

HOSEA'S MESSAGE FOR US

Understanding God's Love

THE PEOPLE'S NEED (Chapter 9 and 10)

The people's problem in their controversy with God was twofold: spiritual ignorance and spiritual adultery (See Hosea 6). Their rejection of God's truth led to widespread ignorance of the truth, and this ignorance produced a great increase in sinful activity and finally outright disloyalty to the Lord (adultery in the form of idolatry). Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 warn of judgment and plead for repentance. God's love calls for their return to him. Now we come to the revival chapters. The Lord will tell these people just what they need to do to solve the problem they are having with Him. The solution verse is actually Hosea 10:12, one of the great "revival" verses in the Bible! How applicable are the words of Hosea 9 and 10 to God's people today! We could have real revival right now, if we wanted it. Let's study these chapters with an open heart, and with a sincere desire to have God revive us again.

Chapter 9 is about what *not* to do. "*Rejoice not*" the Lord says in verse one. The whole chapter then explains why the people have no cause to rejoice, to bring offerings, or to glory. Judgment is about to come. It is no time to rejoice. It is time to "*be afflicted, and mourn, and weep*" (See James 4:8-10). Something *must* be done *now* about the bad situation between the nation and God. As Hosea 10:12 says, "*It is time to seek the Lord.*" At another time, a prophet told Israel the same thing.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" (Joel 2:15-17)

Sometimes it's time to seek the Lord. It's not time to laugh. It's not time to sing. It's not time to go about our normal routine. We have sinned, and it's time to seek the Lord. It's time to weep over our waywardness, and confess our sins. It's time to pray down God's mercy and blessing. Is that what time it is in your life?

Chapter 10 is one of the most important "revival" passages in all of the Bible. First, it

shows us how to tell that it's time to seek the Lord. Notice five signs that it is time to take time and talk to God about our condition:

When We Are Unfruitful

(vs. 1)

Hosea cried, *"Israel is an empty vine!"* She had stopped bearing fruit for the Lord. John 15 gives us Christ's teaching about fruit-bearing. Look up this chapter and notice 4 simple truths Jesus wanted us to know.

1. God wants and expects us to bear fruit for Him (vs. 1-2).
2. If we abide in Christ, we will bear fruit (vs. 3-8).
3. Abiding in Christ involves keeping His commandments (vs. 9-14).
4. Fruit-bearing is winning souls to Christ (vs. 15-27).

The fruit of an apple tree is apples. The fruit of a Christian is new Christians. We will bear fruit if we abide in Christ. Not bearing fruit indicates a problem with our abiding. A believer has reason to question his fellowship with the Lord when his ministry has not born fruit. When were you last instrumental in bringing someone to Christ? Is it time to seek the Lord?

When Our Heart Is Divided

(v. 2)

"Their heart is divided" was the charge. Theirs was the heart of an unfaithful wife, trying to love two men at the same time. They worshiped idols, yet also called upon the name of the Lord. Double-minded people are always called by God to choose which way they will go. A divided heart is unacceptable.

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve!"

(See Joshua 24:14-15)

"How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him!"

(See I Kings 18:21-24)

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other . . ."

(See Matthew 6:22-33)

"Purify your hearts, ye double minded!"

(See James 1:6-8 and 4:4-10)

Is your heart divided between the Lord and the world? Is it divided between God and money? Is it divided between your will and His will? Are you torn between man's

approval and the approval of Christ? It is time to seek the Lord! Although every believer has two natures (Romans 7:15-23), the divided heart is not an automatic or necessary part of the Christian life. A clear and definite *choice* to follow, love, and serve Jesus with all the heart will unite the heart. This choice may need to be made daily (Luke 9:23) because our two natures tend to divide the heart, but if this daily dedication decision is made, we need not remain in a double-minded condition. A conscious constant two-way struggle is a sign that it is time to seek the Lord.

When We Are Chastised

(v. 3)

"We have no king, because we feared not the Lord," is what the people will say when God's judgment falls. Before the utter elimination of the northern kingdom, the nation went through an extended period of political upheaval and anarchy. Look over II Kings 15. Assassinations, conspiracies, civil strife, and oppression characterized the final years of the kingdom. Several times the throne was emptied by a "coup d'etat." II Kings 17:1-6 tells how the last king, Hoshea, was imprisoned by the Assyrians a few years before the people of the nation were taken into captivity. The prophet predicted that all this would happen, and that everyone would know it was the Lord's chastisement. The Bible teaches that God chastises His people when they go astray in order to bring them back to the right path (Read Hebrews 12:4-13). When we realize that God is chastising us, it is time to seek the Lord! Notice also Hosea 10:5-10.

When We Break Our Promises

(v. 4)

"They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant," charges Hosea. People who make vows for God, and then later ignore and break them are in serious trouble! Study Ecclesiastes 5:1-7. See Proverbs 20:25. Also note Numbers 30:2. But often Christians forget their commitments to God. Vows and commitments can help us live consistent Christian lives (See Psalm 61:8), and when we see that we are neglecting our commitments, it is surely time to seek the Lord. Did you once promise to read the Bible daily? Did you commit yourself to a certain amount of time in prayer each day? How about your commitments or promises about giving? Are you breaking your promises?

When We Are Passed Over

(v. 11)

Ephraim (a name God used for Israel) was like a trained heifer. She loved treading out grain. But now her Master was going to pass over her for that pleasant task, and put a rider on her back! When we notice that God passes us over, and doesn't use us any more, it is time to seek the Lord. Is that what is happening to you? Was there a time when God

used you to do His work? Does His hand now seem to pass right by you to use another instead? What's the reason? Clearly, you must hurry and find out. It is time to seek the Lord!

When God's people realize that it is time to seek the Lord, a spiritual revival is at hand. God is about to "*rain righteousness*" upon us (v. 12). Our duty now is to get the ground ready for seed and for rain. This we will do if we "*break up*" our "*fallow ground*." The Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13 uses ground to represent our hearts. Good ground will produce fruit when the seed of the Word is sown into it. It is our responsibility to prepare the ground of our hearts. Breaking up the ground involves repentance ("*Sow to yourselves in righteousness*") and prayer ("*time to seek the Lord*"). If the signs indicate that it is time to seek the Lord, let us get to the business of breaking up our ground! Have a time when you get alone with the Lord and talk with Him about your life. Confess your sins and pray for His blessing and power in your life Stay alone with Him until you know your problems with the Lord have been settled. It is time to seek the Lord!

Weekly Verse to Memorize:

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." (Hosea 10:12)