

### **Punishment Is Coming**

There are a great deal of interrelationships within the Old and New Testaments. Here in Hosea there is a parallel with Amos the prophet, who says, "I am not a prophet", because he was not professionally trained in the rabbinic schools. However, Amos was called by God and is a contemporary of Hosea. Amos prophesies against both Israel and Judah in a similar fashion as Hosea. Jonah is also a contemporary of both Amos and Hosea but his focus is on God going out to the nations, specifically Nineveh with the message of salvation through worship of God. In addition, there is also a relationship between Hosea and 1 and 2 Kings. I will be referring to some of these parallels and relationships this morning.

Let me lay some foundational background for our study of Hosea chapter 5. There are contrasting themes found in chapters 4 and 5. In chapter 4 God's charge against Israel is that they have turned away from the knowledge of God. As believers we know the greatest of all blessings is that God allows us to have true spiritual knowledge of him and to live in relationship with him. However, Hosea's Israel has chosen sin instead of God. Israel once possessed knowledge of God but they have for many years run away from God. Like Gomer running away from Hosea, Israel has run away from God in an attempt to forget the knowledge they once had of God. In chapter 5, through Hosea, God reminds Israel of who he is and what he desires for and from Israel. Like many today the Israelites wanted to be their own gods so they would have the right to seek whatever they desired. The problem is there is only one God and we are not he. So our attempts to control lead to frustration and destruction.

Israel was unwilling to face the fact that God knew her as a nation and knew each and every one personally including their sin. Israel says they are followers of Yahweh because they claim to be his chosen people through the lineage of Abraham. Verse 6 says they “[seek the Lord](#)” but we know this is not a true seeking after God for they also worship idols, pleasures and self. The Israelites are just like the lost gentiles and Jews that Paul referred to, “[Claiming to be wise, they became fools,](#) <sup>23</sup> [and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.](#)” (Romans 1:22-23) This remains true of people of the world to this very day. The Israelites would offer as proof that they seek God by their sacrifices to God from their flocks and herds. The question is, where is their heart? If we approached many today who call themselves Christian and asked, they would say they also are seeking after God. They might respond, look how religious we are. They practice liturgy and rituals, but where is their heart for God? God says this is not a true seeking because they refuse to abandon their sin and live obedient to him. A relationship with God is not build upon rituals, but seeking the heart of God. This thought and behavior is why verse 4 says, “[Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God.](#)” So the heart of mankind has not changed, man seeks God on his own terms and often replaces relationship with ritual. With that in mind let me now read chapter 5 and as I do think of how the Israel of Hosea’s time is much like the world today and how we specifically are to live. Think of the times throughout history and the Bible that God has tried to teach these lessons of true worship to the generations.

I want to begin with reading Hosea chapter five and adding narrative to help show the connections for what God wants each generation to see. Turn in your Bibles to chapter 5, verse 1, “[Hear this, O priests! Pay attention, O house of Israel! Give ear, O house of the king! For the judgment is for you; for you have been a snare at](#)

Mizpah (*mits·paw* is located in Gilead [*Gil'ad*] the territory east of the Jordan River and means “watchtower”) and a net spread upon Tabor.” (*taw·bore* is a hill about 6 miles west of Nazareth). Verse 1 parallels the beginning of Amos chapter 3. Moving onto verse 2, which parallels Amos chapter 5, “And the revolvers have gone deep into slaughter, but I will discipline all of them.” In these first 2 verses God tells the priests and those who have revolted by worshiping false gods that judgment is upon them. God then gives a threefold warning to Israel. The 1<sup>st</sup> warning is found in verse 3, “I know Ephraim (*ef·rah·yim* was the son of Joseph and whose territory lays north and west of the Dead Sea) and Israel is not hidden from me; for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore; Israel is defiled.” God says Israel lead by Ephraim’s descendants has become apostate through their self-serving worship and by the worshiping of false gods. The 2<sup>nd</sup> warning is found in verse 4, “Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not the LORD.” At this point God is saying it is impossible for them to repent for they have passed the “point of no return” they no longer know the Lord and therefore to correct the problem God’s judgment is required and will come. The 3<sup>rd</sup> warning is in verse 5, “The pride of Israel testifies to his face; Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt; Judah also shall stumble with them.” Israel and Ephraim will stumble in their sin and Judah closely follows them and this will trigger the punishment of God. Now the warnings are repeated in reversed order to show finality. Verse 6 affirms it will be impossible for them to repent and in verse 7 it says because they are apostate and God’s punishment is coming. Reading verse 6, “With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them.” Israel has passed the point of repentance. Verse 7 repeats the charge of verse 3; the nation is apostate. “They have dealt faithlessly with the LORD; for

