

HOSEA

People Who Forgot GOD

by S. Franklin Logsdon

"For Israel hath forgotten his maker." (Hosea 8:14)

"My people have forgotten me days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32)

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CHAPTER TWO -

THE SYMBOL OF AN UNFAITHFUL WIFE (Hosea 1)

THE FIRST CHAPTER of the book opens with a clear ring of authority. It was definitely the word of the LORD which came to the prophet. It came to him, of course, that he might present it to the people. This supports the fact that GOD maintains the power and availability of His Word for all generations. He spoke through Moses to Israel; through Samuel to Saul; through Nathan to David; through Jeremiah to the people; through Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar; through John the Baptizer to Judaism. And in these "**last days**" GOD speaks to us through His Son.

The reason GOD desires to speak to men is threefold:

- (1) To give warning: "**Turn ye, turn ye... for why will ye die?**"
- (2) To give life: "**the words... are spirit, and they are life.**"
- (3) To give hope: "**Because I live, ye shall live also.**"

He speaks to the sinner to look (Isaiah 45:22) to the sorrowing to come (Matthew 11:28), and to the indifferent to hear (Hebrews 3:7, 8). But the thing so difficult to ponder, so impossible of comprehension, is that finite, needy, helpless men stop their ears to the voice of GOD.

The LORD speaks with miraculous force (Genesis 1:3), with promising assurance (John 14:3), with comforting bliss (Isaiah 51:12), and with resurrection power (John 5:28). He speaks amid the labyrinth of voices. Yet for all of this, the majority of people will live and die without having heard His message of love and compassion.

Hosea was a spokesman for the LORD in perilous times, and his ministry reflects in a dramatic manner the Herculean task of getting a hearing for divine revelation in declining days. Isaiah, for instance, was driven almost to distraction (Isaiah 64:1-8). Jeremiah wept, preferring instead of

the ministry to operate a lodging house for wayfaring men (Jeremiah 9:2). And Ezekiel met with opposition described as the piercing of thorns and briars, even the sting of scorpions (Ezekiel 2:6).

The ministry of Hosea continued for more than sixty years. While his contemporaries were pleading, respectively, for people in Israel to "**prepare to meet thy God**" (Amos 4:12), and for the people of Judah to "**come now, and let us reason together**" (Isaiah 1:18), Hosea was revealing the pathetic spiritual plight of the people as the omniscient GOD viewed it. His metaphorical style, such as calves, cakes, cornfloor, etc., should not conceal but rather clarify the meaning of his timely message.

Verse 1 indicates the time of this prophecy. It was given during "**the days Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel.**" Verse 2 reveals the demonstrative manner in which the message was begun. The prophet was commanded to take unto himself a wife from among the indifferent and backsliding people of GOD. This was designed to be symbolical of the union of JEHOVAH with His covenant people, now idolatrous and wayward. It was emblematic of what grace and mercy must do in bringing back faithless rebels to the place of devotion. It is illuminating to note here that Hosea means "*salvation, help, deliverance, GOD is help.*"

In due course, and in unquestioning obedience, Hosea took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim to be his wife (v. 3). And as Israel, after her marriage contract with JEHOVAH on Mount Sinai, lapsed into spiritual fornication, it is assumed, in order to complete the figure, that Gomer, following the trend of the times, fell into adultery.

To Hosea and Gomer were born two sons and a daughter. Around their names, divinely given, the sad facts of this prophecy gather. The first son was called Jezreel (v. 4). The name, meaning in this instance "*GOD will scatter,*" has an involved historical and spiritual association. Jezreel was the royal city of the wicked king Ahab, and became the scene of bloody murder inflicted by Jehu.

It was more than a hundred years prior to this that Elijah the prophet came upon Ahab (I Kings 21:20, 21).

The king called the prophet an enemy, and the prophet was quick to remind the king that he had outdone all others in his wicked perpetrations, and that his posterity would be cut off. The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in II Kings 10.

Jehu sent letters to the rulers and to the elders at Jezreel in a clever move to apprehend the sons of Ahab.

These rulers and elders were paralyzed with fear, and readily replied: "**We are thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us**" (II Kings 10:5). Soon the hideous instructions were issued and carried out. The seventy sons of the king were slain and their heads, carried in baskets, were dumped in two heaps at the gates of the city. Then Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab.

It is to this gruesome tragedy that the LORD refers when, through Hosea, He says: "**I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu**" (v. 4). GOD's patience and forbearance never affect His justice. "**To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense . . . If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold of judgment, I will render vengeance**" (Deuteronomy 32:35, 41).

