

### Lesson 5: What Do You See?

Hosea 6:4 – 7:2

**Impenitence (hard heart/calloused) of Israel:** Because Israel's commitment to the Lord was fleeting and superficial, He had to send prophets (Hosea and Amos) with stern words calling for a covenantal loyalty befitting a marriage relationship. But they violated their marriage vows.<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever looked at yourself in distorted carnival mirrors that make you look extraordinarily tall and thin or incredibly short and fat? In these two chapters, it seems that the Israelites had the opposite kinds of mirrors – they saw only the images of themselves that they wanted to see. Through Hosea, the Lord tries to get the Israelites to see their reflection as it really is.

Suffering turns the people to God again (v. 1-3), but there is no deep change. Their 'love' evaporates as quickly as dew in the hot sun. It is lasting love and real knowledge of him that God looks for (v. 6).

At the heart of the nation's religion at Shechem is intrigue and murder! 'The third day' (6:2) probably indicates that after a short period, Israel would be restored and is generally understood to foreshadow the Messiah's resurrection on the third day. Gilead (v. 8) and Shechem (v. 9)—two of the principal cities of the land—were particularly horrible as centers of vice and violence.

Hosea employs a string of metaphors to describe the relationship between Israel and God. In matters of judgment, God has been referred to as a moth and dry rot that will eat away at the nation (5:12) and a wild animal that devours (5:14-15). Now, his people are referred to as evaporating dew and dwindling mist and smoke (6:4), a hot oven (7:3-7), a burned cake (7:8), and a silly dove (7:11).

These metaphors and similes are designed to strike the hearts and imaginations of God's people. Some shock by exposing the ugliness and depth of sin and straightforwardly compelling repentance; others comfort and encourage the faithful to trust in God's goodness and persevere through the coming judgment.

It is crucial to realize and emphasize that the overriding pictures of God and his people point to restoration. Throughout the book of Hosea, this God of Mercy is depicted as a forgiving husband (chapters 2-3), a loving parent (11:1-4, 14:3), a healing physician (14:4), and fresh dew (14:5).

1. Read Jeremiah 2:11-13. The prophet Jeremiah was one of the major prophets in the Old Testament. Here are the key details about him:
  - Jeremiah was born around 650 BC in the village of Anathoth near Jerusalem to a priestly family from the tribe of Benjamin.
  - When he was a youth, God called him to be a prophet in 627 BC during the reign of King Josiah of Judah.
  - Jeremiah's prophetic ministry spanned the reigns of the last five kings of Judah before the Babylonian exile - Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, 74.

- His main message was to warn Judah and Jerusalem to repent from their idolatry and immorality or face imminent destruction by the Babylonians from the north.
- Despite Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 22-23), the people persisted in pagan worship, like sacrificing children to Molech, leading God to decree judgment.
- Jeremiah faced opposition, beatings, and imprisonment for his unpopular messages of doom but persisted in urging surrender to Babylon.
- After Jerusalem fell in 586 BC, he stayed with the remnant in Judah until he was taken to Egypt against his will, where he likely died.
- The Book of Jeremiah records his prophecies of judgment and future restoration, while Lamentations, traditionally attributed to him, mourns Jerusalem's destruction.

So, in summary, Jeremiah was **the weeping prophet** who faithfully proclaimed God's word of judgment on apostate Judah through persecution until the bitter end of the Babylonian exile, looking ahead to an eventual divine restoration.<sup>2</sup>

- a. What often happened to the Israelites' love for and faithfulness to God after returning to Him (6:4)?
  - b. What did the prophet Jeremiah accuse the Judeans/Judahites, who rebelled against God just as the Israelites did, of doing? What "broken cisterns" was Jeremiah pointing to (2 Kings 21:1-6, 19-22)?
  - c. What are some 'broken cisterns' that we turn to instead of to God, and what does it mean that they are broken?
  - d. Read John 4:10-14; 7:37-39. What cistern (Who) should we turn to to have living water? What did Jesus say to the woman at the well (John 4) and the crowd on the last day of the feast (John 7)? What did Jesus mean?
2. Read Jeremiah 1:9-10; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 4:12-13. Who and what did God use to "cut," "kill," and "judge" His people?

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<sup>2</sup> Who was the prophet, Jeremiah? <https://www.perplexity.ai/search/who-was-the-uOYxgARvSJufhmYCl31yyA>, accessed May 15, 2024.

- a. Explain how the word of God brings conviction ('cutting,' or 'circumcision' of the heart') of sin (Romans 2:28-29; Acts 2:37-41).
- b. What message is rarely preached in America today (Matthew 3:1-2, 7-8; 4:17; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 3:19)? What needs to change if America is to witness another revival?

3. Read Isaiah 29:13; Psalm 51:16-17.

- a. What do these words of Hosea, "not sacrifice" and "burnt offerings," refer to (skim Exodus 40 and Leviticus 1-7)? God is the One who, through Moses, instituted the sacrificial system found throughout the Old Testament. Since this sacrificial system originated in the heart and mind of God, why did He say, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings" (v. 6)?

*(Jesus repeated Hosea 6:6 in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7. So this must be very important to God.)*

- b. Read 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 22:37; John 4:22-24; Romans 2:28-29. What did God really want from His people (Hosea 6:6)?
- c. How do you think God sees the worship of Him in many churches today? What does God really want from us?

4. From Hosea 6:7-7:11, the prophet uses vivid language and metaphors to characterize the people, including the priests, of Israel. What does Hosea mean by the following phrases or images?

