

Hosea's Important Message

Commentary for October 1, 2012 — What God Wants from His People

This month's article by Dr. Ernest Martin is "The Book of Hosea." Of course, Hosea is the first of the Minor Prophets, the Book of the Twelve.¹ But first read the "[October 2012 Newsletter](#)." In Dr. Martin's presentation you will find some surprising information about the Book of Hosea that you never knew before. Why did you not learn it? Probably because most preachers think Old testament material is dull and difficult to understand (and some is indeed difficult), but often because theology disagrees with some of what a particular book says.

In the first four chapters of Hosea God identifies a close link between prostitution and idolatry and pagan religion. That link has always existed, but Hosea makes it explicit. Most Christian theology and religious practice today is derived from those same idolatrous religious teachings, with architectural religious symbolism and religious images that match the theology.² YHWH said through the prophet Hosea to the people of Ephraim (the northern kingdom of Samaria or Israel), and the people of the southern kingdom of Judah:

"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and your judgments are as the light that goes forth.

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me."

• *Hosea 6:4–7*

God was going to use the prophets to chop down the people like wood, slaying them by His word, all for the purpose of enlightening the people. God was judging Israel and Judah by how they treated their own people, each other, and not by whether they were scrupulous in performing the rituals, sacrifices, and burnt offerings that the Law of Moses required.

God wanted them (and He still wants them) to treat other people with mercy and justice, exhibiting their knowledge of Him by their actions toward others. In other words, they were to love God and their neighbors as themselves (Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, 11:13, 13:3, 30:6; Joshua 22:5; and Leviticus 19:18). By not doing so they violated the very covenant that Israel and Judah, when they were united as one, agreed to perform in order to receive God's blessings. God considers Israel's actions in this regard to be treachery, not ignorant disobedience. Even worse, Ephraim will be unrepentant.

¹ See Dr. Martin's presentation, "[The Minor Prophets for Today](#)" that shows the unity and interrelationship of these 12 shorter books.

² See Dr. Martin's article "[The Anatomy of a Church Part 1](#)" and "[The Anatomy of a Church Part 2](#)" where evidence of this connection of pagan religion and aberrant sexuality is discussed.

God will punish Ephraim first, then Judah (detailed by the other prophets). Ephraim will remain rebellious and God will devastate them. At the end, God will redeem and bring back Israel to God's love. These are some of the messages of the Book of Hosea that God wanted people to know. And this is the message that introduces the first Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets.

God's requirements for all Israel are simple in theory: obey God and serve your fellow Israelites, be an example for and teach the Gentiles about God as His unique priestly nation (Exodus 19:6). According to God's plan of salvation every human being was made to be a sinner. Each of us has inherited death from Adam. This inheritance and movement toward death in turn causes us to sin.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death [entered] by sin; and so [thus] death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

• Romans 5:12

Then in the next verses the apostle Paul immediately discusses the role of the Law of Moses and how it was added to increase the realization of sin. This is another role Israel plays for all mankind — that of a negative example.

Israel and Judah in the time of Hosea (and later) failed to live up to God's demands. They continue to fail on every point even today (as we all do). They have failed since the Law was introduced to Israel when God made their Covenant with His people.

It is important to keep the past and present example of Israel and Judah in mind. They are an exaggerated model of what our nations are like, and what the people in the nations are like. Everything that Israel has done and experienced — does and experiences today — is an intensified illustration by God for our benefit, for all the world to witness.

This is how God made them, to be particularly stiff-necked (Exodus 32:9, 33:3, 5, 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:6, 13, 10:16, 31:27; 2 Chronicles 30:8; Jeremiah 17:23; Acts 7:51) in their sinfulness. Yet at our core, we are no different than they are. Our heart is just as deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), and we are reminded that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). God reckons us (and every other human being) to be **"ungodly"** (Romans 5:6), **"sinners"** (Romans 5:8) and **"enemies"** of God (Romans 5:10).

On the other hand, we can say with the apostle Paul:

"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

• 1 Corinthians 15:10

Hosea shows us what the problem is, exemplified by Israel and Judah. God solves that problem through Christ's faith and righteousness imparted to us according to God's grace.

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