

Lesson 10: God's Intense Love For Israel!

Hosea 11:1-11

God's Continuing Love for Israel: In tender words reminiscent of Exodus from Egypt (see Exodus 4:22-23), the Lord reassures Israel of His intense love for her.¹

Exodus 4:21-24 The Lord said to Moses... say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the Lord says: Israel is **my firstborn son**, and I told you, "**Let my son go**, so he may worship me. But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son."

How can I give you up?

Hosea begins with God declaring his verdict upon Israel that he will no more have mercy on the house of Israel (1:6) and that he will not call Israel his people (1:8). However, God is the God who never forsakes his promise. Therefore, he assured his people that he will not forget the promise he made with Abraham more than 1,000 years ago (1:10). Having said that, God does not turn a blind eye towards Israel's chief sin, which is idolatry. God commanded Hosea to marry Gomer, an unfaithful prostitute, as an illustration to God's relentless pursuit over Israel despite their unfaithfulness. However, Israel has continually rejected God and has given their devotion towards idols. Therefore, in chapters 4 to 10, God describes to Israel the true picture of Israel's spiritual condition and he announces to Israel his coming judgment should they not turn away from their idolatries:

- I reject you (4:6; 9:17)
- I will change their glory into shame (4:7)
- I will punish them (4:9; 8:13; 9:9)
- I will discipline them (5:2; 7:12; 10:10)
- I will tear and go away (5:14)
- I have slain them by the words of my mouth (6:5)
- My anger burns against them (8:5)
- I will send a fire upon Israel (8:14)
- I will drive them out of my house (9:15)
- I will love them no more (9:15)

If Hosea had stopped at chapter 10, the situation would have looked very grim to the whole nation. God's promise seems distant and impossible, and what is left for them to do is to continue in their sins because there is no hope left for them. However, praise God that the prophecy

continues. God speaks tenderly to Israel and once again he affirms his promise of mercy to his people.

1. Read Hosea 11:1-11 ‘... out of Egypt I called my son.’ (11:1)

God *chose Israel for sonship*. God made the entire nation his son. It involved God’s concern, and his planning the future for his youngster, the nation of Israel. He trained him as a father teaches skills to his son. He guided the youngster in the way he should go. At the cost of all the firstborn sons of Egypt, God redeemed his Son (Exodus 11:5).

God *allowed hardship in the nation’s life*. Although God set his love upon the nation, God seemed to neglect his son and allows suffering in his life. For a long time his beloved son was allowed to remain in Egypt in distress and in bondage.

But eventually, God *called the nation into privileges of liberty and maturity*. To ‘call’ in this setting is not merely to invite, but to powerfully summon. God ‘made bare his mighty arm’ and powerfully drew Israel out of the land of bondage. Nine miraculous judgments took place (Exodus 7:14-10:29) yet the nation could not escape. The tenth miracle was a battle over firstborn sons. God judged the firstborn sons of the Egyptians but redeemed his own firstborn son by the blood the lamb (Exodus 11:1-12:50). Before the blood was shed the nation could not get out of Egypt; once the blood was shed the nation could no longer stay in. God powerfully ‘summoned’ his Son out of Egypt, saving the nation by the blood of the lamb.ⁱⁱ

a. Read Deuteronomy 7:6-11.

- Why did God choose the descendants of Abraham to be His treasured possession?
- What did the Israelites need to do in order to remain under His covenantal blessings?
- What would be the result if Israel showed hatred toward God by rebelling against Him, what would be the consequences?
- (Personal question): If you are ‘in Christ’ it is only because God called you (Romans 8:29). How can you remain under God’s promise of blessing? How are you doing in your walk with God (Colossians 1:10)?

b. What event in the history of Israel does this prophecy point backward to (cf. Exodus 3:7-10; 12:40-42, 51)?

- c. What event in the history of mankind does this prophecy point forward to (cf. Matthew 2:13-15)?
 - d. How is Israel's redemption from Egyptian slavery comparable to our redemption from the slavery of sin (cf. Luke 4:18-19; John 8:34; Romans 6:15-19; Galatians 5:1)?
2. As repeated in previous chapters, Israel's chief sin is idolatry. Israel was ungrateful and went to worship idols instead of the almighty God, even though God is the one who brought them out from Egypt and loved them as his children (v. 2-4). Answer the following:
 - a. How is this true in your own life?
 - b. Read 1 John 2:15-17. To what extent have you turned your devotion towards the idols of this world?
 3. 'But the more [they: NASB] called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals, and they burned incense to images. It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them' (11:2-4).

God's call is rivaled by the invitations of the world. The Hebrew of verse 2a is simple. 'They called to them', says Hosea. He has already referred to the daughters of Moab at Baal-Peor (9:10). At that time 'They called the people to the sacrifices of their gods' (Numbers 25:2). 'They' (pagan people) called to 'them' (Israel). The sense is 'Others [They] also called to them...'

There is a conflict of two appeals. There is the powerful calling of God (11:1), but 'Others [They] also' call to us. God's call is a 'high calling', a calling to God's rewards (Philippians 3:14). It is a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9), a calling of the voice of God from heaven (Hebrews 3:1). It begins as a call into fellowship (1 Corinthians 1:9), and then continues as a calling to holiness (1 Corinthians 1:2). We are to live in a way that is worthy of it (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

But 'Others [They] call also'. God warns us about these 'calls' from elsewhere. 'They will call you to join them', God said to Israel about pagan invitations (Exodus 34:15). But they were rather to hear a call to gratitude. The blessing of Zebulun and Issachar (Deuteronomy 33:18-19) sees the tribe responding with gratitude to God, and says, 'They will call the people to the mountain' for worship of God.

So there are two kinds of call. Israel heard the appealing beguilements and invitations of paganism nearby. Listening to the blandishments of the girls of Moab, they were drawn into pagan immorality and, as part-and-parcel of pagan life, into pagan religion.ⁱⁱⁱ

- c. Why are people so inclined to run from God when they hear Him calling instead of running to Him (Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 13:13-15; John 3:19-20; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4)?
- d. Read Proverbs 7:6-23; Hebrews 11:25; and James 1:14-15.
 - How does the world call or pull people away from God? Why is the world so alluring?
 - Read Proverbs 7:1-5. How can you avoid being lured into a worldly and deadly trap set by Satan?

God led the Israelites out of slavery, through the Red Sea, and then, to Mount Sinai where through Moses, He gave them the Law (His Commands and Precepts). He taught Ephraim how to walk in obedience to Him. If they had only obeyed, they would have remained under God's protection and would have continued to be blessed by Him.

4. Although God will not send Israel back to Egypt, God's discipline towards his people will come from another nation.
 - a. What do verses 5-7 refer to in the history of Israel (cf. 2 Kings 17:6-12)?
 - b. Why do you think the Israelites refused to repent?

Do you see this happening in America today?

Their persistence in sin gives God a problem. Israel has adamantly refused to repent (11:5). Its political life no longer has any contact with Yahweh but is steered by the schemes of the religious leaders. The nation's religious life is now dominated by Baal, their 'High God'[Verse 7 can be translated 'My people are determined to turn from me, and to their 'High God' they call, but their god cannot lift them up at all.'] They call to him, but when the invasion comes as it soon will their god will be of no help.

So they will experience what it is to 'return to Egypt'. It is as though they will be 'un-redeemed'. It is this ghastly thought that confronts God. He is in agony and deeply pained at the thought of losing his people. He cannot be reconciled to the idea of losing them at all.^{iv}

5. ‘How can I give them up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim?’ (vv. 7-8)

a. What do Admah and Zeboiim refer to (cf. Deuteronomy 29:23; Genesis 10:19; 14:8; 19:28-29)? What caused God to destroy these two cities, along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19)?

b. Is America guilty of the same sins as these four cities, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim (Romans 1:26-27)? If yes, then should we assume that God is not going to judge us similarly (Romans 3:18)?

Someone once said, “If God does not judge America, then He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah!”

c. Read Micah 7:18-19 along with Psalm 103:8. How does God reveal a merciful heart towards Israel in verses 8-9? How is this promise significant in light of what God did to Admah and Zeboiim? What does this reveal about the heart of God?

6. God says, “I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man—the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath” (v. 9).

a. What does God mean?

b. How does God satisfy his holiness, justice and wrath, while at the same time have compassion and mercy to us (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10; Romans 5:6-9)?

c. How does this comfort you?

A Ray of Hope!

7. In Hosea 11:10-11 one sees a ray of hope for Israel. “They will follow the Lord; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west. They will come trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria. I will settle them in their homes,” declares the Lord.
- a. What do you think these two verses imply regarding the future of the northern kingdom, Israel?

 - b. Do you believe that many of the Israelites repented while in captivity in Assyria? What does God do whenever anyone repents (2 Peter 3:9)?

 - c. Read 2 Chronicles 33:1-13 along with Matthew 1:10. Manasseh was one of the most evil kings ever in the history of Israel (Judah).
 - What were some of the evil things he did?

 - How did God get Manasseh’s attention?

 - How did Manasseh respond?

 - Did he end up in the line of Christ? Why is this so significant?

 - Can anyone sink so deep in sin that he or she is beyond redemption? Does this not give you hope?
8. Thus far Hosea 1-11 bears witness to the truths of God’s holy wrath towards sinners and his mercy towards repentant sinners. How does this truth affect the way you live your life daily?

Prayer Points

- Praise God for making the initiative to deliver us from our slavery to sin.
- Pray that God increases our understanding and appreciation of what God did for us in Jesus Christ.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit helps us in our daily repentance as we seek to trust and obey him in our daily lives.

ⁱ MacArthur, 90.

ⁱⁱ Eaton, 160-161.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eaton, 163-164.

^{iv} Eaton, 166.