they have borne alien children.” The end of verse 7 speaks to the corruption of the leadership the punishment coming and echoes the warning of verses 1 and 2, “Now the new moon shall devour them with their fields.” They will be devoured because these “new moons” represents false religious festivals and the coming wrath of God. Isaiah the prophet is also a contemporary of Amos and Hosea. He prophesies from Judah of God’s coming wrath in chapter 1 and in chapter 13 he writes, “Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. <sup>10</sup> For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.” (Isaiah 13:9-10)

The leadership has allowed worship of false gods and the “new moon” festivals are for these false gods. The “new moon” is a time of darkness during the night. The new moon does not reflect the light of the sun symbolizing the lost of the light of God. In Joel chapters 2 and 3 the prophet speaks of the darkness of the “new moon” as a sign of the judgment of Yahweh. The prophet Joel’s ministry began before Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, but it extended into their time of ministry. Hosea may well have had in mind when he wrote what Joel had written earlier, “For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. <sup>15</sup> The sun and the moon are darkened...” (Joel 3:14-15)

### **Punishment Poured Out**

In verses 8 to 15 Israel and Judah face the punishing wrath of God. Again God gives a threefold warning in verses 8 to 10 for his wrath will be poured out. “Blow the horn in Gibeah (*Gib’ah* which is located between the Jordan River and Jericho, in the vicinity of *Gilgal*, where Joshua conducted the circumcision of the Hebrew males born during the wilderness journey, the 40 years of wandering.), the

trumpet in Ramah (**raw·maw** is about 5 miles from Jerusalem, in the territory belonging to the tribe of Benjamin and the home of the Prophet Samuel). Sound the alarm at Beth-aven; we follow you, O Benjamin! <sup>9</sup> Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of punishment; among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure. <sup>10</sup> The princes of Judah have become like those who move the landmark (Dishonest people cheated others for their own gain by moving land boundaries); upon them I will pour out my wrath like water. God's wrath is coming and will flood the land!

According to Isaiah chapter 7 and the beginning of 1 Kings, written by Samuel some 200 years earlier he writes in chapter 16 concerning the a coalition of forces gathered at the time of Hosea under Rezin (**rets·een**) of Syria and Pekah (**peh·kakh**) of Israel. They formed an alliance in order to free themselves from servitude to Assyria. They hoped that Judah would join the coalition, but Ahaz (**aw·khawz**), fearing the power of Assyria, refused to join. Not wanting to begin a war with Assyria while unsure of their southern flank of Judah. So, Syria and Israel decided to attack Judah. We read 2 Kings chapter 15 that it is God who sent Rezin and Pekah against Judah for Ahaz had burned his son as an offering and defiled the temple. Syria and Israel launched a campaign to overthrow Ahaz, they desired to put a puppet on the throne of Judah, and then proceed with their struggle against Assyria. Ahaz, terrified of the combined forces of his two northern neighbors, appealed to Assyria to the southeast for help. The king of Assyria came and killed Rezin in 732 B.C. and Ahaz remained king of Judah worshiping false gods. This is the stage for verses 11 to 15, "Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, because he was determined to go after filth. <sup>12</sup> **But I am like a moth to Ephraim, and like dry rot to the house of Judah.** <sup>13</sup> When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to the great king. But he is not able to cure you or heal your wound. The king of Assyria saved

Judah from Israel and Syria but not from their own sin. <sup>14</sup> **For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.** <sup>15</sup> I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.” One of the things people have always told themselves is – if they run away from God and forget him, he will forget them. When one ponders God they come to realize God knows all things, including all that each person is and does. For those who do not have a relationship with God, this is a most frightening truth. This realization is why most of the unbelieving world resents and even hates God.

