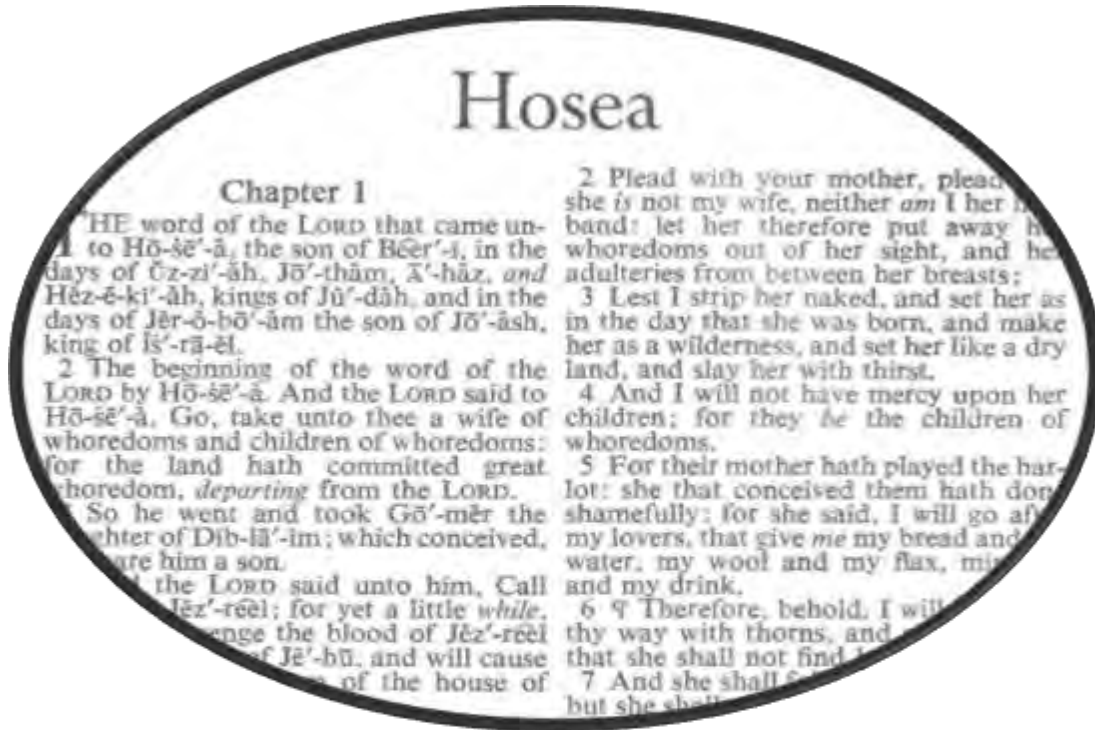


HOSEA—WEEK 8

RECONCILIATION



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Hosea, Week 8 — Reconciliation

Israel has sinned against God in just about every way imaginable. Their blessings have made them proud. They asked for a king, which is the ultimate insult to their true king. They will suffer greatly for this. Finally, Hosea explicitly calls them to pray for forgiveness.

And God will restore them. His love conquers all.

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Thank you.

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1 Hosea 13:1-8 (NIV)

*When Ephraim spoke, people trembled;
he was exalted in Israel.
But he became guilty of Baal worship and died.
Now they sin more and more;
they make idols for themselves from their silver,
cleverly fashioned images,
all of them the work of craftsmen.
It is said of these people,
“They offer human sacrifices!
They kiss calf-idols!”
Therefore they will be like the morning mist,
like the early dew that disappears,
like chaff swirling from a threshing floor,
like smoke escaping through a window.
“But I have been the Lord your God*

*ever since you came out of Egypt.
You shall acknowledge no God but me,
no Savior except me.
I cared for you in the wilderness,
in the land of burning heat.
When I fed them, they were satisfied;
when they were satisfied, they became proud;
then they forgot me.
So I will be like a lion to them,
like a leopard I will lurk by the path.
Like a bear robbed of her cubs,
I will attack them and rip them open;
like a lion I will devour them—
a wild animal will tear them apart.”*

Israel’s sin and idolatry has reached a fever pitch. But notice that right in the middle of this passage is the key to the whole book—and to the problem with Israel.

