. Even though God will hedge her up and build up a wall against her, blocking her way, she will not return to Him but instead will pursue her lovers, her idols. However, eventually she will say,

"I will go / And return to my first husband, / For it was better for me then than now." This indicates that eventually she will return to God as her first Husband. All of us have had this kind of experience. First, we struggled persistently against God to a point, but later we returned to God to be with Him. We said, "I will return to God, for it was better then than now."

**7. *Israel Not Knowing That It Was Jehovah
Who Gave Her the Grain,
the New Wine, and the Fresh Oil***

Israel did not know that it was Jehovah who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the fresh oil and who multiplied to her silver and gold. Rather, she used the silver and gold to serve Baal, an idol (v. 8).

**8. *Jehovah Taking Back His Grain in Its Time
and His New Wine in Its Appointed Season***

Verse 9 tells us that Jehovah will take back His grain in its time and His new wine in its appointed season, and He will snatch away His wool and His flax, which were to cover her nakedness. Some may wonder whether the great God would do things such as this. Yes, God does such things in order to correct us, to adjust us, to perfect us, and to make us according to His intention.

**9. *Jehovah Uncovering Her Lewdness
in the Sight of Her Lovers,
and No One Delivering Her from His Hand***

Jehovah will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one will deliver her from His hand. He will bring all her mirth to an end, her feasts, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her appointed assemblies. He will desolate her vine and her fig tree, of which she said, "These are my payments / That my lovers have given me" (vv. 10-12a). He will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field will devour them (v. 12b). He will also visit the days of the Baals upon her, in which she offered incense to them and adorned herself with her nose rings and her jewels and went after her lovers and forgot Jehovah (v. 13).

C. Jehovah's Restoration of the Adulterous and Apostate Israel

In 2:14-23 we see Jehovah's restoration of the adulterous and apostate Israel.

1. Jehovah Luring Israel, Bringing Her into the Wilderness, and Speaking to Her Heart

Jehovah will lure Israel, He will bring her into the wilderness, and He will speak to her heart (v. 14). The wilderness should signify a wild place. During the Second World War Hitler made Germany a wilderness for the Jews, and today the Arab countries are trying to make the nation of Israel a wilderness. God would allow even this, for in the wilderness God can speak to Israel.

Quite often in our human life we enter into a situation which may be likened to a wilderness. Sometimes God will cause our environment to be a wilderness so that He may speak to us, to our heart.

2. Jehovah Giving Israel Her Vineyards and the Valley of Achor as a Door of Hope

Jehovah will give Israel her vineyards from there (the wilderness) and the valley of Achor as a door of hope. She will respond there as in the days of her youth and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt (v. 15).

3. In That Day Israel Calling Jehovah Her Husband

In that day Israel will call Jehovah her Husband (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:14; Ezek. 16:8) and will no longer call Him Baali (meaning "my Master"—Hosea 2:16). For Jehovah will take away the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they will no longer be remembered by their name (v. 17).

4. Jehovah Making a Covenant for Israel

Jehovah will make a covenant for Israel in that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of heaven, and the creeping things of the earth (v. 18a). Just as God made for us a

covenant with the living things at Noah's time, so He will make such a covenant for Israel at the time of restoration. Because of this covenant, the beasts, the birds, and the creeping things will be in a good order. Also, God will break bow, sword, and battle from the land, and He will cause Israel to lie down in safety (v. 18b).

5. Jehovah Betrothing Israel to Himself Forever

Jehovah will betroth Israel to Himself forever (v. 19a). Indeed, He will betroth her to Himself in five of His attributes—righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, compassions, and faithfulness—and she will know Jehovah (vv. 19b-20).

6. Jehovah Answering the Heavens, and the Heavens Answering the Earth

In that day Jehovah will answer the heavens, and the heavens will answer the earth with rain to enable the earth to grow things (v. 21). Then the earth will answer the grain, the fresh wine, and the oil, and they will answer Jezreel, which symbolizes sowing (v. 22).

7. Jehovah Sowing Israel for Himself in the Land

Jehovah will sow Israel for Himself in the land of Palestine (v. 23a). He will have compassion on Lo-ruhamah (meaning "she has not obtained compassion"), and He will say to Lo-ammi (meaning "not My people"), "You are My people." And they will say, "My God" (v. 23b).

D. The Confirmation of God's Faithful Restoration of Israel

Hosea 3:1-5 speaks of the confirmation of God's faithful restoration of Israel.

1. Jehovah Telling Hosea to Love Gomer, a Woman of Adulteries, Again

"Then Jehovah said to me, Go again, love a woman who is loved by her companion yet who is an adulteress, even as Jehovah has loved the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes" (v. 1). Here Jehovah told

Hosea to love Gomer, a woman of adulteries, again. This symbolizes that Jehovah will love the children of Israel again, though they have turned to other lovers (other gods) and loved raisin cakes (pleasures for self). Apparently, God stopped loving Israel when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and again when Titus the prince of Rome destroyed Jerusalem. To this day Israel has been left alone, apparently without God's love, yet God still cares for Israel in His own way.

2. Hosea Loving Gomer and Telling Her to Abide with Him Many Days

Hosea was very obedient to God. He had married Gomer already, and she had borne him three children. Then she probably left him and committed adultery with her lovers. Later, as a symbol of His intention to love the children of Israel again, Jehovah told Hosea to love Israel again, and Hosea did so.

Hosea told Gomer, the woman of harlotries, to abide with him many days without going about as a harlot nor being another man's, and he would be the same toward her (vv. 2-3). According to verse 4, this symbolizes that the children of Israel would abide for many days without king, without prince, without sacrifice, without pillar (for worship), and without ephod and teraphim (idols in homes). These "many days" began when the Babylonians burned the temple. For seventy years the Jews did not offer sacrifices. The temple was rebuilt, but it was utterly destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70. From that time, Israel has been without king, without prince, and without their worship by offering sacrifices to God. Furthermore, from that time until the present, a period of nearly two thousand years, the Jews have not worshipped idols.

3. The Children of Israel Returning and Seeking Jehovah and David Their King (Christ in the Millennium)

Later, as verse 5 reveals, the children of Israel will return and seek Jehovah and David their king (Christ in the millennium—Rev. 20:4, 6), and they will come with fear to

Jehovah and to His goodness in the latter days (in the restoration age—Matt. 19:28).

What Hosea did in obedience to God's command regarding Gomer was a confirmation of what God promised to do regarding Israel. God told Hosea to love Gomer again as a symbol of His intention to love Israel again. Today Israel is a Gomer, but the day is coming when God will restore her to Himself.

This restoration will be the result of the manifestation of Christ. Once again I would emphasize the fact that in the prophetic books four things are covered repeatedly: God's chastisement on the Jews, God's punishment upon the nations, the manifestation of Christ, and the restoration. God's chastisement and punishment will issue in the manifestation of Christ, and the manifestation of Christ will bring in the age of restoration, the millennial kingdom, which ushers the old and ruined universe into the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem. If we see these four things, we will see what a hope we have in Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF HOSEA

MESSAGE FOUR

THE SINS OF THE APOSTATE PEOPLE, THE PUNISHMENTS OF JEHOVAH, AND THE RETURN OF THE APOSTATE PEOPLE

Scripture Reading: Hosea 4—6

Hosea 4—6 covers the sins of the apostate people, the punishments of Jehovah, and the return of the apostate people. In this message we will consider the details regarding these matters recorded in these three chapters.

I. THE SINS OF THE APOSTATE PEOPLE AND THE PUNISHMENTS OF JEHOVAH

The sins of the apostate people and the punishments of Jehovah are seen in 4:1—5:14 and 6:4-10.

