

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

James M. Gray, D.D.

Fleming H. Revell Company

Copyright © 1906

by

Fleming H. Revell, Westwood, New Jersey

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century ago

~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~

LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN

HOSEA

Read 1:1 for something of the personal history of the prophet Hosea. Whose son was he? In whose reigns did he prophesy? The allusion to four kings of Judah, and but one of Israel, might lead us to suppose that Hosea was a prophet of the first-named kingdom; but the contents of the book show differently, and the four kings of Judah are doubtless referred to for other reasons. If, however, Hosea began to prophesy when Jeroboam II was king of Israel, and continued till Hezekiah was on the throne of Judah, it is evident that his ministry covered a period of 60 or 70 years, ending only with the captivity of his people. Compare your diagram of II Kings for corroboration of this.

The Character of the Times, II Kings 15-17

It is always well to acquaint oneself with the history of the period of a given prophet when one can do so, for obvious reasons. Read afresh, therefore, the three chapters in II Kings mentioned above, and observe the unsettled and iniquitous condition of Israel at this time.

- It was a golden age no longer, and their sun was setting under a dark and heavy cloud.
- Zechariah is slain, but the regicide rules only a month in his place until he, too, is slain.
- Menahem becomes a vassal to Assyria, and levies exacting taxes on the people to meet the tribute necessary to be paid.
- His son reigns but two years until he is murdered by one of his own military officers who

usurps the authority of the throne.

- Now the king of Assyria begins to foreclose his mortgage on the land and the people, and the first installment of the captivity takes place.

- Another murderer comes on the throne, and finally, after a siege of three years, Samaria succumbs to her stronger mistress, and the whole nation is removed far away.

Please do not be satisfied with this limited sketch of the period, but by your own diligent reading master the facts for yourselves. If you do so, you will be impressed anew with the wonderful patience and love of GOD as illustrated by His message to such a people through the lips of our prophet.

Hosea is pre-eminently a prophet of love and tenderness, whose characteristics in that respect are simply the reflection of the divine mind, the pulsation of the divine heart; but to be appreciated must be seen and weighed in comparison with the environment in which he lived.

An Example of Object Teaching, Chapters 1-4

We hear much in these days about object teaching and the kindergarten system, but it is not so modern or so strictly mundane a method of instruction as might be supposed. GOD taught His people Israel in that way, of which we have already seen many illustrations in type and symbol. But we come now to one of a kind different from anything yet met.

For example, GOD would sometimes call upon His prophets to do strange things, to act in a manner out of the ordinary. But as they were conspicuous and important personages in the land, such conduct would naturally excite inquiry, and this, in turn, would open the way for the prophet to give the particular instruction to the people which his action or conduct symbolized or figuratively portrayed.

In the present instance what strange thing is Hosea commanded to do (1:2)? Of course, though strange, it was not wrong for him to do. GOD's command to do it removes any thought of that character. Moreover, the prophet's motive in marrying the woman was a pure and lofty one. He was to give her his name, and his protection, and lift her out of her former life of moral degradation unto the same high plane as that on which he lived. But why was he to do this? That is, what great historical fact in His own relationship to Israel did GOD intend to set before them in this domestic history of His prophet?

- what does the last clause of verse 2 say?

- is it not clear that Hosea's marriage with this unchaste woman illustrates the Lord's marriage with an unchaste people?

- where in this book does GOD call Himself the husband of Israel?

But did Israel have anything more to recommend her to GOD's love and care when He took her to Himself, than this woman had when Hosea married her (Deuteronomy 9:4-6; and Isaiah 51:1,2)?

Observe farther the object teaching in the very names of the children born of this union (vv. 3-9). The meaning of these names will be found in the margin.

Observe a peculiarity of prophetic teaching illustrated in verse 4.

There are two distinct prophecies there, but at the first glance it reads like only one. You would think that the avenging of the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu and the cessation of the house of Israel were one and the same thing, and took place at one and the same time. But look back at II Kings 15:8-12 for the fulfillment of the first, and II Kings 17 for the second. How long a period elapsed between the two, represented by that punctuation mark after "Jehu," in verse 4?

