



Hosea - Chapter Six

II. Hosea 4:1-14:9 - Hosea Spells Out His Parable with Accusations, Warnings, and Promises (continues)

Summary of Chapter Six

The people are called to know that it is only God who can heal them of their current ills but they must repent of their ways and return to him.

Both Israel and Judah are reminded that God had sent forth his prophets to warn them of what would befall them if they did not mend their ways. Yet they still chose idolatry over the Lord.

II.c Hosea 6:1-3 - A Call to Repentance

The Lord will return to his place: <<*I will return again to my place*>> (Hosea 5:15a), expecting the people to return to him.

- 1 'Come, let us return to the Lord;
for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us;
he has struck down, and he will bind us up.

Hosea 6:1

Come, let us return to the Lord. Now the prophet includes himself in his imagining of humble submission to the Almighty's discipline. The OT prophets did not separate themselves from the plight of their people: <<*And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'*>> (Isaiah 6:5), and: <<*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all*>> (Isaiah 53:6).

For it is he who has torn, and he will heal us. Hosea prays with the right heart in response to the chastening hand of God. Instead of arguing with God, or resenting his correction, Hosea leads Israel in humble prayer. This is a prayer that trusts the love of God, and sees his loving hand even in correction. Often, a rebellious child will complain that their parents do not love them: <<**He has torn me in his wrath, and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me; my adversary sharpens his eyes against me**>> (Job 16:9), and: <<**he led me off my way and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate**>> (Lamentations 3:11). Of course, the parents do love the child, but in their rebellion and lack of submission, they cannot receive or respond to that love. Hosea prays with a different heart: <<**And Moses cried to the Lord, ‘O God, please heal her’**>> (Numbers 12:13).

² After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.

Hosea 6:2

After two days he will revive us shows that even after this fierce slaying (v.1) they are not beyond the Lord’s healing. Healing is a picture of a complete metamorphosis: a rising from the dead on the third day. Hosea prayed this full of confidence in God’s love and power to restore: <<**See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and no one can deliver from my hand**>> (Deuteronomy 32:39).

The Septuagint’s Greek translation for on the third day he will raise us up is part of what lay behind Jesus’ and the NT writers’ statements that Jesus’ resurrection on the third day was according to the Scriptures: <<**and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem’**>> (Luke 24:46-47), and: <<**For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures**>> (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). It is also shown in Jesus analogy of the sign of Jonah in Matthew 12:40. Hosea was not writing about the Messiah directly, however, but about the people of Israel. The NT use of this idea depends on seeing a parallel between Israel’s resurrection on the third day in this verse, and Jesus as the Messiah representing and embodying his people. The potential of Israel’s third-day resurrection is to be ultimately realised in the resurrection of the one who acted in Israel’s place. This picture of Israel’s death and resurrection thus sets the pattern for what eventually will be accomplished in and through Christ.

3 Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord;
his appearing is as sure as the dawn;
he will come to us like the showers,
like the spring rains that water the earth.'

Hosea 6:3

Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. Israel's problem was described earlier: *<<My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children>>* (Hosea 4:6). Hosea leads the nation in a repentant correction of this problem. Christians should also know that when they pursue the knowledge of the Lord, he blesses it. It must be more than superficial, it must be a pursuit. However, when they endeavour to know the Lord, especially through his Word, he reveals himself to them: *<<And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him>>* (Hebrews 11:6).

His appearing is as sure as the dawn. Nothing is more certain than God responding to those who earnestly seek him and cry out to him.

He will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth. In Israel, the only way crops were watered was by rain. So farmer waited for the rain with great anticipation. When people anticipate and wait for God with this kind of earnest expectation, he answers and will come to us.

This passage along with others such as: *<<then he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil>>* (Deuteronomy 11:14), and: *<<O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before>>* (Joel 2:23) were taken to give the name of the 'Latter Rain Movement' which started in 1948. In 1948, a Oneness Pentecostal minister named William Branham held meetings at an orphanage and school founded by a Foursquare Church in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada. Those attending the meeting were so impressed by the supernatural works, healing, prophecy, word of knowledge, and strange phenomenon, that they considered it a beginning of a new work of God on earth. In their newsletter, this is how they described it: "All the great outpourings of the past have had their outstanding truths. Luther's truth was Justification by Faith. Wesley's was Sanctification. The Baptists taught the pre-millennial coming of Christ. The Missionary Alliance taught Divine Healing. The Pentecostal outpouring has