A. The Sins of Israel and the Punishments of Jehovah— concerning the People in General

1. No Faithfulness, No Kindness, and No Knowledge of God

Hosea 4:1 tells us that Jehovah had a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, for there were no faithfulness or truth, no kindness, and no knowledge of God.

2. False Swearing, Deceiving, Murder, Stealing, and Adultery

Instead of truth, kindness, and the knowledge of God, there were false swearing, deceiving (not fulfilling one's promise), murder, stealing, and adultery (v. 2a).

3. The People Being Violent

The people were violent, and bloodshed followed bloodshed (v. 2b).

4. The Land Mourning, and the Inhabitants of the Land Languishing

Because of this the land mourned, and the inhabitants of the land languished with the beasts of the field and with the birds of heaven. Indeed, even the fish of the sea would be taken away (v. 3).

B. The Sins of the People and the Punishments of Jehovah— concerning the Priests

1. The People Contending with the Priest

The people contended with the priest (v. 4). This was altogether contrary to God's law, which did not allow the people to contend with the priests.

2. The Priest Stumbling in the Day, and the Prophet Stumbling with the Priest in the Night

Verse 5 says that the priest would stumble in the day and that the prophet would stumble with the priest in the night. Also, the mother of the priest would be destroyed by God. This tells us that they all were committing sins. The prophet cooperated with the priest to commit sin, and the mother of the priest joined them. That brought in God's judgment upon the mother.

3. God's People—the Priests—Being Destroyed Because of a Lack of the Knowledge of God

Verse 6a tells us that God's people—the priests—would be destroyed because of a lack of that knowledge of God mentioned in verse 1. The people of Israel did not know God's regulations, and the priests also lacked that knowledge.

4. God Rejecting the Priest

God will reject the priest, for he has rejected "that

knowledge” of God (v. 6b). Thus, he will no longer be a priest to God.

**5. God Forgetting
the Priest's Children**

God will forget the priest's children, since he has forgotten the law of his God (v. 6c).

**6. God Changing
the Glory of the Priests
in Their Multiplication into Shame**

The more the priests were multiplied, the more they sinned against God. Hence, Jehovah said that He would change their glory in their multiplication into shame (v. 7). This indicates that as God's priests, His serving ones, we need to be careful, for our service involves our children.

**7. The Priests Feeding
on the Sin Offering of God's People**

Referring to the priests, verses 8 and 9 say, “They feed on the sin of My people, / And their soul desires their iniquity. / And it will be that as it is with the people, so will it be with the priest; / Thus I will visit their ways upon them / And I will recompense their doings to them.” A portion of the sin offering was to be food for the priests. The priests desired that the people would sin, because the more the people sinned, the more sin offerings there would be for the priests to eat.

As it was with the people, so it was with the priests. This means that the priests, who had been sanctified, separated, to be a special group among the people, made themselves the same as the people, becoming low and common. Therefore, regarding the priests God said that He would visit (punish) their ways upon them and recompense their doings to them.

8. The Priests Eating but Not Being Filled

The priests would eat but would not be filled, and they would commit fornication but would not increase, for they had ceased giving heed to Jehovah (v. 10).

**C. The Sins of Israel
and the Punishment of Jehovah—
concerning Fornication, Wine, and Harlotries**

Hosea 4:11-14 is a word concerning three things that were prevailing among the Israelites—fornication, wine, and harlotries.

**1. Fornication, Wine, and New Wine
Taking Away Their Heart**

Fornication, wine, and new wine took away the heart of the people of Israel (v. 11). They did not have a heart for anything else.

**2. God's People Inquiring
at Their Wooden Post**

Instead of praying to God and inquiring of Him, God's people inquired at their wooden post (idol), considering that their rod informed them of things. A spirit of harlotries made them err, and they had gone about as harlots away from their God (v. 12).

**3. Offering Sacrifices
upon the Tops of the Mountains
and Burning Incense upon the Hills**

Upon the tops of the mountains they offered sacrifices, and upon the hills they burned incense, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because its shade was good. Therefore, their daughters went about as harlots, and their brides committed adultery (v. 13). But God would not punish their daughters or their brides, for the men themselves went off with harlots and offered sacrifices with the cult prostitutes (v. 14a; cf. Deut. 23:17).

**4. The People Who Had
No Understanding Being Cast Down**

The people who had no understanding would be cast down (Hosea 4:14b).

**D. The Sins of Israel
and the Punishments of Jehovah—
concerning Israel's Stubbornness**

Hosea 4:15-19 is concerned with Israel's stubbornness.

1. Israel Going About as a Harlot

Israel went about as a harlot, but Judah was charged not to transgress and not to come to Gilgal, nor to go up to Beth-aven, nor to swear, "As Jehovah lives" (v. 15). Gilgal was the focus of idolatry (9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5). Beth-aven means "house of nothingness" or "house of idolatry."

2. Israel Being Stubborn, like a Stubborn Heifer

Israel was stubborn, like a stubborn heifer (Hosea 4:16a), which is disobedient and goes its own way.

3. Jehovah Limiting Israel in a Narrow Field

In verse 16b the prophet asks, "Will Jehovah now pasture them / Like a lamb in a spacious place?" This indicates that Jehovah would limit Israel in a narrow field.

4. Ephraim Being Joined to Idols

In verse 17a we are told that Ephraim was joined to idols.

5. Ephraim Being Left Alone

In 4:17b the prophet gives a charge concerning Ephraim: "Leave him alone." Ephraim was to be let go. This indicates a kind of punishment.

***6. Their Liquor Having Ended,
and They Having Given Themselves Up to Harlotry***

Their liquor had ended (v. 18a), meaning that their pleasure in drinking was gone. That was God's punishment. They had given themselves up to harlotry; their rulers dearly loved shame (v. 18b). They were fond of drinking and harlotry.

7. The Wind Having Wrapped Her Up in Its Wings

Verse 19a says that the wind had wrapped her up in its wings. It had carried her away—a kind of punishment.

According to verse 19b, they would be ashamed because of their sacrifices (to idols—v. 13a).

**E. The Sins of Israel
and the Punishments of Jehovah—
Mainly concerning the Priests,
the House of the King, and the Princes**

In 5:1-14 and 6:4-10 we have more details about the sins of Israel and the punishments of Jehovah—mainly concerning the priests, the house of the king, and the princes.

**1. *Jehovah's Judgment Coming
upon the Priests, upon the House of Israel,
and upon the House of the King***

In 5:1-2 we are told that upon the priests, upon the house of Israel, and upon the house of the king Jehovah's judgment would come, for they had been a snare and a net for slaughtering, even though Jehovah had chastised them all.

**2. *Ephraim Having Gone About as a Harlot,
and Israel Being Defiled***

Ephraim had gone about as a harlot, and Israel was defiled. A spirit of harlotries was within them (or, in the midst of them). Their doings did not permit them to turn to their God, and they did not know Jehovah (vv. 3-4).

3. *The Pride of Israel Testifying to His Face*

Verse 5 says that the pride of Israel testifies to his face and that Ephraim and Israel would stumble in their iniquity. Judah also would stumble with them.

4. *Going to Seek Jehovah but Not Finding Him*

With their flocks and herds they would go to seek Jehovah, but they would not find Him. He had withdrawn Himself from them (v. 6).

5. *Acting Treacherously against Jehovah*

They had acted treacherously against Jehovah, for they had begotten strange (illegitimate) children. The invaders at

the new moon would devour them with their apportionments, with their possessions (v. 7).

6. Ephraim Being a Desolation in the Day of Correction

Behind Benjamin would be the enemies, and Ephraim would be a desolation in the day of correction (punishment). This was sure (vv. 8-9).