- Chapter 6, verses 7-9: "as marauders lie in ambush for a man, so do bands of priests (Matthew 12:14; 23:34-35; 26:3-4; John 11:45-50; 12:9-11)"

*Israelite society was murderous.* Hosea refers to a recent murderous attack, contrary to the command of the law, which took place at Adam. Apparently, at the town on the river Jordan called 'Adam,' about thirty kilometers from Jericho, a terrible crime took place, a breach of 'the covenant,' that is, the sworn agreement (Exodus 19:8) made at Sinai. There the Israelites had sworn that they would show their loyalty to God by keeping his law,

including the command against murder (Exodus 20:13). ‘They’ refers to the priests, as will become clear.<sup>3</sup>

- Chapter 6, verse 10: “There Ephraim (Israel) is given to prostitution and Israel is defiled”
  - Chapter 6 verse 11a (Read Jeremiah 7:30-32): “Also for you, Judah (the southern kingdom) a harvest (a figure for God’s judgment) is appointed”
5. Verse 11 says: “And for you, Judah, a harvest is appointed.” When did the “harvest” of Judah take place that Hosea prophesied about (skim 2 Kings 25:1-21)?

In Hosea chapter 7, kings fall at the hands of hotheads and conspirators. There were six different kings in the short span of 20 years. Israel turns to foreign peoples (v. 8-9), foreign powers (v. 11) and foreign gods (v. 16) but never to the Lord.

They transgressed the covenant and became defiled, even influencing Judah. When God would have healed them, their iniquity was even worse! Idolatry, alliances with pagan nations, rejection of God's efforts to discipline them – all these things were the charges brought against Israel!

6. When God lifts the veil from the eyes of the Israelites, as well as people today, even unbelievers, what will they see (6:11b-7:1; John 16:8; Isaiah 6:1-5)?

To be convicted is to feel the sheer loathsomeness of sin. This happens when we’ve seen God’s beauty, His purity and holiness, and when we recognize that sin cannot dwell with Him (Psalm 5:4). When Isaiah stood in the presence of God, he was immediately overwhelmed by his own sinfulness: “Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips . . . and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty” (Isaiah 6:5).<sup>4</sup>

### **The Decline of the Western World!**

(Russ’ commentary: Keep in mind as you read the below commentary by Michael Eaton that it was published in the year 1996, twenty-eight years ago, long before the onslaught of the LGBTQ revolution and the invasion of neo-Marxism, Critical Race Theory, and Wokeness into our culture, our government, our educational system and sadly, into many churches.)

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<sup>3</sup> Eaton, 109.

<sup>4</sup> “*What is the conviction of sin?*” <https://www.gotquestions.org/conviction-of-sin.html> accessed on May 8, 2024.

We become like the God—or the people—that we worship. ‘They went into vanity and became vanity’ (Jeremiah 2:5). People may think that they can remove the worship of God and still have a decent society. Maybe they can—for a short time! But take away the God of the Bible and soon the righteousness of the Bible will disappear also. Society gets steadily worse. The ‘man in the street’ was going on pilgrimage to Dan and to Bethel.

Two centuries after Jeroboam I and Jeroboam II, murder and violence were everywhere, family life was broken up, immorality was the custom of the hour. ‘Everyone does it. How can you be so old-fashioned?’, said the people to any who protested. In their national life they had sown to the flesh, and back from the flesh they were reaping corruption.

Never was there the slightest sign of recovery for northern Israel while their idolatry continued. It kept Israel under the anger of God. God gave the northern territory over to their enemies. The nation was reduced in size and influence. Society steadily deteriorated until, now in Hosea’s day, society is depraved and about to collapse altogether.

A century ago, in the ‘west’, men and women turned aside from the Bible. They were so confident that evolution was about to take them to the pinnacle of glory. The first world war of 1914-1918 shattered their dreams of utopia, but even that was thought to be the ‘war to end all wars’. What crass ignorance of God, and ignorance of human history! The end of the twentieth century shows the results: great cleverness in technology, but more murders, violence, and broken homes than ever. Lying and immorality are not even regarded as sin at all! Israel thought the nation would last forever, but they had thirty years left. How many years does the western world have? It is one of the affluent parts of the world, but so was Israel in Jeroboam’s day. Israel despised the Gentiles, but soon the Assyrians and Babylonians, and the Greeks and Romans, would be far more influential and prestigious than Israel. At present ‘the west’ is the affluent, influential, admired part of the world. But how long will it last? The center of gravity of the Christian world is now Africa, South America and Indonesia. One can expect Christian influence to steadily grow there as it is steadily declining in the western world...

Hosea has a message for us! The murders and the violence, the sex-craze and the lying, are signs of how much our society needs the God of the Bible. The need of the hour is not a new political party, not superior technology, not the right foreign policy, or the right relationship in some financial market. Our very survival as a [nation] depends on whether or not spiritual awakening comes and—while we are waiting—on how many people actually come to Jesus Christ. A country with few Christians will be a place of murder, immorality, and deceit. Israel proved it long ago. The modern world adds to its confirmation.<sup>5</sup>

7. Read Psalm 14:2-3; Proverbs 15:3; Hebrews 4:13. Does God see the wickedness and depravity taking place in our country twenty-four hours a day?

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<sup>5</sup> Eaton, 112-113.

- a. Did you know that God measures sin (Genesis 6:4-7; 15:6)? What happened to the Amorites (Canaanites) when its sin reached full measure (Joshua 6:20-27; 11:6-23)?
  
- b. At some point, sin reaches its 'full measure' and the inhabitants of the land incur the wrath of God. This happened during the days of Noah, during the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, during the time of the Amorites (Canaanites), and during the days when Israel and Judah were led astray into debauchery, child sacrifice and idolatry. What is the lesson for America (Acts 3:19-20)?
  
- c. Read Jeremiah 31:34 along with Hosea 7:2 which says, "I will remember all their wicked deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me." What is the great promise that God makes to those who place their trust in Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6)? Do you see why the gospel is such Good News?