

HOSEA'S MESSAGE FOR US

Understanding God's Love

THE LORD'S OFFER (Chapter 13 and 14)

The Book of Hosea closes with a wonderful offer from the Lord to His people. If they will ask Him, He will forgive them. Not only will he forgive them in a technical sense, but also He will bless them and exalt them and restore them completely! Several verses in Chapters 13 and 14 should be familiar to God's people, but generally they are not. Look at 13:9, 13:14, 14:1-2, 14:4, 14:8, and 14:9. Aren't these verses wonderful? As you read these chapters, you may find other verses that are especially appealing or instructive to your heart. It is a shame that this part of the Bible is not better known.

In Chapter 13 the Lord through the prophet explains what has happened to Israel, "*When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died*" (v. 1). Who was Ephraim? Ephraim was the younger of Joseph's two sons (Genesis 41:50-52). You will remember that Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob, who is also known as Israel, the father of the Israelite nation. Jacob removed the birthright from his eldest son, Reuben, and gave it to Joseph's sons (Genesis 48:3-20, 49:3-4). Ephraim, the younger, was mysteriously favored over Manassah, the older of Joseph's sons. Thus the birthright of Israel belonged to Ephraim. When Israel demanded a king, God gave them Saul of the tribe of Benjamin (I Samuel 10:20-24). Saul was the kind of man the people wanted for a king, but he was not a man after God's heart. Therefore his family was rejected as Israel's royal line, and the family of Jesse in the tribe of Judah was chosen (I Samuel 16:1-13). David the son of Jesse became the next king (II Samuel 5:1-4). David was promised that his descendants would be God's chosen occupants of the throne (II Samuel 7:8-16). The apostasy of David's son Solomon, however, caused the Lord to take drastic action against the house of David (I Kings 11 and 12). When Solomon's son Rehoboam ascended to the throne, most of the nation rejected his rule. God made sure that he and his family maintained control of the throne at Jerusalem and rule over the tribe of Judah, but most of Israel chose to be led by another king (Note 1 Kings 12:19). That king was Jeroboam, a man of the tribe of Ephraim (I Kings 11:26 and 12:25). From this time on, the tribe of Ephraim dominated the kingdom of Israel, while Judah dominated the "southern" kingdom. The history of the divided kingdom was in a sense the conflict between God's chosen line and Jacob's natural birthright: Judah vs. Ephraim. Hosea often uses the name Ephraim in referring to all the northern kingdom, Israel. In his mind it was Judah vs. Ephraim. Now what does he say (in Hosea 13:1)? When Ephraim was humble, God exalted him; but when he turned from the Lord to the idol Baal, he spiritually died (I Kings 16:29-32). In a nutshell, this is the history of the northern

kingdom.

What is the relationship of God to Israel now that she has fallen into idolatry? He will remove them from their land (13:3—Look up Deuteronomy 28:58-68). It is the promised punishment for apostasy. But He is still their God (13:4). This covenant relationship with them as a

nation began with God's deliverance of them from bondage in Egypt. It is an unbreakable covenant made by the Lord Himself. Any punishment He must give them is their own fault (13:5-9). The Lord loves them; He is their God; He wants to help them, not punish them. Yet their sins require His chastisement. As God said in earlier parts of this book, He looks forward to the day when he can bless them again! In that day, He will again be their king as at the first (13:10-11). He never wanted them to have another king in the first place (See I Samuel 8). When Israel is restored, their king will be both God and the Son of David. It will be Jesus Christ, the God-Man. At this time, Israel will experience a spiritual birth (13:12-14). They have had a spiritual death (13:1), but they will have a spiritual birth. First, there will be travail (labor pains). After travail, they will not wait long before the birth. This birth will mean victory over death (13:14 is brought up by Paul in I Corinthians 15:55). This is the salvation of Israel promised in the Bible for the Great Tribulation period (See Matthew 24:29-31, Romans 11:26-27, and Revelation 7). Their conversion to Christ will climax in the second coming of Christ. But Chapter 13 ends with a note of warning. An awful judgment for the Nation's unfaithfulness is surely coming. The blessings are yet in the distant future. Invasion and captivity are just over the horizon (13:14-16).

Chapter 14 tells the people very plainly what they should do:

“O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously . . .” (Hosea 14:1-2)

God offers to forgive and restore them if they will “*return*” to the Lord (an act of the heart) and “*take . . . words*” to Him, asking forgiveness (an act of the mouth). This heart-and-mouth repentance is what it takes to have forgiveness from a loving God. To say words of confession but not to turn from sin in the heart is to tell God a lie. Repentance in the heart without the confession of the lips is also action short of what is required. God wants His people to “*repent and make supplication*” according to I Kings 8:47. He calls upon them in II Chronicles 7:14 to “*pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways.*” To turn in the heart and to confess with the tongue is to get right with God.

The close of the Book of Hosea is God's promised reply to Israel in the day that they will tell them those words sincerely (vs. 4-8). See 3 things He will do if they repent, heart-and-mouth:

1. He will “*heal their backsliding*” (v. 4). Backsliding requires healing. Confession brings forgiveness immediately (I John 1:9), but the toll a

backslidden condition has taken requires divine healing! Godly ways must be relearned. Damage done by sin must be repaired. Feelings of guilt and remorse must be corrected. But the Lord promised He will do these things!

2. He will *“love them freely”* (v. 4). The Lord was not able to do this while they were backslidden. He loved them, but was not free to bless them. Now He will be able to show His love much more than before.
3. He will make them fruitful (vs. 5-8). They will wonder why they ever fooled with idols! Their fruitfulness and prosperity under God’s blessing will be so great. How could they ever have forfeited His blessing for a fling with sin? God will bless restored Israel and use him to be a fruitful tree.

God will do these things for any backslider who will repent of and confess his sins. He will heal your life, love you freely, and make you productive. How can you refuse this offer? Note the final statement of Hosea the prophet about what he has written:

“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.” (Hosea 14:9)

Will you respond to God’s Word? Will you surrender to His love? A wise person will. A person who appreciates the Lord’s love will heed His Word. How about you?

“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.” (Hosea 13:9)