

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

BIBLE TEXT : Hosea 11:1-12; 14:1-9.

LESSON 331 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Hosea 11:1-12

¹ When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

² As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

³ I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

⁴ I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

⁵ He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

⁶ And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels.

⁷ And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt *him*.

⁸ How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

⁹ I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I *am* God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

¹⁰ They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

A Minor Prophet

Hosea, son of Beeri, had a message for the Children of Israel. He was a prophet of the Lord at the time when Isaiah, Amos, and Micah also prophesied. Although Hosea is known as a prophet of the northern kingdom, all the Children of Israel were included in his message. Hosea prophesied about 60 years. During those years Jeroboam, son of Joash (sometimes called Jehoash), reigned in Israel; while Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were the kings of Judah.

A Prophet's Work

There was a need for prophets. It was necessary to have some men who were called by God to deliver His message to the people. God could trust the prophets to say the words that He wanted given to the Children of Israel. The prophets warned them of the judgements of God. They reproved them of their sins, and pointed out their idolatrous ways. They also told them of the Lord's promises of blessing when they returned to serve God. This was the work of a prophet. Hosea was faithful to God as well as faithful to the Children of Israel.

Evil Ways

As we consider the Children of Israel and their kings during Hosea's time, we see how faithful God and His prophets were to warn them. Jeroboam, king of Israel, did evil in the sight of the Lord by not departing from all the sins of the other Jeroboam who made Israel to sin (**2 Kings 14:24** ²⁴ **And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.**). At that time the affliction of Israel was "very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel" (II Kings 14:26). God had promised that Israel's name would not be completely blotted out, so He used Jeroboam to spare the Israelites from their enemies.

Leprosy

Uzziah is remembered as the king who was smitten with leprosy when he went into the Temple to burn incense. By so doing he transgressed against God. To burn incense in the Temple was the work and privilege of the priest only. Uzziah had been helped marvellously by the Lord, but when he was strong his heart was lifted up (**2 Chronicles 26:15-16** ¹⁵ **And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.** ¹⁶ **But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.**). Uzziah's leprosy caused him to be separated from the good things in his life – his family and home, his work and his kingdom, and even his religion, because "he was cut off from the house of the LORD." Sin, like Uzziah's leprosy, has caused the same separations from every good thing

¹¹ They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD.

¹² Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

Hosea 14:1-9

¹ O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

² Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us* graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

³ Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

⁴ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

⁵ I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

⁶ His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

⁷ They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive *as* the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof *shall be* as the wine of Lebanon.

⁸ Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him*, and observed him: I *am* like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

⁹ 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.

in the lives of many people. Uzziah was not dealt with unjustly. He must have heard the words God sent by Hosea, yet he did not repent.

Wickedness

When Uzziah was smitten with leprosy, his son, Jotham, became king. He "became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God" (II Chronicles 27:6). Jotham did that which was right in God's eyes but the people did "corruptly" (II Chronicles 27:2). This must have been the people's choice. Hosea was faithful to point out their sin and the punishment that went with sin.

Ahaz reigned in Judah after Jotham. His reign was wicked, cruel, and idolatrous (II Kings 16:3,4). "In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD" (II Chronicles 28:22). Ahaz damaged the house of the Lord, shut its doors, and made altars in every corner of Jerusalem (II Chronicles 28:24).

After Ahaz's death, Hezekiah was king of Judah. He was the man who was told to set his house in order because he was going to die. Hezekiah prayed. God healed him, and added 15 years to his life. He had trusted God and had not departed from following Him: "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up" (II Chronicles 32:25).

Hosea's Message

What was Hosea's message to these kings and to their people? It was a message to show them their need of repentance. To repent is to turn from one's sins. When one repents he has a sorrow and a regret for his past; he has a desire to change for the better; he asks forgiveness and is willing to make right those things in his life, which are against God and his fellow man.

This was Hosea's message to the people whose lives were filled with sin. He told them of their need to return and to serve God. He reminded them of the great things that God had done for them — even from the time that the Children of Israel were brought out of Egypt. Hosea pointed out that which was wrong in their lives.

As a Child

In giving the message of the Lord, Hosea compared Israel to a child with God as his Father. As a father teaches a child to walk by holding to his hands, so God taught Israel "to go." The Children of Israel had depended on God to help them, to support them, and to teach them.

In the land of Egypt, the Children of Israel were slaves, working for Pharaoh. The Lord removed them from that bondage. He lifted their burden and supplied them with food. As one would loosen the yoke straps under the oxen's jaws so they could eat, the Lord had removed Israel's burden and provided food. The Lord sent manna for the Children of Israel to eat (**Exodus 16:15** ¹⁵ **And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.**). But they remembered the fish, cucumbers, leeks, melons, onion, and garlic that they had eaten in Egypt. They complained against God who was sending them food, until they had to be punished for their murmuring. (See Lesson 99.)

Bands of Love

The Lord drew the Children of Israel unto Himself with love. He did not use means of force as those who are used to drive or pull animals into place. God used means that good men use to persuade others. He did not compel them to serve Him. God loved the Children of Israel.

God would draw all people to Him because He loves them. It was God's love for us that caused Him to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to be a Sacrifice on the Cross that we might be saved. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Your Choice

God gives each person the call to follow Him. Each one must choose whom he will serve. God does not force anyone to serve Him. Sometimes people feel that they must do certain things to please others because they have a great fear. They serve others because of a "band" of fear. God's people follow Him because of His love.

If the choice were left to God, all people would be Christians. God did His part when He made a way of salvation. Each person must make a choice between serving God or serving Satan. One has no other choice. A person either loves God enough to follow Him, or he loves Satan. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Their Own Way

Hosea told the people that they had wanted their own way. God had done much for them and had shown them much love. Yet they were "bent to backsliding." The Israelites would follow God for a while. Then they wanted their own way. There is danger in wanting one's own way, because "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). God's prophets urged the people to return to God, to exalt and to worship Him. This was the very thing that Hosea was doing. Yet the Israelites turned aside to their own ways.

God's love was so great that He said to the Israelites, "How shall I give thee up?" His heart was grieved because of their backslidings. But God was merciful and long-suffering. He said, "I will not return to destroy Ephraim [Israel]: for I am God, and not man." God's ways are not like man's ways. Some people, in their anger, would have withdrawn and never given them another time to repent.

Lies and Deceit

The Israelites had spoken lies and deceit by making vows to God that they did not pay. They had made promises to God, which they did not keep. At times, during the history of the Israelites, they returned to God and promised to obey Him. For example, when Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD," the people wanted to do that, too. They knew that God had brought them out of Egypt and they wanted to serve Him. They said, "The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey" (Joshua 24:15,24). After the death of Joshua, they forsook God and served idols. Time and again the Israelites did this.

This is true not only of the Israelites; some people today do not keep their promises to God. When they prayed for salvation they promised to serve God, but they are not doing it now. Often when people are sick they make promises to God, but they are not doing it now. Often when people are sick they make promises to God, but some seem to forget about the vows and promises when God heals them and they are well. In time of trouble and danger some people have made promises to God, which they are not keeping. Are these things not lies and deceit? David said: "I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble" (Psalm

Prayer

Hosea brought these things to their attention to show that they needed to repent. They had not been thankful for all that God had done for them. When one counts his blessings he feels that he owes the Lord so much praise that he must serve and worship God. Do we give thanks to God for what He has done for us? Or are we ungrateful and unmindful of His blessings to us?

Hosea not only showed them their need of salvation but he also told them how to get it. He told them what to say, and advised them to take words to the Lord – to talk to the Lord and give Him consecrations. That is praying. Instead of taking animals to sacrifice, they were to take the “calves” of their lips, which were praises and promises to God. Hosea told them to say, “Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses.” This meant that they were willing to trust God rather than to depend on men, as they were doing. They were to acknowledge God instead of considering the work of their own hands to be gods. The Lord expects all who are saved to trust in Him, and to acknowledge Him as the only true and living God.

Promises

God promises mercy to those who truly repent — who confess their sins and forsake them (**Proverbs 28:13** ¹³ **He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy**). The Lord is near those who are sorry for their sins, and He saves those who have a contrite spirit (**Psalms 34:18** ¹⁸ **The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit**). Besides mercy, other blessings are promised to those who repent and follow God. Hosea said that God would be to Israel as the dew. We are told that in the East the dew is very heavy, supplying moisture to the land. In other places there is a great deal of rainfall, but in the land where Israel lived the dew was life-giving water. In a spiritual way, God promised to send the water, which will keep the soul revived and growing. Can you find some of the verses of Scripture, which tell about the Water of Life?

A Plant

Hosea compared a person who receives the “dew” to a plant. “He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” Growth as a lily — one root often produces many bulbs! Roots as Lebanon — the cedars of Lebanon send their roots as deep as the trees are tall! “His beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.” Beauty as the olive — the tree is always green, showing life and yielding fruit! Smell as Lebanon — the fragrance of flowers and trees were given as a sweet savour! One plant could not be found to describe God’s people. The fine qualities of several plants were combined to tell about them — growth of the lily, deep roots of the cedar, the fruit and beauty of the olive.

“They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.” Jesus gave similar illustrations to His disciples. Read what Jesus taught about “a corn of wheat” which falls into the ground and dies (John 12:24). Jesus also told His disciples about the vine growing and bearing fruit (**John 15:1-7** ¹ **I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.** ² **Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.** ³ **Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.** ⁴ **Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.** ⁵ **I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.** ⁶ **If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.** ⁷ **If ye abide in me, and my words abide**

in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you).

Just or Unjust

With all these promises, and more, there is no reason why any person should not follow the Lord. Each one could say with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" or in his own words, "Why should I continue in sin?" The Book of Hosea closes with the thought that there are only two kinds of people: the just and the unjust; those who follow the Lord and those who walk in their own ways. As there are wonderful promises to the obedient, so there are fearful promises to the disobedient. Which kind of person are you? "The ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by a "minor" prophet?
2. What was Hosea's message to the Children of Israel?
3. How had the Children of Israel treated God?
4. How did they show that they were not grateful?
5. What had God done for them?
6. What is repentance?
7. Who needs to repent?
8. How can one seek God for forgiveness?
9. Of what value are the long roots of the cedars?
10. How much does God love a person?