We have talked about 2 kinds of knowledge: First, knowledge of God, which Gomer, the Israelites and people of today have rejected. This is the knowledge that God has given to all people. As Paul wrote to the Romans, **“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”** (Romans 1:19-20) There is a second knowledge that frightens people because they know that they are not right with God and know he exposes their sin. By great effort they continue to deny God and it is by these efforts that we know they recognize God’s existence. Now, we will look at a 3<sup>rd</sup> knowledge, the knowledge of God’s ways with sinners, which he reveals, in spite of how hard people work to reject him. He reveals this knowledge so people will see him and how he controls all and reveals his knowledge that some might come to repent and be led back to him. God uses an illustration here in Hosea to cement this 3<sup>rd</sup> knowledge into people’s minds. It is the illustration of the moth and the lion. I want to spend the rest of our time focused on verses 12 and 14.

## **Punishment by Moth**

After having spoken clearly of Israel's sin, the running away from the knowledge of God and worshiping false gods, God says he will first be like a moth to the people. Go to verse 12, [“But I am like a moth to Ephraim, and like dry rot to the house of Judah.”](#) There are 2 things a moth does. First, a moth distracts us. We have all experienced sitting outside on summer eve reading or relaxing and a moth is attracted by the light and begins to flutter around the light and around our head. When a moth lands upon us it is only the lightest touch but it distracts us and takes our attention from what we were doing. By comparing Himself to a moth, God may be telling us that when we first begin to stray from his path to the path of sin he is like the moth. Trying to take our attention away from our desire for sin. He tries to get us to change our focus and to think of him once again, the true light.

Second, moths are destructive. When a moth is in the larva stage the damage is done. The moth larva feed on plants, crops, woolen clothing, fur, and rugs. This causes damage and rot. Hosea suggests this is [“like dry rot to the house of Judah.”](#) The people having resisted the fluttering of the moth find it has worked its way into the things of life and have begun to destroy them with the eating larva and rotting that follows. God does this, he brings rot and decay in the form of troubles into our lives to help us recognize our need for him and to turn back to him.

But suppose we do not turn to God when he sends the small moth troubles? Suppose we resist his warnings? Moths can be dealt with when they begin, but once they multiply and the infestation spreads it becomes much more difficult to eradicate them – this is just like the sins in our life. What if we do not recognize God's fluttering to bring our attention back to the light? The answer is found 2 verses later in verse 14.

## **Punishment by Lion**

Reading verse 14, “For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.” In this we can see God’s progress of wrath is motivated by his love for people. God desires not to lose any and will exhaust himself to rescue. We can recover from the damage of the moth, but if we will not heed God’s lighter warnings he will send the lion. The lion does not warn first but hunts with stealth and suddenly trouble springs upon one as the lion pounces upon his prey. As one sees him spring fear grips their heart and their blood runs cold. Even then one can be at peace if we realize this is God’s way to turn us from ruin. We can quickly turn from the path that the lion hunts to the path of God’s will were no beast could devour us.

So, God may send the moth to eat away our clothing and destroy our food with larva to show us our lives are being destroyed by sin. If this does not get our attention God will send the lion to tear our lives apart and even bring us to the point of death to get our attention for he desires us to not die but live in peace with him. But what happens if even after all this we do not turn back to God and repent of our sins? God may pour out his greatest and most harsh punishment – he may leave us for we have crossed over the point of no return. He abandons us to what we desire – the lusts and pleasures of this world that leads to destruction. In verse 15 God says, “I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.” My beloved, I cannot imagine a worst judgment than to be abandoned by God and to be left in our wretchedness and misery and sin.

## **Punishment May Bring Righteousness**

Yet, even in our complete misery there is hope. God will hide his face and we will grope in the darkness of our sin, but even in this we will exist in our misery only “until”. Verse 15 says God will leave “**until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face.**” In our darkest hour, in our deepest sin there remains a glimmer of hope and love in God’s judgment. Like the prodigal son in Luke 15 who found himself among the pigs eating their leftover slop. The lost son said, “**How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!** <sup>18</sup> **I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, <sup>19</sup> and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’ ”** (Luke 15:17-19) In our desperation we come to God dressed in our moth eaten robes of self-righteousness and he removes it and washes away our filth with the cleansing blood of Christ and washes us so clean he remembers our sins no more. God removes our heart of stone and replaces it with his heart of flesh. God gives the oil of the Spirit to anoint our body of sores and heal our self-inflicted wounds and clothes us in his Son’s robe of righteousness. We call God our Master, and His Son is our Lord and we now live as his grateful slaves. We live in peace while the world is being devoured.

I close with the words of God given to the Apostle Peter and may we live these words and succeed, by the power of Christ, where Israel failed, “**Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. <sup>10</sup> And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has**

called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup> To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:6-11)