*I cared for you in the wilderness,
in the land of burning heat.
When I fed them, they were satisfied;
when they were satisfied, they became proud;
then they forgot me.*

God blessed them incredibly, and that just made them proud. They took it all for granted.

America has the same problem. We’re too blessed.

Our blessings make those of ancient Israel look like nothing. What would an ancient Israeli think of a smart phone? Or indoor plumbing?

We take this all for granted too. Blessings like these have made us soft and have made us proud.

But it’s worse than that. Suppose we could transport Hosea to modern America. After he got over the shock of seeing smart phones and indoor plumbing, what sin do you think he would see everywhere? What sin would he say defines our culture?

I think he’d be more shocked by what we do with the smart phones than by the phones themselves.

We treat them like idols! Our sin isn’t pride; it’s idolatry.

2 Hosea 13:9-13 (NKJV)

*“O Israel, you are destroyed,
But your help is from Me.
I will be your King;
Where is any other,
That he may save you in all your cities?
And your judges to whom you said,
‘Give me a king and princes’?
I gave you a king in My anger,
And took him away in My wrath.*

*“The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up;
His sin is stored up.
The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come
upon him.
He is an unwise son,
For he should not stay long where children are
born.”*

What was ancient Israel’s greatest sin—its greatest offence against the LORD? What thing did they do that rejected God the most? Was it casting another golden calf?

No, though that might hold the record for the dumbest thing they did, it wasn’t pure rejection.

No, the purest rejection of God was when they asked for a king. God is their king. God is supposed to be their king. God wants to be their king.

Another king will command the people. He will be their lord. He will do the job that’s supposed to be reserved for the LORD Himself.

God’s response is, “What am I? Chopped liver?”

*I will be your King;
Where is any other,
That he may save you in all your cities? ...
I gave you a king in My anger,
And took him away in My wrath.*

Israel’s earthly kings failed by design. God wouldn’t allow such an affront to succeed.

Yet again, we see this book pointing to Christ—the one true king.

We talk about Christ as king all the time, but do we envision Him that way? Because He’s our savior, we often focus on that aspect of Christ and don’t pay much attention to His role as ruler of all creation. Ever thank Jesus for creating the sun? Or gravity? Or whatever your favorite thing is (roses, ice cream, etc.)?

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. –John 1:3 (NKJV)

We thank Jesus for going to the cross, but that’s pretty much it. We need to expand our point of view to encompass the whole Lord.

He is worthy of a glory, praise, and honor, and not just for one thing He did.

3 Hosea 13:14-16 (NKJV)

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave;

I will redeem them from death.

O Death, I will be your plagues!

O Grave, I will be your destruction!

Pity is hidden from My eyes.”

Though he is fruitful among his brethren,

An east wind shall come;

The wind of the Lord shall come up from the

wilderness.

Then his spring shall become dry,

And his fountain shall be dried up.

He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize.

Samaria is held guilty,

For she has rebelled against her God.

They shall fall by the sword,

Their infants shall be dashed in pieces,

And their women with child ripped open.

This is even more Christ oriented than yesterday’s passage. Hosea sounds like he’s quoting Matthew and 1 Corinthians.

“And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” — Matthew 20:27-28 (NKJV)

O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” — 1 Corinthians 15:55 (NKJV)

But then Hosea describes, in brutal detail, their slaughter. How does that fit with the gospel?

It fits perfectly. Being saved has nothing to do with avoiding pain. He warned His followers that they would be persecuted for following Him. Trials and tribulations are sure to come to their way.

They’ll be *ransomed from the power of the grave*, but that’s not the same as avoiding death.

This is how the plan of salvation works. People who sign up to follow Christ shouldn’t expect life to be a bowl of cherries. The Lord was perfectly clear on this.

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. — Matthew 5:11–12 (NKJV)

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” — Luke 9:23 (NKJV)

But some people have been sold Christianity as a panacea. That’s not right. In fact, it’s cruel.

