

## HOSEA AND THE GOD WHO WANTS TO MEND BROKEN THINGS

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Hosea's name means He saves. He was the son of Beerli and lived about 780 - 725 BC

Many brethren and other Christians are fussy about words. Sometimes this may be necessary, but not always.

While the words salvation and redemption has the same resultant meaning, the words are a little different.

This is shown in the book of the prophet Hosea, the first of the twelve Minor Prophets. Minor, not in the sense of less important but, perhaps, in the sense of a shorter ministry.

In Hosea 1 verse 2, the Lord tells Hosea to take a wife of whoredoms who has children of whoredoms.

Now God would not tell a man, let alone a prophet, to marry a woman of ill repute who had illegitimate children. Hosea is recounting events after they have happened. Hosea married a woman who later proved to be unfaithful. Some had said that Gomer was probably, or became, a Temple prostitute.

Hosea marries Gomer and in chapter 1 verse 3 we read that she bare him a son.

In verse 6 she has a daughter but not it does not say that she bare him a daughter.

In verse 8, she has a son and, again, it does not say that she bare Hosea a son. These last two children are not Hosea's, but children of Gomer's infidelity. Hosea 3 verse 1 calls her an adulteress.

In Chapter 2 verse 2, Hosea pleads the case of Gomer saying, "She is not my wife; she put must away her whoredoms. She has played the harlot," says verse 5, "and gone after other lovers and acted shamefully".

To most men that would be the end of it. The Lord Jesus said that a man can divorce his wife for fornication (Matthew 5.32; 19.9) although there are believers who contradict this.

In Hosea 3, God tells Hosea to go and buy Gomer back although she has worshipped other gods, had a drink problem and had many lovers.

And so he does. She cost him 15 pieces of silver and one and a half homers of barley and Gomer had to promise to be faithful to her husband in the future and he would treat her well.

This is a picture of God calling His earthly people back to Himself. Alas, My land and My people have committed great harlotry, says the Lord.

This is also a picture of the Lord redeeming us. Everyone belongs to God but the majority reject Him. But the Lord came to seek and save those that are lost. He did not pay 15 pieces of silver and a homer and half of barley for us but paid with His life and the shedding of His Precious Blood; a price that we cannot calculate.

It is like depositing an item in a pawnbrokers shop and being without it until you buy it back and redeem it. There are Christians who have owned allegiance to the Lord and gone away from Him and yet the Lord wants to redeem them. It is the story of the one lost sheep of a fold of an hundred.

There is another message here. Hosea forgave Gomer. I don't think I could have. God forgave us.

When He died on the Cross all our sins were future. That causes us to rejoice!

Hosea 4 deals with various judgements on Israel each referring to some aspect of Israel's sin; the root cause was not knowing the Lord. Both Hosea and Jeremiah define religion as knowing the Lord (Jeremiah 9.24, 24.7) and it refers to a deep knowledge and nothing superficial. It is one thing to know of the Lord but it is another to know Him personally and obey His Will.

Hosea deals with inward attitudes to the Lord and deals with His kindness and faithfulness. Without these attributes evil will have its way. There is an emphasis on moral standards here which standards are successful if we have the right relationship with God. In verses 4 to 9 Hosea deals with the low standards of the religious leaders of his time who actually encourage people to sin because there would be an increase in income for sin and trespass offerings. It is to be noticed that strong drink and idolatry made many people irrational and sinful. One could consider how these things are prevalent today. Some denominations and speakers have slick methods with entertainment, jokes, pop groups, dancing and talking about self. It may get people into church but not necessarily into heaven. And some of these groups are money making enterprises which detail may be concealed.

In chapters 5 and 6 Hosea predicts an invasion of Israel starting in the hilltop towns in which invasion Judah was to be involved as well. The invading armies were God's instruments of moral judgement upon Israel who choose the wrong way out of trouble (5.13). Often we escape from the judgment upon our sin but commit more sins. Chapter 6 talks about Israel in distress because of their being under threat and 6 verses 1 to 3 states their expression of repentance which seems true enough upon first consideration. But mere words cannot fool God who speaks of His mercy. He is not deceived by outward sacrifice (v 6) since religious ritual is not enough.

In Hosea 7 and 8, the prophet uses the symbolism of a baker and saying that the district of Ephraim is half baked. Israel made false alliances. They were at the crossroads of the trade routes and encountered many foreign peoples who influenced them and such compromise is weakness. It can result in half baked faith. Trust in any foreign alliance is an act of disobedience to the Lord.

There were also false gods and rampant idolatry (7.16, 8.4-6) which refers particularly to Jeroboam's images at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12.28) which idolatry was Canaanite worship of Baal the fertility god. Repentance was false while idolatry was rife.

Canaanite worship centred on a calf or bull, and the idolatry of the golden calf of Exodus 32 suggests that the whole of Israel's monarchy from Jeroboam 1 onwards is condemned as was Solomon and his serial idolatry in 1 Kings 11 which split the kingdom into two namely Israel and Judah. Both these evil kings show us the danger of turning away from God and failing to implement His guidance.

Hosea 11 is very moving and said to be the Old Testament equivalent of the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is at Calvary that we see both the mercy and justice of God.

The other contrast is the waywardness of the children of Israel and God's amazing love towards them which we can all speak about in our own lives. Israel was a son to God and He loved them but they sacrificed to Baal and other deities. He showed them His ties of love for them and removed their burdens.

This contradicts the view that the Old Testament portrays God as a tyrant which He is not. He loves His own without compromising His righteousness. He treated Israel with judgement (5- 7) and with mercy (10-11). In verse 12 we read that Judah remained faithful, but within a century failed and received strong condemnation.

Chapter 12 deals further with Israel's sin and, still today, people believe that what we know as sinful

attitudes and acts seems to bring security ( verse 1) prosperity (verses 7-8) or other goals. Riches acquired by evil means are condemned by God who will punish (verses 8-9). We must not fool ourselves and think that we can get away with it.

The reference to Jacob is interesting signifying like father like son (verses 2-6). To trample over another is utterly wrong and was apparent from Jacob's birth but he finally met God. It is implied that Israel pursued his immoral way and now were in the death-throes with the oncoming overthrow by the Assyrians.

Hosea 13 typifies Proverbs 14.34, Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to all the people. It says at least two things about idolatry. It degrades (verse 2). The idea of men kissing the calf images expressing their homage and worship was ridiculous to say the least. We have idolatry today but it is harder to detect and idolatry is heresy and practised by some who say that they are Christians. From this we see that idolatry is ingratitude to God and it corrupts. Who would image that Israel, so loved and protected by God, would turn away from Him? As for ourselves, we must never forget what we owe to Him (Hebrews 2.3). We reap what we sow and we must constantly look to ourselves

The final chapter tells us that Israel heard Hosea's warning and did nothing. They took no notice. Verse 3 likens us to being helpless and orphans and always being tempted by material things. Israel was relying on foreign alliances, weapons, cavalry and idolatry. Verses 4 to 8 speaks of God's amazing grace. The dew in Palestine is an important source of life-giving moisture hence it speaks symbolically of God-given vitality.

There is a need for true repentance and to return to the Lord which will restore a broken home such as that of Hosea and Gomer, and a broken nation.

In over 50 years, I have heard preaching or ministry on this important book only once with its vital lessons and that was at Keswick.

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