This offers a fitting opportunity to remark that the prophets saw the future in space rather than in time. The perspective is regarded rather than the actual distance.

As another expresses it, "They speak of things future as a common observer would describe the stars, grouping them as they appear, but not according to their true position." Other illustrations of this principle will be noted further on, but let us fasten the fact on our minds now for future use.

While Hosea is speaking of Israel especially, what side reference is made to Judah in verse 7? See the application or fulfillment of these words as recorded in Judah's history sometime after Israel has been led into captivity (II Kings 19, especially v. 35).

In all such cases, form the habit of examining the marginal references in your Bible, which are a commentary and concordance in one. The above-named reference will be found there. But is there no hope at all for Israel? Read verse 10.

- what is the blessing spoken of?
- in what place will it be realized?
- will there be two kingdoms then, or only one (v. 11)?
- what other prophet, with whom Hosea thus agrees, has held out a like prospect?

An Unfaithful Wife, Chapter 2

We now reach a second chapter in the book, and a second in the domestic experience of the prophet. It is a very bitter one. It would appear that notwithstanding the love of Hosea for his wife, as evidenced among other ways in his bountiful provision for her needs; and notwithstanding she had become the mother of his children, yet she turned her back upon him and them; went after her former lovers and companions in sin, and from an unchaste woman became now a faithless, an adulteress wife.

The chapter containing this story is like a dissolving picture, making it difficult to determine just where the record ceases to speak of Hosea's wife and begins to speak directly of Israel's unfaithfulness to GOD. We will dismiss the first idea, therefore, and confine ourselves to the second, where the intention is very plain. The teaching clearly is, that notwithstanding GOD's goodness to Israel, calling them to be His people, providing for and protecting them when they had no more claim on His bounty than that unchaste woman had on Hosea's love, yet they had abused His kindness and committed spiritual adultery with idols, especially in Baalim worship.

- what command is laid on the prophet (vv. 1,2)?
- what charge is laid at the door of Israel (v. 5)?
- what is predicted as the outcome of her iniquity (vv. 6, 7)?
- what was the ground or origin of her sin (v. 8)?
- what shows her culpability for this ignorance (vv. 8-13)?
- how do these verses indicate her punishment?
- to what particular period do verses 11-13 refer?
- may they also, according to the law of double reference, find an application in her history at the present time?
- what allusion to the extent of her punishment (in time) is found in verse 13?
- with what verse does the usual vision of hope appear?
- does verse 18 apply to the present or the coming millennial age?
- what language agrees with the idea already expressed of the Lord's (marriage) union with Israel?
- how does that language show that a great moral change must precede or accompany Israel's restoration?
- what language in verse 19 agrees with the last promise in Amos?

A Faithful Husband, Chapter 3

Perhaps the third chapter in this interesting history is the most impressive of all.

The prophet's wife has deserted him, but he is commanded still to love her, notwithstanding her conduct. And he is to enter into an arrangement with her, by which a certain provision is to be given her by him for her necessities, on condition that for the time being she shall no longer live adulterously with other men. He, too, will keep himself from becoming husband to another woman. It does not seem that they were to live together in their former relationship, but to be kept one for another in this separated state (vv. 1-3).

And now how plain is the application made by the HOLY SPIRIT in the two following verses! To what period in Israel's history can verse 4 apply any more truly than the present? And on such a conclusion what inference may be drawn from verse 5? It might be well to read this verse in connection again with Amos 9:11-15.

A Sermonic Hint

Preachers and others looking for themes and texts of discourses along deeply spiritual lines, will not neglect the precious opportunity here presented. What an analogy we have here to our own standing before GOD in CHRIST!

When we were first called of GOD, were we not spiritually just what this woman was morally, when Hosea married her? Had we anything to commend us to Him? Was not His acceptance of us an act of pure grace on His part? And since that time, with so much more to praise Him for as His benefits have been bestowed on us, how often have we treated Him like this unfaithful wife! Is not every act of disobedience on our part a kind of spiritual adultery? Yet has GOD discarded us?