7. The Princes of Judah Becoming like Those Who Move a Boundary Mark

The princes of Judah had become like those who move a boundary mark to enlarge the size of their estates, and Jehovah would pour out upon them His overflowing wrath like water (v. 10).

8. Ephraim Being Oppressed, Crushed by Judgment

Ephraim was oppressed, crushed by judgment, for he was determined to walk after man's command (v. 11).

9. Jehovah Being like a Moth to Ephraim

Jehovah was like a moth to Ephraim and like rottenness to the house of Judah (v. 12). In the Bible God is usually likened to positive things, but here He is likened to negative things, things that consume.

10. Ephraim Going to Assyria

When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb. But that king could not heal him, and the wound would not depart from him (v. 13).

11. Jehovah Being like a Lion to Ephraim and like a Young Lion to the House of Judah

Jehovah would be like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the house of Judah. He would tear them and go away. He would carry them off, and there would be no one to deliver them out of His hand (v. 14).

**12. *The Lovingkindness of Ephraim and Judah
Being like a Morning Cloud
and like Dew That Departs Early***

The lovingkindness of Ephraim (Israel) and Judah was like a morning cloud and like dew that departs early. Therefore, Jehovah hewed them to pieces by the prophets. He slew them by the words of His mouth, and His judgments went forth as light. For He delights in lovingkindness and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings (6:4-6).

**13. *They like Adam
Having Transgressed the Covenant***

They like Adam (or, men) had transgressed the covenant. There they had acted treacherously against Jehovah (v. 7).

**14. *Gilead Being a City of Those
Who Commit Iniquity***

Gilead was a city of those who commit iniquity; it was tracked with blood. Like bands of robbers lying in wait for a man, the company of priests murdered on the way to Shechem, committing wickedness (vv. 8-9). Once again, this was the sin that involved the priests, who had become robbers.

**15. *In the House of Israel
Jehovah Having Seen a Horrid Thing***

In the house of Israel Jehovah had seen a horrid thing; the harlotry of Ephraim was there; Israel had defiled itself (v. 10).

As we consider all these details concerning Israel's situation, we can realize how sinful Israel had become.

II. THE RETURN OF THE APOSTATE PEOPLE

In 5:15—6:3, 11 the prophet Hosea speaks regarding the return of the apostate people. We may wonder how it can be possible for such a sinful people to return. They can return because they are under God's compassions.

**A. Jehovah Going Away and Returning
to His Place, until the Apostate People
Acknowledge Their Offense and Seek His Face**

According to 5:15a Jehovah will go away and return to His place, until the apostate people acknowledge their offense and seek His face. Eventually, in their affliction (the divine chastisement) they will seek Him earnestly (v. 15b). Thus, the divine chastisement of Israel will be effective.

B. The Return of the Apostate People

**1. A Word concerning Coming
and Returning to Jehovah,
Who Will Heal Them and Bind Them Up**

In 6:1 we have a word concerning Israel's coming and returning to Jehovah. In this verse the prophet says, "Come and let us return to Jehovah, / For He has torn us, but He will heal us, / And He has stricken us, but He will bind us up."

2. Jehovah Enlivening Them after Two Days

Hosea 6:2 says, "He will enliven us after two days; / On the third day He will raise us up, / And we will live in His presence." What are the "two days," and what is "the third day" in this verse? In the Bible there is a principle that "with the Lord one day is like a thousand years" (2 Pet. 3:8). According to this principle, the two days here might signify the first two periods of a thousand years each, counting from A.D. 70, when the Roman prince Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, cruelly killed thousands of Jews, and scattered the Jews among the nations. From that time the Jews have been without king, without prince, without sacrifice, and without the temple, fulfilling Hosea's prophecy in 3:4. For two thousand years God has left Israel in a dead condition. After this two-thousand-year period, the third thousand years will come. The third day in 6:2 might signify the third period of a thousand years, that is, the millennium, the age of restoration, in the reality of Christ's resurrection (Rev. 20:4, 6).

3. A Word concerning Knowing Jehovah and concerning Christ's Going Forth as the Dawn and His Coming as the Rain

In Hosea 6:3 there is a word concerning knowing Jehovah and concerning Christ's going forth as the dawn and His coming as the rain. The first part of the verse says, "Therefore let us know, let us pursue knowing Jehovah." The remainder of the verse says that Christ's going forth is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us as the rain, as the latter rain which waters the earth (in the restoration of the millennium—Matt. 19:28; Rev. 20:4, 6).

C. Jehovah's Promise to Judah in the Return of the Apostate People

In Hosea 6:11 we have Jehovah's promise to Judah in the return of the apostate people. This promise is that there will be a harvest appointed for Judah, when Jehovah will turn the captivity of His people. This means that in the restoration all the Israelites, including the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, will be very rich in all kinds of produce from the earth. The earth was created by God to produce a rich harvest, but due to the fall of man, the earth was cursed to grow thorns, and man has had to labor with sweat for food (Gen. 3:17-19). In the restoration time the earth will be restored to its original condition and will be rich, fertile, and productive. Thus, a harvest will be apportioned to Judah for their enjoyment.

From the time that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded Israel in 606 B.C., three things have been taking place on earth. The first is God's loving chastisement over His dear elect Israel, and the second is God's punishment on all the nations. These two things added together bring in the third thing—the manifestation of Christ. The manifestation of Christ will bring in a fourth thing—the age of restoration, the millennial kingdom. This restoration will consummate in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth.

The manifestation of Christ does not refer only to Christ's second coming. The manifestation of Christ is a long process which began with Christ's coming to mankind, and even into

mankind, at His incarnation and which will continue until Christ's coming back. Micah 5:2, referring to Christ's incarnation, says that His goings forth are from the days of eternity. Christ's goings forth are His coming. Thus, in eternity past, Christ was ready to go forth; that is, He was ready to come. At His incarnation Christ came out of eternity into time, coming with His divinity into humanity. Actually, Christ's goings forth, His coming, have not ceased. Even today He is still coming. This manifestation, which began with the incarnation, will be consummated in Christ's coming back with the overcomers as the mighty ones to defeat Antichrist, the last Caesar of the Roman Empire.

The Roman Empire is the last of the human governments according to the great image in Daniel 2. It was through the Roman Empire that Christ was born in a way that fulfilled the prophecy in Micah 5:2 concerning the place of His birth. It was also through the Roman Empire that Christ accomplished His redemption by being crucified, and it was under the Roman Empire that the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost to initiate the church life. With the help of the Roman Empire, the apostles, especially the apostle Paul, spread the gospel in Asia and Europe. Later, the Lord used imperialism to spread the gospel to Africa, Central and South America, Asia, and Australia. Today Russia, a country of three hundred fifty million people, has been opened to the Lord's recovery by God's punishment upon the nations for the spreading of the gospel, which equals the manifestation of Christ. Our going to Russia today to minister the proper spiritual food is the spreading of the manifestation of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF HOSEA

MESSAGE FIVE

THE SINS OF ISRAEL IN FORSAKING JEHOVAH AND JEHOVAH'S PUNISHMENTS ON ISRAEL BECAUSE OF THEIR FORSAKING OF HIM

Scripture Reading: Hosea 7—8

Chapters seven and eight of Hosea cover the sins of Israel in forsaking Jehovah and Jehovah's punishments on Israel because of their forsaking of Him.

I. THE SINS OF ISRAEL IN FORSAKING JEHOVAH

The sins of Israel were in two categories: sins in their social life among the people and the rulers and evils in their relationship with Jehovah. Israel was wrong with man and also with God.

A. Sins in Their Social Life among the People and the Rulers

Hosea 7:1-7 speaks of the sins of Israel in their social life.