restored the Baptism of the Holy Ghost to its rightful place. But the next great outpouring is going to be marked by all these other truths plus such a demonstration of the nine gifts of the Spirit as the world, not even the Apostolic world, has ever witnessed before. This revival will be short and will be the last before the Rapture of the Church.” They felt that the Pentecostal denominations of their day were ‘dead’ and ‘dry,’ and needed the blessing of the ‘Latter Rain,’ which would especially be marked by miraculous signs and supernatural works. The Pentecostal denominations, notably the Assemblies of God and the Foursquare Church denounced the Branham and the Latter Rain movement for both their teaching and practices. William Branham continued, drawing large crowds to his prophecy and healing crusades. He and a young evangelist named Oral Roberts led the Latter Rain Movement for several years. Branham’s doctrine became more and more aberrant. Branham believed that the Word of God was given in three forms: the Zodiac, the Egyptian pyramids, and the written scriptures. He also taught the ‘serpent seed’ doctrine, which was based on his interpretation of Genesis 3:13, saying that Eve had sexual relations with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. The Latter Rain Movement, as led by William Branham and Oral Roberts eventually faded from prominence. Branham himself died in a road traffic collision with a drunk driver in 1965. He died on Christmas Eve, and his faithful followers believed that he would rise from the dead, so they delayed his burial for several days. But the influence of the Latter Rain movement lived on. The Latter Rain popularised many attitudes and doctrines popular in revival movements today. Many researchers, and many within these modern groups today, believe that many modern ‘revival’ movements are really just a continuation of the Latter Rain movement. Movements such as ‘Joel’s Army,’ the Manifest Sons of God, the Dominion Movement, the Kansas City Prophets, the Toronto Blessing, and the Pensacola Revival are connected in some way to the Latter Rain movement. For example, Paul Cain, later to re-emerge as head of the Kansas City Prophets in 1989, travelled with William Branham and called him ‘the greatest prophet that ever lived.’ The modern Latter Rain movement believes: “The Latter Rain is God’s great end-time ministry. This concept as revealed in the Bible, comprises the restitution of the church to its rightful place, the enormous last day revival and the harvest of souls before the great and terrible Day of the Lord. It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh promised to us in the last days and the restoration of apostolic and prophetic gifts.”

Throughout history there have always been groups of people who come up with ideas that hype up the message of the Gospel. Most people would be advised to base their own faith on sound biblical teaching and the experience of their own personal relationship with God. God will make himself known in the hearts of those who earnestly seek him and have no other desire than to serve God in the name of Jesus.

II.d Hosea 6:4-7:10 - Impenitence of Israel and Judah

Israel's sins are worse than simply violating the law: they repudiate the gracious covenant that is the foundation of their life and hope.

- 4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
 What shall I do with you, O Judah?
 Your love is like a morning cloud,
 like the dew that goes away early.

Hosea 6:4

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? O Judah? One must not miss this outburst of emotion, like an anguished father not knowing what to do with his wayward child, or a husband agonisingly frustrated with his promiscuous bride: <<*How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender*>> (Hosea 11:8), and: <<*So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him*>> (Luke 15:20). Israel's response, as envisaged in vv.1-3, is described as a morning cloud and the dew that goes early away, both representing the inconstancy of an adulterous wife. It was not that there was no faithfulness among the people of God. It is just that whatever there was quickly dissipated like the early dew.

- 5 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets,
 I have killed them by the words of my mouth,
 and my judgement goes forth as the light.

Hosea 6:5

I have killed them by the words of my mouth. God sent the prophets not just to warn the prophets but to cut them to the core so that they might repent and return to him: <<*Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart*>> (Hebrews 4:12).

My judgement goes forth as the light means that God's light exposes Israel's idolatry, something they would have preferred to have hidden from his gaze: <<*And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds*>>

may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God’>> (John 3:19-21), <<I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness>> (John 12:46), <<Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness?>> (2 Corinthians 6:14), and: <<These are blemishes on your love-feasts, while they feast with you without fear, feeding themselves. They are waterless clouds carried along by the winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the deepest darkness has been reserved for ever>> (Jude 12-13).

⁶ For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings.

Hosea 6:6

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice. At this time, God’s people were still good at bringing sacrifice: <<*With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them*>> (Hosea 5:6). But they had forsaken steadfast love or mercy, and they abandoned mercy because they gave up the knowledge of God and truth: <<*Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel; for the Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land*>> (Hosea 4:1). God would rather have right hearts, full of truth and mercy than sacrifice. Jesus twice quoted this passage of Hosea to the religious leaders of his day in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7. They also missed the heart of God, focusing on the wrong and superficial things.