The vengeance of the LORD has a very noticeable emphasis in the Scriptures. With a jealous eye upon His ancient people, He says, "**I will... curse him that curseth thee**" (Genesis 12:3). This will find its ultimate fulfillment when the hooks are put into the jaws of the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal (Ezekiel 39:3, 4), and when the Old Dragon, who for so long had plagued the woman (Israel) that gave birth to the man child (CHRIST), is cast into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:3). The intermittent imprecatory pleadings, especially in the Psalms, prove that these ancient people understood that JEHOVAH meant to intervene in their behalf.

The avenging spoken of by Hosea is to take place "**yet a little while**" (v. 4), and "**at that day**" (v. 5).

The scene is localized as the "**valley of Jezreel**" (v. 5), later called the "**plain of Esdraelon**," extending ten miles in breadth, and in length from Jordan to the Mediterranean near Mount Carmel - the great battlefield of Palestine.

The prophecy of Amos furnishes light on this matter: "**Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities**" (Amos 3:1, 2).

"**Therefore thus saith the LORD God; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled**" (Amos 3:11).

This seems to correlate with the thought of Hosea 1:5: "**I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel**," a destruction of prowess or strength (cf. Jeremiah 49:35). Whatever the judgment meted out to the enemies of the people of GOD, the wickedness of the people themselves is remembered (7:2), and "**the time of Jacob's trouble**" is inevitable (Jeremiah 30:7).

The second child born of Gomer was named Loruhamah (v. 6), meaning "*unpitied*"; more freely, not an object of mercy or gracious favor. Herein the people are pictured as in a state of broken fellowship. This finds an analogy in the Church Age as recorded in II Corinthians 6:14-18. Righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness; CHRIST has no concord with Belial; the believer has nothing in common with an infidel; nor has the temple of GOD any agreement with idols.

Unless unequal yokes are broken; until ungodly alliances are renounced, GOD cannot maintain the fellowship of a FATHER, nor dispense His blessings as a benefactor. Those who have fallen into such unholy situations are commanded unequivocally to "**come out from among them, and be ye separate.**" Then GOD says, I "**will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and**

daughters." The thought is comprehended in I Samuel 2:30: " . . . **them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.**"

The text makes clear (v. 7) that the northern kingdom was more wayward at the time than the southern kingdom; and, consequently, fell into the judgment of captivity the earlier. GOD gave Judah the advantage of Israel's downfall for a warning, even as He gives to the Church warning in the examples of these former experiences: "**Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come**" (I Corinthians 10:11). But neither Judah nor the Church will profit much by examples.

GOD spared Judah without bow, sword, battle, cavalry, and cavalymen; that is, without their resorting to warfare (v. 7). GOD stayed their enemies with His mighty power. But, when the flood of idolatry gradually rose to unprecedented heights, JEHOVAH confessed, "**The land is full of adulterers**" (Jeremiah 23:10), and "**My people have forgotten me days without number**" (Jeremiah 2:32).

The graveness of the situation is summed up in the blasphemous attitude of the people later: "**But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then had we plenty of victuals [food], and were well, and saw no evil [trial]**" (Jeremiah 44:17).

When people maintain they fare better serving mammon than GOD, they have only to wait until the day of disillusionment and remorse. It will surely come. When GOD took His hand off Judah, neither their idolatrous queen of Heaven nor their armies proved sufficient (Jeremiah 52: 8-11).

As soon as the daughter, Loruhamah, was weaned, Gomer conceived and bare another son whom GOD instructed them to name Loammi, meaning "**not my people**" (v. 9).

It is suggested that the first child, Jezreel, represents the dynasty of Jeroboam I and his successors, ending with Jehu's shedding of blood.

Loruhamah (not pitied), the second child, being a daughter, represents the effeminate period which followed the overthrow of the first dynasty when Israel was at once abject and impious.

Then, the third child, Loammi (not my people), a son, is thought to represent the vigorous dynasty of Jeroboam II.

But in spite of the increased prosperity of this period there was no spiritual awakening, no perceptible return to the LORD. This prevailing broken fellowship with JEHOVAH left them still Loammi (not my people). GOD spoke to Judah in their prosperity, but they would not hearken (Jeremiah 22:21).

Tragedy is but a word until one is enveloped in its grip and tastes of its bitterness. Then adjectives fall short of description. Of the various kinds of tragedy, however, none can produce

more unassuaged remorse than that which might have been avoided by attention to warning and obedience to instruction. The HOLY SPIRIT has marched out on the horizon of divine revelation some startling and sobering examples of defeated and dejected personalities (cf. I Samuel 15:26; II Kings 17:20).

At long last, after the display of patience most sublime, JEHOVAH rejected all the seed of Israel (II Kings 17:20). Even divine toleration ceases, and with its cessation comes irreparable loss.

"Lo-ammi . . . ye are not my people," saith the LORD.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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