- has He cast us away?
- are not His gifts and calling without repentance?
- does He not bear patiently with us?
- does He not still supply our need?
- does He not call us back to Him again?
- does not His Spirit work in us repentance not to be repented of?
- and shall we not be His forever?

Thus we see that although primarily, or historically, the application of these chapters is to Israel in the flesh, yet in an accommodated and spiritual sense it belongs to us.

If we are thus always careful to distinguish between these two things, the historical and the spiritual, there is no reason why we may not employ much of the Old Testament in this way. Indeed doubtless, it is so intended to be employed.

General Discourses, Chapters 4-13

The first three chapters of the book, already considered, form its first natural division, which may be distinguished by the term "Historico-prophetic."

They are historic as alluding to the personal life of the prophet, but prophetic, as pre-figuring GOD's relations to and dealings with Israel. The second division of the book may be described as at the head of this paragraph.

By "General Discourses," is meant such as we have already studied in Amos, and which it will not be necessary to especially consider here. They give in detail what the first three chapters give in outline, so to speak.

That is, they speak of Israel's departure from GOD, and describe more particularly the forms it took, viz:

- falsehood (4:1),
- licentiousness (4:11),
- murder (5:2),
- robbery (7:1),
- oppression (12:7), etc.

Unlike the book of Amos, however, the discourses in Hosea are not very distinctly defined one from another.

The chapters have more the form of one continuous prophecy, and it is thought by some that the prophet himself probably gathered into one discourse the substance of what he had delivered in the whole course of his ministry. The name "Ephraim" so commonly used in the book, taken from one of the chief tribes, is synonymous, or used almost interchangeably, with "Israel." As "Judah" is the title given to the other kingdom, though composed of Judah and Benjamin, so Ephraim is used here as including the other nine tribes.

Your attention was called to the fact that in each of the first three chapters, after rebuke, and warning and prediction of coming suffering, the discourse ended with the promise of future blessing. So now at the close of these "General Discourses," the last chapter (14) concludes in the same way.

This further illustrates the law of recurrence which was defined at the beginning of our lessons, and which is a marked peculiarity of much of the prophetic writings. For example, the ground covered in the first chapter of this book, is practically gone over again in chapter two, or chapters two and three taken together.

The HOLY SPIRIT thus "recurs" to the subject for the purpose of bringing out certain details, or calling attention to certain features not mentioned before, or if so, in only a very general or incidental way. And so it is with reference to the rest of the book. From chapters 4 to 14 the HOLY SPIRIT is simply "recurring" to the main theme of the earlier chapters. He is not going over new ground, and the matter does not represent what we call progress of thought.

The last chapter of the book now to be considered is speaking of the same circumstances, and the same period of time practically, as the last verses of chapters 1,2 and 3, and all that has intervened has been is the nature of amplification of the other verses of those chapters. The importance of seizing upon such a simple principle as this in interpreting the prophets is too apparent to require emphasis.

The Future Hope, Chapter 14

Let us remember, therefore, that the viewpoint of this chapter is about the same as that of 1:10, 11; 2:14-23, and 3:5. With that understanding, let us divide it into its several parts, finding in it material for another discourse or Bible reading.

The gracious appeal, verses 1-3.

The promised blessing, verses 4-8.

The practical application, verse 9.

Observe in the appeal that the very words are put on Israel's lips with which they are to return to GOD.

Observe the freeness of GOD's blessing to them on the ground of repentance and faith (v. 4).

Observe the figurative allusions to the source and character of these blessings in that day (vv. 5-7), fully agreeing again with Amos 9:11-15.

Verse 8 might be considered as a future dialogue between Ephraim and the Lord. Verse 9 justifies us, as was said before, in employing the whole subject in a spiritual sense and applying it to the present church period in which we dwell.

~ end of Lesson 27 ~