Rather than burnt-offerings. God prefers real participation in the covenant on the part of his people, here expressed as steadfast love and the knowledge of God, to the polluted ceremonies of the northern kingdom that ignore these qualities: <<*Come to Bethel – and transgress; to Gilgal – and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days; bring a thank-offering of leavened bread, and proclaim freewill-offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel! says the Lord God*>> (Amos 4:4-5). Israel brought animals for sacrifice, but they never brought themselves as a living sacrifice as Paul said God’s people should in Romans 12:1. They missed what God really wants: a deep, close relationship with him.

⁷ But at Adam they transgressed the covenant;
there they dealt faithlessly with me.

Hosea 6:7

But at Adam they transgressed the covenant. Covenant appears four other times in Hosea; refer to 2:18, 8:1, 10:4, and 12:1. Twice it refers to the transgressing of covenant in 6:7 and 8:1.

The following phrase, there they dealt faithlessly with me, along with: <<*because they have broken my covenant, and transgressed my law*>> (Hosea 8:1b), makes it virtually certain that the covenant in view is the Mosaic covenant. In addition, the kinds of sins and curses pronounced in the Sinai covenant dovetail precisely with the warnings of the prophet: the end of agricultural prosperity, military disaster, foreign exile, the demise of their offspring, and a return to slavery in Egypt. In summary, the crisis in Israel was Israel's failure to keep covenant. The hard issue is: to whom or to what does Adam refer? Many commentators suggest a geographical locality. The difficulty is that there is no record of covenant breaking at the place called Adam: <<*the waters flowing from above stood still, rising up in a single heap far off at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, while those flowing towards the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, were wholly cut off. Then the people crossed over opposite Jericho*>> (Joshua 3:16), and it requires a questionable taking of the preposition Hebrew *ke*, which means 'like', to mean at or in.

There represents the act wherein Israel was unfaithful to the covenant. 'Mankind' is another suggestion for Adam, but that would be a vague statement with no known event indicated, and therefore it would not clarify the sentence. It is best to understand Adam as the name of the first man; thus Israel is like Adam, who forgot his covenant obligation to love the Lord, breaking the covenant God made with him: <<*And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die'*>> (Genesis 2:16-17), and: <<*Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, "You shall not eat of it", cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life*>> (Genesis 3:17). This also implies that there was a covenant relationship between God and Adam, the terms of which were defined in God's words to Adam, although the actual word covenant is not used in the first three Chapters of Genesis.

⁸ Gilead is a city of evildoers,
tracked with blood.

Hosea 6:8

Gilead is another of Hosea's allusions to former glories, such as Jephthah's leadership of Gilead in their victories over the Ammonites and the Amorites; refer to Judges 10:17-11:21.

- ⁹ As robbers lie in wait for someone,
so the priests are banded together;
they murder on the road to Shechem,
they commit a monstrous crime.

Hosea 6:9

As robbers lie in wait for someone, so the priests are banded together. When the priests went to places of pagan sacrifice, it was a thieving, killing sin.

On the road to Shechem, a place known for its pagan shrines, the priests became involved in a conspiracy to assassinate defenceless people or, at least, kill them spiritually by leading them in idolatry. Attacks on country roads were common place in their culture and the people could readily identify with such similes: <<*They sit in ambush in the villages; in hiding-places they murder the innocent. Their eyes stealthily watch for the helpless*>> (Psalm 10:8). In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which illustrates how both a Levite and a priest failed to help an innocent man who was attacked and left for dead by thieves, whereas a Samaritan stopped and did all that he could to help.

The word for monstrous crime or villainy, Hebrew *zimmah*, is a powerful term for human depravity. It is particularly heinous when it is applied to the priests who are called as the servants of God to his people: <<*An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule as the prophets direct; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?*>> (Jeremiah 5:30-31).

- ¹⁰ In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing;
Ephraim's whoredom is there, Israel is defiled.
- ¹¹ For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed.
When I would restore the fortunes of my people,

Hosea 6:10-11

A harvest is appointed refers to an abundant ingathering which is supposed to depict joy but which will instead depict tragedy. Thus it is a harvest of judgement: <<*Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the*>>

wine press is full. The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great>> (Joel 3:13), and: <<Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, 'Use your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.' So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and he threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God>> (Revelation 14:18-19), which stands in ironic contrast to the harvest of joy that will come to the faithful, when I would restore the fortunes of my people. When the people of God came back into the land after the Babylonian exile, they mainly settled in the area of Judah. The harvest of returned exiles was mainly for Judah, not for Israel: <<Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of those among you who are of his people – may their God be with them! – are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel – he is the God who is in Jerusalem; and let all survivors, in whatever place they reside, be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods and with animals, besides freewill-offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem>> (Ezra 1:2-4).