1. Falsehood, Theft, Raids, Evils, Lies, Intoxication, and Scorn

Israel's sins in their social life included falsehood, theft, raids, evils, lies, intoxication, and scorn (7:1-3, 5). On the feast day of the king, the princes made themselves sick with the heat of wine, and the king stretched out his hand with scorners.

2. Adultery Practiced by All of the People

Adultery was practiced by all of the people. They burned like an oven in their lust, devouring their judges (the priests) and making all their kings fall (vv. 4, 6-7). Hosea used the

parable of a baker to portray Israel's burning lust. Even the kings could not stand against the burning lust within them.

B. Evils in Their Relationship with Jehovah

In verses 8 through 16 Hosea speaks regarding Israel's evils in their relationship with Jehovah.

1. Wandering from Jehovah

They wandered from Jehovah, not returning to Him and not seeking after Him (vv. 13, 10, 16a, 14).

2. Ephraim Being Likened to Three Things

a. An Unturned Cake

Ephraim (another term for the northern kingdom of Israel) was likened to an unturned cake (v. 8). This symbolizes that they were stubborn to remain in a charcoaled condition and would not turn to Jehovah.

b. A Silly Dove

Verses 11 and 12 say, "Ephraim has become like a silly dove / Without understanding; / They call to Egypt; / They go to Assyria. / When they go, / I will spread My net over them; / I will bring them down like the birds of heaven; / I will chasten them according to the report given to their assembly." Israel's being likened to a silly dove symbolizes that they were lacking the proper knowledge of God in His economy. Many of today's Christians are lacking the knowledge of God's economy. They do not realize that God's present chastising of Israel and His punishing of the nations will issue in the manifestation of Christ to bring in the restoration.

c. A Deceitful Bow

In verse 16a Israel is likened to a deceitful bow. This symbolizes that they were rebellious toward God and were not faithful to fight the battle for God's kingdom.

II. JEHOVAH'S PUNISHMENTS ON ISRAEL BECAUSE OF THEIR FORSAKING OF HIM

Chapter eight describes Jehovah's punishments on Israel because of their forsaking of Him.

A. Like an Eagle the Enemy Coming against the House of Jehovah

Like an eagle the enemy would come against the house of Jehovah, because they had trespassed Jehovah's covenant—Jehovah's binding of Israel in His holy requirements and righteous terms—and because they had transgressed against Jehovah's law—Jehovah's regulating of Israel according to what He is: love, light, holiness, and righteousness (8:1).

B. Israel Having Cast Off What Is Good

Israel had cast off what is good, and the enemy would pursue him (v. 3).

C. They Having Set Up Kings but Not by Jehovah

They had set up kings but not by Jehovah. They had set up princes, but Jehovah did not acknowledge it (v. 4a). They had their own way of setting up an authority, and Jehovah objected to it.

D. With Their Silver and Gold Making Idols for Themselves

With their silver and gold they made idols for themselves, that they might be cut off (v. 4b).

1. Samaria's Calf Having Cast Israel Off

Verse 5a says, "Your calf has cast you off, O Samaria; / My anger burns against them." Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and her "calf" was an idol, a golden calf image (cf. 1 Kings 12:28; Exo. 32:4). This idol cast Israel off, and Jehovah's anger burned against them.

Verse 5b goes on to say, "How long will they be incapable of innocence?" Here to be incapable of innocence means to be incapable of not making idols. Israel lacked the capacity

not to make idols; that is, they were very capable and active in making idols. Thus, Hosea was asking when they would lose their capacity to make idols, when they would no longer be able to make idols. The situation of humankind today is the same. Human beings may not be capable of understanding the Bible or of knowing God, but they are very capable in making many things their idols.

2. The Calf of Samaria Being Shattered to Pieces

Hosea 8:6 says, "For from Israel is this! / A workman made it; / Thus it is no God. / The calf of Samaria / Will be shattered to pieces." One day God will come in to shatter that idol to pieces.

3. In Making Idols Having Sown Wind and Reaping a Whirlwind

In making idols they had sown wind and would reap a whirlwind (v. 7a). Because of the whirlwind, they would be lacking in food. For this reason, verse 7b continues, "It has no stalk; should there be a sprout, / It will not produce flour; / If so be that it does produce, / Strangers will swallow it up."

4. Israel Becoming among the Nations like a Vessel in Which No One Takes Pleasure

Israel had been swallowed up and had become among the nations like a vessel in which no one takes pleasure (v. 8). For they had gone up to Assyria like a wild ass alone by itself. Ephraim had hired lovers (v. 9). Though they had hired such among the nations, Jehovah would gather them for their punishment, and they would begin to be diminished because of the burden of the king of the princes (v. 10). Today there is a little nation in Palestine with Jerusalem as its center, but what nation takes pleasure in Israel?

E. Ephraim Having Multiplied Altars

Because Ephraim had multiplied altars, altars would be multiplied to him for sin (v. 11).

***1. Jehovah Writing for Ephraim
the Ten Thousand Things of His Law***

Jehovah wrote for Ephraim the ten thousand things of His law, but they were considered a strange thing (v. 12). This means that Ephraim, the kingdom of Israel, did not care for God's law. No matter how many items God wrote, Ephraim did not care for them.

***2. They Sacrificing Flesh and Eating It,
but Jehovah Having No Delight in Them***

As for the sacrifices of Jehovah's offerings, they sacrificed flesh and ate it, but Jehovah had no delight in them. He would remember their iniquity and would punish their sins, and they would return to Egypt (v. 13).

**F. Israel Having Forgotten His Maker
and Having Built Palaces,
and Judah Having Multiplied Fortified Cities**

Israel had forgotten his Maker and had built palaces, and Judah had multiplied fortified cities. But Jehovah would send fire into his cities, and it would devour its palaces (v. 14).

The minor prophets spoke concerning the evils, the rottenness, and the corruption of Israel, but Israel was stubborn and would not listen to them. Eventually, God was forced to send Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army as the fire to judge, to punish, and to chastise His rebellious and apostate people.

LIFE-STUDY OF HOSEA

MESSAGE SIX

THE IDOLATRY OF ISRAEL AGAINST JEHOVAH AND THE PUNISHMENTS OF JEHOVAH UPON ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: Hosea 9—10

In this message we will consider from Hosea 9 and 10 the matters of the idolatry of Israel against Jehovah and the punishments of Jehovah upon Israel.

I. THE IDOLATRY OF ISRAEL AGAINST JEHOVAH BEING LIKE A WIFE'S HARLOTRIES AGAINST HER HUSBAND

The idolatry of Israel against Jehovah was like a wife's harlotries against her husband (1:2; 2:13; 3:1). Hosea's thought here is very deep because it indicates God's organic union with His people. However, the wife's situation was exceedingly ugly.

II. ISRAEL HAVING GONE AS A HARLOT AWAY FROM HER GOD

Israel was told not to rejoice, for she had gone as a harlot away from her God. She had loved payment, like a harlot, upon every grain floor, worshipping idols on every threshing floor (9:1). The threshing floor was a place where people earned their living. Thus, they worshipped idols in the place where they earned their living.

III. THE THRESHING FLOOR AND THE WINEPRESS NOT FEEDING THEM

Verse 2 says that the threshing floor and the winepress would not feed them, and the new wine would fail them. Whatever they had would not be sufficient to take care of their need. They would desire wine to drink, but there would be none.

IV. THEY NOT DWELLING IN THE LAND OF JEHOVAH

According to verse 3, Israel would not dwell in the land of Jehovah. Rather, they would return to Egypt, and in Assyria they would eat what was unclean.

**V. THEY NOT POURING OUT
OFFERINGS OF WINE TO JEHOVAH,
AND THEIR SACRIFICES NOT BEING PLEASING TO HIM**

They would not pour out offerings of wine to Jehovah, neither would their sacrifices be pleasing to Him. Their sacrifices would be to them as the bread of mourning, the bread eaten by a family who had lost a relative. All who ate such sacrifices would be unclean, for their bread would be for themselves and would not come into the house of Jehovah (v. 4). They did not have the real enjoyment, and what they offered to God in name was not for God but for themselves.

**VI. THEY NOT PARTICIPATING
IN THE DAY OF ASSEMBLY
AND IN THE DAY OF THE FEAST OF JEHOVAH**

Verse 5 indicates that they would not participate in the day of assembly and in the day of the feast of Jehovah. They did not care for the feast of Jehovah but only for their own necessities, enjoyment, and pleasures.

**VII. THEY ESCAPING FROM DESTRUCTION,
BUT EGYPT GATHERING THEM,
AND MOPH BURYING THEM**

They would escape from destruction, from the evil that was coming upon them. But Egypt would gather them, and Moph (Memphis, an Egyptian city near the Nile) would bury them. As for their desirable things of silver (idols), nettles would dispossess them. Thistles would be in their tents (v. 6). On the one hand, this is a picture of punishment; on the other hand, it is a picture of how sinful they were. They did not even care for their lodging but only for their sinful enjoyment.

VIII. THE DAYS OF VISITATION HAVING COME

Verse 7 says that the days of visitation had come; the days of the recompense had come. The prophet was a fool, and the inspired man was mad, because of the greatness of Israel's iniquity and because of the greatness of the enmity. Instead of love and sympathy among the people, there were hatred and enmity. They considered a man of the spirit, or an inspired one, as mad. This indicates that they did not care for God's interests. On the contrary, they thought that caring for God's interests was foolishness.

IX. EPHRAIM HAVING BEEN A WATCHMAN WITH GOD

Verse 8a says, "Ephraim was a watchman / With my God." This indicates that in the past the northern kingdom of Israel was quite good.

Verse 8b continues, "As for the prophet, a fowler's trap / Is in all his ways; / Enmity is in the house of his God." This may mean that the prophets had become so evil that wherever they went they were a trap to snare the people. In the temple the prophets created enmity; they did not have love or sympathy.

In verse 9 Hosea goes on to say concerning Ephraim, "They have deeply corrupted themselves / As in the days of Gibeah; / He will remember their iniquity; / He will punish their sins." The corruption of Ephraim was so great that it matched the corruption in the days of Gibeah described in Judges 19:15-30. Because Israel had become like those in the days of Gibeah, God would come in to punish their sins.

X. JEHOVAH FINDING ISRAEL LIKE GRAPES IN THE WILDERNESS, AND SEEING THEIR FATHERS AS THE FIRST RIPE FRUIT ON THE FIG TREE AT ITS BEGINNING

Jehovah found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, and saw their fathers as the first ripe fruit on the fig tree at its beginning (Hosea 9:10a). This refers to the time of God's "honeymoon" with Israel. At the time of the exodus from Egypt, God considered Israel a young wife. However, when this wife grew up, she left God for Baal and went to Baal-peor

(a city named after the idol Baal of Peor—Num. 25:3; Psa. 106:28) and sanctified herself unto the shameful thing (idol) and became an abomination, like the thing (idol) that she loved (Hosea 9:10b).

XI. THE GLORY OF EPHRAIM FLYING AWAY LIKE A BIRD

The glory of Ephraim, the glory of the northern kingdom of Israel, would fly away like a bird. This means that there would be no birth, no pregnancy, and no conception. Even if they brought up their children, Jehovah would bereave them, so that not a man would be left. Indeed woe would also be to them when Jehovah turned away from them. Ephraim was planted in Tyre in a meadow, but he would still bring forth his children to the slayer. Jehovah would give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All their evil was in Gilgal (the focus of idolatry—4:15), for there Jehovah hated them. Because of the evil of their doings, Jehovah would drive them from His house; He would love them no more. All their princes were rebels. Ephraim was stricken. Their root was dried up; they would not bear fruit. If they brought forth, Jehovah would kill the beloved fruit of their womb. God had rejected them, for they did not listen to Him. They would be wanderers among the nations (9:11-17).

XII. ISRAEL BEING A LUXURIANT VINE BRINGING FORTH FRUIT FOR HIMSELF

Hosea 10:1a says, "Israel is a luxuriant vine; / He brings forth fruit for himself." The fruit of the vine should have been offered to God as a drink offering, but they used the vines to bring forth fruit for themselves, not for God.

Verse 1b and 2 continue, "According to the abundance of his fruit / He has multiplied altars; / According to the goodness of their land / They have made pillars well. / Their heart is divided; / Now they will be found guilty. / He will break down their altars; / He will destroy their pillars." Israel became rich, but they used their produce to build up altars and to make idols. Therefore, Hosea said that God would break down their altars and destroy their pillars.

Verse 3 says, "For now they will say, / We have no king, / For we did not fear Jehovah; / And the king, what can he do for us?" Because they did not fear Jehovah, they could not have God's deputy authority (a king). This refers to the headship, the leadership, among God's people. When the church is proper, the church has the headship, the leadership, representing God as His authority. But in a time of turmoil, some would say, "Why do we need God's deputy authority? Why do we need to have any headship or leadership?" This issues in anarchy.

XIII. THEY SPEAKING MERE WORDS, SWEARING FALSELY WHILE MAKING A COVENANT

In verses 4 through 8 we have further details concerning the idolatry of Israel against Jehovah and the punishments of Jehovah upon Israel. They spoke mere words, swearing falsely while making a covenant. Judgment sprouted forth like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field. The inhabitants of Samaria would fear for the calves (the idols) of Beth-aven (probably a contemptuous name applied to Bethel, which was a seat of idolatry—1 Kings 12:26-33; Hosea 4:15). Its people would mourn over it, and its idol priests would tremble for it, for its glory, because it had departed from it. It would be carried to Assyria: a present to King Jareb. Ephraim would be taken in shame, and Israel would be ashamed of his own counsel. Samaria would be cut off with her king and would be like sticks, or small pieces of wood, on the surface of the water. The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, would be destroyed. The thorn and the thistle would come up upon their altars, and they would "say to the mountains, Cover us! / And to the hills, Fall on us!" (v. 8). This is Jehovah's judgment on Israel and on her idolatry.

XIV. ISRAEL HAVING SINNED SINCE THE DAYS OF GIBEAH

Israel had sinned since the days of Gibeah (v. 9a). Israel thought that the battle which took place in Gibeah against the children of iniquity could not overtake them (v. 9b; Judg.

19:15-30). But Jehovah said that He would chasten them for their "double iniquity" (Hosea 10:10). This double iniquity refers to Israel's two evils: forsaking Jehovah and turning to idols (Jer. 2:13). Israel's sins in their social life were due to their sin of forsaking God and turning to idols.

**XV. EPHRAIM BEING A TRAINED HEIFER
THAT LOVES TO TREAD THE GRAIN,
BUT JEHOVAH HAVING PASSED
THE YOKE OVER HER FAIR NECK**

Ephraim was a trained heifer that loved to tread the grain. But Jehovah had passed the yoke over her fair neck. Jehovah would make Ephraim draw the plow. Judah would plow, and Jacob would break his clods (Hosea 10:11).

**XVI. THE CHARGE TO SOW
UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THEMSELVES,
TO REAP ACCORDING TO LOVINGKINDNESS,
AND TO BREAK UP THEIR FALLOW GROUND**

Verses 12 and 13 say, "Sow unto righteousness for yourselves; / Reap according to lovingkindness; / Break up your fallow ground; / For it is time to seek Jehovah / Until He comes and rains / Righteousness on you. / You have plowed wickedness; / You have reaped injustice; / You have eaten the fruit of lying. / For you have trusted in your way, / In the multitude of your mighty men." This is similar to what Paul says in Galatians 6:7 and 8, where he tells us that if we sow unto the flesh, we will reap corruption of the flesh, but if we sow unto the Spirit, we will of the Spirit reap eternal life. Here in Hosea 10:12 to sow means to seek Jehovah. To seek Jehovah rightly is to sow rightly. Thus, Hosea charged the children of Israel to sow unto righteousness. If they did this, they would reap according to lovingkindness. Otherwise, if they plowed wickedness, they would reap injustice.

In verse 12 Hosea uses the expression "fallow ground." Fallow ground is ground that has been plowed but has not been sown with anything. The children of Israel were the fallow ground. They had been plowed by God, but had not been sown with righteousness. They were to break up the

fallow ground; that is, they were to seek God until Christ came as righteousness to rain righteousness upon them.

However, Israel did not sow properly. They trusted in their own way and in the multitude of their mighty men. Therefore, God caused them to be utterly destroyed. Regarding this, verses 14 and 15 say, "A tumult will arise among your peoples; / And all your fortresses will be devastated, / As Shalman devastated Beth-arbel / In the day of battle: / The mother was dashed in pieces with the children. / Thus Bethel will cause this to happen to you / Because of your great evil: / At dawn the king of Israel / Will be utterly cut off." This was fully fulfilled by Titus in A.D. 70.

The word "dawn" in verse 15 indicates that Israel was in the night, in darkness. They were a people who were altogether lacking in righteousness and justice. They forsook God and they were evil to one another.

LIFE-STUDY OF HOSEA

MESSAGE SEVEN

JEHOVAH'S UNCHANGING LOVE VERSUS ISRAEL'S STUBBORN UNCHASTITY

(1)

Scripture Reading: Hosea 11—14

In this message we will begin to consider chapters eleven through fourteen. These chapters are concerned with Jehovah's unchanging love versus Israel's stubborn unchastity.

I. ISRAEL'S STUBBORN UNCHASTITY

The highest virtue of a proper wife is chastity. A wife may be very good in every respect, but if she is not chaste, she is still not a proper wife. Israel was stubborn in her unchastity toward Jehovah her Husband.

A. God's Prophets Calling Them

God sent the prophets to call Israel again and again, but the more the prophets called them, the farther they went away from the prophets. "As they called them, / So they went from them; / To the Baals they sacrificed, / And to the idols they burned incense" (11:2). They served the Baals with their offerings of sacrifices.

From the time Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 until now, God has not raised up any prophets among the Jews. This is God's doing. In Matthew 21:43 the Lord Jesus told the Jews that "the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation producing its fruit." This nation is the church. In the church God has raised up many prophets. Furthermore, in the church every reborn one is a priest (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6). As long as we are

children of God, we are priests. In addition to being God's priests serving Him in the gospel (Rom. 15:16), we all need to endeavor to prophesy. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul charged us to desire earnestly to prophesy (vv. 1, 39) and said that we all can prophesy one by one (v. 31). The Lord has shown us that, in His recovery today, He wants to recover 1 Corinthians 14, that is, to recover the prophesying of every believer. Every Lord's Day, after remembering the Lord and worshipping the Father at the Lord's table, all the members of the church should prophesy. This means that they all should speak for the Lord and speak forth the Lord. If we all, the young ones and the old ones, prophesy one by one, how rich, how high, how fresh, how living, and how powerful that would be! We all must honor God's ordained way in 1 Corinthians 14. We were regenerated to be priests. Now we need to endeavor to prophesy.

B. They Refusing to Return to Jehovah

They would not return to the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian would be their king, for they refused to return to Jehovah. The sword would whirl about in their cities, consume their bars, and devour them because of their own counsels. They were bent upon turning away from Jehovah. Though the prophets called them to Him who is on high, none at all exalted Him (Hosea 11:5-7).

C. Ephraim Encompassing Jehovah with Lies

Ephraim encompassed Jehovah with lies, and the house of Israel, with deceit (v. 12). When they came to God, they lied. Judah was yet unsteadfast with God and with the Holy One, the Faithful One.

D. Ephraim Feeding on Wind and Following the East Wind Continually

Hosea 12:1 says that Ephraim fed on wind (on vanity and in vain) and followed the east wind continually (in emptiness). He multiplied lies and violence. They made a covenant with Assyria (not with Jehovah), and oil was carried to Egypt (not

into the temple of God). This was their situation in their stubborn unchastity.

E. Jehovah Having Also a Controversy with Judah and Punishing Jacob according to His Ways

Verse 2 tells us that Jehovah had also a controversy with Judah. This means that He was contending, arguing, with Judah. Jehovah would punish Jacob according to his ways. According to his doings He would recompense him. In the womb he grasped his brother by the heel (v. 3a; Gen. 25:26). "Jacob fled into the country of Aram; / And Israel served for a wife, / And for a wife he kept sheep" (Hosea 12:12; Gen. 29:20, 30; 31:38-41). In his full strength he contended with God (Hosea 12:3b). "Indeed he contended with the Angel [Christ] and prevailed; / He wept and made supplication to Him" (v. 4a; Gen. 32:24-32).

F. Ephraim Being a Merchant

Ephraim was a merchant. In his hand were balances of deceit, and he loved to extort (v. 7). Ephraim said, "I have surely become rich; / I have found wealth for myself. / In all my labors / They will find with me / No iniquity, which would be sin" (v. 8). In Ephraim's hands were two kinds of balances: one that weighed light for buying and one that weighed heavy for selling.

G. Gilead Being Iniquity

Gilead was iniquity (6:8). They were altogether vanity. In Gilgal (the focus of idolatry) they sacrificed bullocks. Indeed their altars were like heaps in the furrows of a field (12:11). This was a figure of speech to describe Israel's stubborn unchastity.

H. Ephraim Provoking Jehovah to Bitter Anger

Ephraim provoked Jehovah to bitter anger. Therefore, his Lord would leave his bloodshed upon him and would recompense him with his own reproach (v. 14).

**I. Being like a Morning Cloud
and like Dew That Departs Early,
like Chaff Driven by a Storm Wind,
and like Smoke from a Window Vent**

When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling. He exalted himself in Israel, but he trespassed through Baal and died. Now they sinned more and more and made molten images for themselves out of their silver, idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of craftsmen. They asked those who sacrificed to kiss the calves (idols). Therefore, they would be like a morning cloud and like dew that departs early, like chaff driven by a storm wind from the threshing floor, and like smoke from a window vent (13:1-3). These too are figures used by Hosea to describe the vanity of the sinful life of Israel.

**J. Their Heart Being Exalted,
and They Having Forgotten Jehovah**

After they became full, their heart was exalted. Therefore, they forgot Jehovah (v. 6). Thus Jehovah would be to them like a lion; like a leopard Jehovah would watch them along the way. Jehovah would meet them like a bear robbed of her cubs, He would tear away the covering of their heart, and He would devour them there like a lioness. The beast of the field would tear them to pieces (vv. 7-8). This is Hosea's poetic writing.

**K. It Being Their Destruction
That Israel Was against Jehovah**

It was their destruction that Israel was against Jehovah, against their help. Their king could not save them in all their cities. Jehovah gave them a king in His anger and took away the king in His overflowing wrath (vv. 9-11). The king given by Jehovah in His anger might have been Saul, who was eventually taken away by Jehovah in His overflowing wrath.

L. The Iniquity of Ephraim Being Bound Up

The iniquity of Ephraim was bound up; his sin was laid up in store. The pains of a woman giving birth would come

upon him. He was an unwise son; for he should not have delayed at the time the children broke forth (vv. 12-13).

**M. A Wind of Jehovah
Coming from the Wilderness**

Verses 15 and 16 say that even if Samaria should be fruitful among his brothers, an east wind would come, a wind of Jehovah coming up from the wilderness, and his spring would become dry, and his fountain would be dried up. The enemy would plunder the treasure of every desirable vessel. Samaria would be guilty, for she rebelled against her God. They would fall by the sword. Their children would be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women would be ripped up.

N. Israel Having Fallen by His Iniquity

Finally, 14:1b says that Israel had fallen by his iniquity.

LIFE-STUDY OF HOSEA

MESSAGE EIGHT

JEHOVAH'S UNCHANGING LOVE VERSUS ISRAEL'S STUBBORN UNCHASTITY

(2)

Scripture Reading: Hosea 11—14

The first main emphasis of the book of Hosea is the metaphor of Hosea's marriage with the harlot Gomer. Their three children were also metaphors. The son Jezreel symbolized that God would avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel (2 Kings 10:1-11) upon the house of Jehu and would bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel (2 Kings 15:10-12). The daughter Lo-ruhamah symbolized that God would no longer have compassion on the house of Israel. The son Lo-ammi symbolized that Israel was not God's people. God used Hosea's marriage to Gomer and his family to demonstrate how Israel as a wife to Jehovah had become unfaithful to her Husband.

The second emphasis in the book of Hosea is the evils of Israel as the unchaste wife of Jehovah. Once a wife becomes unchaste, all kinds of evils follow. Once we forsake God, we too can do any kind of evil. As the unchaste wife of Jehovah, Israel was stubborn in her unchastity. This stubbornness is described in detail in chapters eleven through fourteen. These chapters also reveal Jehovah's unchanging love, and this is what we will consider in this message.

II. JEHOVAH'S UNCHANGING LOVE

A. Jehovah Loving Israel When Israel Was a Child, and out of Egypt Jehovah Calling His Son

Hosea 11:1 says, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, /

And out of Egypt I called My son.” Israel is depicted as the wife of Jehovah throughout the book of Hosea. But when God’s everlasting love is touched, Israel is called God’s son (Exo. 4:22-23), indicating that Israel has the Father’s life. Only real sons, not adopted sons, have their father’s life. Hosea 11:1 also indicates that Christ joined Israel to be the Son of God and that He was called out of Egypt by God (Matt. 2:13-15).

God’s everlasting love is not a love in affection, like the love of a husband toward a wife, but a love in life, like the love of a father toward a son. Love toward a wife is love in affection, but love toward a son is love in life. On the one hand, God loves us as His wife, and the Lord Jesus is our Husband. On the other hand, God is our Father, and we are sons of the Father.

B. Jehovah Calling Israel by His Prophets

Hosea 11:2a says that Jehovah called Israel by His prophets.

C. Jehovah Teaching Ephraim to Walk

Verse 3 goes on to say that Jehovah taught Ephraim (Israel) to walk, taking them in His arms and healing them.

D. Jehovah Drawing the Children of Israel with Cords of a Man, with Bands of Love

Verse 4a says, “I drew them with cords of a man, / With bands of love.” The phrase “with cords of a man, with bands of love” indicates that God loves us with His divine love, not on the level of His divinity but on the level of His humanity. God’s love in teaching Ephraim to walk and in taking Ephraim in His arms shows us that God’s love is divine but on a human level. If He loved us on the divine level, we could not touch His love. His divine love reaches us on a human level. He has come down to the human level in order to reach us. This is what it means to say that He drew Israel with the cords of a man, with bands of love.

The remainder of verse 4 says, “I was to them like those / Who lift off the yoke on their jaws; / And I gently caused

them to eat.” This yoke was Pharaoh’s yoke, and this eating was the eating of the manna in the wilderness. Pharaoh had put a strong yoke on Israel, but God took off that yoke and gently caused them to eat by bringing them into the wilderness, where God fed them with manna in a gentle way morning by morning (Exo. 16:14-18).

E. Jehovah Not Giving Ephraim Up

Hosea 11:8 and 9 reveal that Jehovah could not give Ephraim up. “How shall I give you up, O Ephraim? / How shall I deliver you up, O Israel? / How can I make you like Admah? / How can I treat you like Zeboim? / My heart is turned within Me; / All My compassions have warmed. / I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; / I will not return to destroy Ephraim; / For I am God and not man, / The Holy One in the midst of you, / And I will not come in wrath.” Admah and Zeboim were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 14:8; Deut. 29:23). Ephraim had become so evil, even more evil than Sodom and Gomorrah. However, because of His everlasting love, God would not destroy Ephraim.

F. The Children of Israel Walking after Jehovah, and Jehovah Causing Them to Dwell in Their Houses

According to Hosea 11:10 and 11, the children of Israel will walk after Jehovah. He will roar like a lion, and the children of Israel will come trembling from the west like a bird from Egypt and like a dove from the land of Assyria. Jehovah will cause them to dwell in their houses.

G. At Bethel Jacob Finding Jehovah, and There Jehovah Speaking with the Children of Israel

At Bethel Jacob found Jehovah, and there Jehovah spoke with the children of Israel, even Jehovah, the God of hosts. Jehovah is his memorial. The children of Israel should return there to their God, keep lovingkindness and justice, and wait on their God continually (12:4b-6).

H. Since the Land of Egypt Jehovah Having Been the God of the Children of Israel

Since the land of Egypt Jehovah has been the God of the children of Israel. He will again cause them to dwell in tents as in the days of the appointed feast. He has also spoken unto the prophets. He has multiplied vision, and through the prophets He has used similitudes (vv. 9-10).

I. Israel Knowing That There is No God except Jehovah

Israel was to know that there was no god except Jehovah, for there is no savior besides Him. He knew Israel in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasturage (given by Jehovah) they became full (13:4-6a).

J. Jehovah Ransoming Them from the Power of Sheol

Jehovah will ransom them from the power of Sheol; He will redeem them from death (v. 14a). Hence, the next part of the verse says, "Where are your plagues, O death? / Where is your destruction, O Sheol?" Repentance will be hidden from His eyes (v. 14c). God's love for Israel is everlasting, and He will never repent of this love.

K. Jehovah through His Prophet Calling Israel to Return to Him Their God

Israel had fallen by their iniquity, and Jehovah through His prophet called them to return to Him their God (14:1). They should take words with them, return to Jehovah, and say to Him, "Forgive all iniquity, / And take us graciously; / Thus we will render our lips as bullocks. / Assyria will not save us; / We will not ride upon horses. / Neither will we say again to the work of our hands, Our God! / Because in You the orphan finds compassion" (vv. 2-3). With their lips they would offer sacrifices and offerings to God.

L. Israel in the Restoration

In verses 4 through 8 we have a picture of Israel in the restoration (Matt. 19:28), as revealed in Hosea 2:15-23; 3:5; 6:1-3; 10:12. Jehovah will heal their apostasy; He will love them freely, for His anger will have turned away from them. He will be like the dew to Israel. Israel will bud like the lily (signifying a pure life trusting in God) and will send forth his roots like the trees of Lebanon (signifying standing steadily in the uplifted humanity). His shoots will go forth (signifying flourishing and spreading); his splendor will be like that of the olive tree (signifying glory in faithfulness); and his fragrance will be like that of the trees of Lebanon (signifying the sweet odor of a life in the uplifted humanity). Those who sit under his shade (signifying being overshadowed by the sufficient grace enjoyed by them—2 Cor. 12:9) will return. They will revive like grain (signifying being full of life for producing the satisfying food) and will bud like the vine (signifying blossoming for producing the cheering drink). Israel's renown will be like the wine of Lebanon (signifying a good name spreading like tasteful wine).

I hope that this will be the situation with all the local churches in the Lord's recovery. Then instead of being an unturned cake or a silly dove or a deceitful bow, we will be like lilies, trees of Lebanon, olive trees, and budding vines.

Israel's transformation as described in Hosea 14:4-7 is based on the factor of love in life. Love in affection does not transform, but love in life transforms people. A husband who loves his wife in affection may spoil her, but a father who loves his son in life never spoils his son. As a son grows, he is transformed. Our relationship with God is of the divine, eternal life of God. This life enlivens us, regenerates us, sanctifies us positionally and dispositionally, renews us, transforms us, conforms us, matures us, and glorifies us, making us the same as God in life, nature, appearance, and glory.

At the beginning of Hosea, Israel was a harlot, but at the end of this book, Israel has become a son. Eventually, Ephraim declares that he has no more idols. "Ephraim says,

What have I yet to do with idols?" (v. 8a). God answers by saying, "(I respond and look on him.) / I am like a green fir tree; / From Me your fruit is found" (v. 8b). Jehovah's being like a green fir tree (symbolizing God's being living and evergreen) and Ephraim's bearing fruit from Him indicates Ephraim's oneness with Jehovah. It also indicates that a wonderful transformation has taken place, based on the factor of love in life. Today God is the evergreen tree, and we, the believers in Christ, are the branches of the tree, bearing fruit out of Him. This is more than an organic union; it is the oneness of two in one life, in one nature, and in one living. The outcome of this book is transformation in life by God's love. This is the revelation in chapter fourteen of Hosea, and we all need to see it.

III. THE PROPHET'S WORD BEING WISE

Verse 9 says that the prophet's word is wise, showing us that the ways of Jehovah are right. The righteous will walk in them, but the transgressors will stumble in them.

LIFE-STUDY OF HOSEA

MESSAGE NINE

THREE IMPLICATIONS CONCERNING CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Hosea 11:1-4

The book of Hosea is very rich. Many of the riches in this book are not directly stated but rather are implied by Hosea's poetic writing. Thus, we need to study the implications of the poetic writing in this book. It is not easy to know the significance of these implications. In this message I have the burden to give a brief word on three implications concerning Christ in 11:1-4. The three matters in these verses that imply Christ are God's calling His son out of Egypt, His drawing Israel with the cords of a man, and His gently causing them to eat.

CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, BEING CALLED OUT OF EGYPT BY GOD

Hosea 11:1 says, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, / And out of Egypt I called My son." This verse implies Christ in His union with Israel as the Son of God and as the One called out of Egypt by God. The fulfillment of the prophecy concerning Christ in this verse is in Matthew 2:15, which speaks of Christ's being called out of Egypt by God. Thus, Hosea 11:1 implies Christ as the Son of God.

A further implication of this verse is that with Christ we, the believers in Christ, are also sons of God (Heb. 2:10). In Christ we are sons of God. Apart from Christ we cannot be sons of God. Our sonship (Eph. 1:5) is altogether in Christ, by Christ, and with Christ.

The Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son

Regarding Christ as the Son of God there are two aspects: the aspect of His being the only begotten Son of God and

the aspect of His being the firstborn Son of God. In eternity, Christ was God's only begotten Son (John 1:18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Christ was the unique Son of God. Besides Him there were no other sons of God. How, then, can there be the many sons of God? To answer this question we need to consider Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. One day Christ, the only begotten Son of God in eternity, was incarnated to be a man. On the cross He died an all-inclusive, vicarious death, and then He entered into resurrection. In resurrection and through resurrection He was born to be the firstborn Son of God. As the only begotten Son of God in eternity, Christ did not have humanity; He only had divinity. Therefore, before His resurrection He was the Son of God only in His divinity. That was unique. But by His incarnation He entered into humanity and took on human nature as part of His being. However, He was not designated the Son of God in His humanity (Rom. 1:4) until His resurrection. This is the reason that Paul says in Acts 13:33, "God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.'" This verse indicates that resurrection was a birth to the man Jesus. He was begotten of God in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). This means that, in addition to His being the unique, only begotten Son of God from eternity, Christ, after incarnation and through resurrection, was begotten of God in His humanity to become the Son of God in another sense, in the sense of being the firstborn Son of God.

The Many Sons

The word "Firstborn" in Romans 8:29 and Hebrews 1:6 indicates that God has many sons. Without the many sons Christ could not be the firstborn Son; He could only be the only begotten Son. In order for Christ to be the firstborn Son, there must be other sons. These other sons were also born in Christ's resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). This means that in His resurrection not only was Christ born to be the firstborn Son of God, but also in His resurrection we were regenerated and

born to be the many sons of God, His many brothers, to be His members for the constitution of the organic Body of Christ. All this is implied in Hosea 11:1. How rich are the implications in this verse!

CORDS OF A MAN, BANDS OF LOVE

Hosea 11:4a says, "I drew them with cords of a man, / With bands of love." God's love is divine, but His love reaches us in the cords of a man.

It is important for us to realize that this verse does not speak of a *cord* but of *cords*. These cords include Christ's incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. This means that the cords mentioned in this verse have different segments and that each segment involves Christ's humanity. First, God was incarnated; He came to be a man named Jesus. Incarnation, therefore, is the first segment of the cords of a man. The Lord Jesus lived among us on earth for thirty-three and a half years, and His human living is the second segment of these cords. Eventually, He was crucified, dying on the cross for us, and then He was resurrected. His crucifixion and resurrection are also segments of the cords of a man. It is with such cords that God has drawn us.

We have pointed out that every segment, every part, of the cords of a man involves Christ's humanity. After His resurrection, Christ ascended to the heavens in His humanity. This was the reason Stephen could see the ascended One as the Son of Man and testify, saying, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). When Christ comes back, He will come in His humanity. The Lord's word to the high priest in Matthew 26:64 reveals this. "From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." The cords of a man, therefore, involve Christ's humanity in His incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

In Hosea 11:4a "cords of a man" and "bands of love" are in apposition. Hence, the words "cords" and "bands" refer to the same thing. The bands of love are the cords of a man. The love of God, the divine love, comes to us through Christ's

humanity. For this reason, the bands of love are the cords of a man. Here Christ is revealed not directly but by the way of implication. What a rich, deep, marvelous, and mysterious implication concerning Christ we have here!

God's everlasting love, His unchanging, subduing love, is altogether in Christ, with Christ, by Christ, and for Christ. Apart from Christ God's everlasting love could not be prevailing. God's unchanging love is prevailing because it is a love in Christ, with Christ, by Christ, and for Christ. If Christ had not been incarnated, if Christ had not lived on earth, if Christ had not died a vicarious death for us, if Christ had not entered into resurrection and then ascended to the heavens, there would be no way for God to draw us with cords of a man, with bands of love.

We need to be impressed with the fact that Christ's incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension are all for us, for it is by all these steps of Christ's humanity that God's love in His salvation reaches us. These steps are the cords of a man, the bands of love, with which God has drawn us.

GOD GENTLY CAUSING US TO EAT

A third implication concerning Christ is found in Hosea 11:4b. Here Jehovah says, "I was to them like those / Who lift off the yoke on their jaws; / And I gently caused them to eat." When did God do this? During the forty years the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God gently and patiently fed them with manna. Manna is a type of Christ as our heavenly food. Hence, this word concerning God's gently causing them to eat also implies Christ.

When we were saved, God drew us with cords of a man, with bands of love, and now He is feeding us with Christ. I can testify that from the time I was saved God has been gently and patiently feeding me with Christ. Sometimes we may want to eat too much or eat in haste, but God wants us to eat slowly and gently with patience and endurance. This is the way God feeds us.