When their life in Christ doesn’t match with what they’ve been taught, they’ll struggle to process the contradiction. Unless someone sets them straight, they’ll keep trying to fix what they “must have” done wrong. Since that’s not the solution, this will spiral endlessly.

That’s just about the nastiest thing that can happen to anyone’s faith.

4 Hosea 14:1-3 (NIV)

*Return, Israel, to the LORD your God.
Your sins have been your downfall!
Take words with you
and return to the LORD.
Say to him:
“Forgive all our sins
and receive us graciously,*

*that we may offer the fruit of our lips.
Assyria cannot save us;
we will not mount warhorses.
We will never again say ‘Our gods’
to what our own hands have made,
for in you the fatherless find compassion.”*

Notice how this passage refers to the LORD in the third person (*Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him; ...*). This isn't God speaking through Hosea; it's Hosea's own thoughts.

And Hosea says something different. He gives a specific prayer.

*“Forgive all our sins
and receive us graciously,
that we may offer the fruit of our lips.
Assyria cannot save us;
we will not mount warhorses.
We will never again say ‘Our gods’
to what our own hands have made,
for in you the fatherless find compassion.”*

This isn't prophesy; it's instruction. Hosea's teaching here. He's making the same point that all his prophetic utterances made, but from his own point of view and with his own style.

He's trying a different approach. If all the pain Israel has suffered hasn't gotten through to them, maybe some straight recitation will help. This simple prayer sums up the lesson God has been pounding into them for the last 13 chapters.

Hosea is calling them to confess that they have trusted in things that do not deliver, namely idols and other kings. They will give this up and worship the true God only, *that we may offer the fruit of our lips*.

If they learn this prayer, they'll at least have memorized the lesson God has been teaching them.

Memorization is an essential tool in education, especially in theology. The fact is that we aren't going to fully understand the great truths of our faith; they're beyond our comprehension. Since everything is so complex, the potential for error is boundless. Thus, the teaching must be precisely crafted.

The surest way to learn proper doctrine is to memorize carefully worded passages word-for-word.

That's why we recite the great creeds.

5 Hosea 14:4-9 (NKJV)

*“I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely,
For My anger has turned away from him.
I will be like the dew to Israel;
He shall grow like the lily,
And lengthen his roots like Lebanon.
His branches shall spread;
His beauty shall be like an olive tree,
And his fragrance like Lebanon.
Those who dwell under his shadow shall return;
They shall be revived like grain,
And grow like a vine.
Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon.*

*“Ephraim shall say, ‘What have I to do anymore
with idols?’
I have heard and observed him.
I am like a green cypress tree;
Your fruit is found in Me.”*

*Who is wise?
Let him understand these things.
Who is prudent?
Let him know them.
For the ways of the LORD are right;
The righteous walk in them,
But transgressors stumble in them.*

God concludes the book by pouring out His heart. You can just feel the love in this passage. Israel has a special place in God’s heart, and He longs for them to quit their idiotic behavior. The good life awaits if they’ll just stop “looking for love in all the wrong places.”

*“I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely,
For My anger has turned away from him.”*

The point of the book of Hosea is that faith isn’t just about laws and logic; it’s about a relationship. Yes, there are laws and logic in that relationship, but the heart is the essence. A faith that’s all laws and logic is like a loveless marriage.

It may look like the real thing, but it’s just a shell.

Why go to church? Why study the Bible? Why read these DEEPs?

Are they for self-improvement? Are they just doing the right thing? Or is there a craving for something?

*As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God. — Psalm 42:1 (NKJV)*

Any practice of Christianity is a good thing, but craving God is how it soars.

I began this study of Hosea by explaining that acting like a Christian should come from thinking like a Christian. Part one of “How to Think Like a Christian” was the Jonah study. Part two was Hosea. Jonah taught the right mindset. Hosea taught the right heartset.

One of the great secrets of life is learning that God really does love us—and loving Him in return.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What are the idols in your life?
2. How is our worship inadequate?
3. How much should a Christian suffer?
4. What is your favorite memorized thing, creed, or passage?
5. How can we love God more/better?

Items for prayer: