

## The Word of the Lord to Hosea

### Lesson 6

#### Hosea 13:1 – 14:9

##### Ephraim's State

Hosea 13:<sup>1</sup> When Ephraim spoke, *there was* trembling. He exalted himself in Israel, but through Baal he did wrong and died. <sup>2</sup> And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves molten images, idols skillfully made from their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen. They say of them, "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!" <sup>3</sup> Therefore they will be like the morning cloud and like dew which soon disappears, like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney.

Ephraim's response to the prophet's warning found in Hosea 12:8 revealed the state of mind found throughout the kingdom.

Hosea 12:<sup>8</sup> And Ephraim said, "Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors they will find in me No iniquity, which *would be* sin."

Its sin began shortly after the crowning of Jeroboam I in 938 BC and never ceased; it grew with each passing year. All the power of the kingdom would soon evaporate just as smoke from a fire disappears into the atmosphere.

##### The Lord's Plan

Hosea 13:<sup>4</sup> Yet I *have been* the Lord your God since the land of Egypt; and you were not to know any god except Me, for there is no Savior besides Me. <sup>5</sup> I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of drought. <sup>6</sup> As *they had* their pasture, they became satisfied, and being satisfied, their heart became proud; therefore they forgot Me. <sup>7</sup> So I will be like a lion to them; like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside. <sup>8</sup> I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs, and I will tear open their chests; there I will also devour them like a lioness, as a wild beast would tear them. <sup>9</sup> It *is* your destruction, O Israel, That *you are* against Me, against your help. <sup>10</sup> Where now is your king that he may save you in all your cities, and your judges of whom you requested, "Give me a king and princes"? <sup>11</sup> I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath. <sup>12</sup> The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is stored up. <sup>13</sup> The pains of childbirth come upon him; he is not a wise son, for it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb.

Because Israel forgot the Lord, He would set into motion His plan for them, a plan no one could stop. Just as no one can stop the birth of a child when a woman's body begins to expel it, neither can the Northern Kingdom stop its expulsion from the land, not even the king or prince. They begged for a king and the Lord gave them Saul. Angered with Saul's choices, the Lord removed him from his place of authority. So, too, the kings of the north would be removed by the anger of the Lord.

##### The Lord's Question

Hosea 13:<sup>14a</sup> Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting?

The death of the Northern Kingdom approached. Would the Lord save them from the grave? No. Would He redeem them from death? No. Here the Lord called for the thorn of

death and the sting of the grave to come upon them and the pain of death would soon strike.

Paul used these same words with a different context in his letter to the Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 15:53-58** <sup>53</sup> For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. <sup>55</sup> "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; <sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.

For Paul, belief in the Lord Jesus Christ promised victory over death and its sting. In Hosea, the Northern Kingdom, afforded the same unchanging promise of the Lord who brought it out of Egypt, had forgotten the Lord's words, "there is no Savior besides Me." <sup>40</sup> Rejection of Him as Savior resulted in the full penalty and pain of death for the Northern Kingdom just as it does for people today.

### No Compassion

**Hosea 13:** <sup>14b</sup> Compassion will be hidden from My sight. <sup>15</sup> Though he flourishes among the reeds, an east wind will come, the wind of the Lord coming up from the wilderness; and his fountain will become dry and his spring will be dried up; it will plunder *his* treasury of every precious article. <sup>16</sup> Samaria will be held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword, their little ones will be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women will be ripped open.

When the Assyrians came to overthrow the kingdom, the time for the kingdom to seek compassion from the Lord had passed. At that time, the Lord's wrath, administered by the Assyrians, was bloody, brutal and ruthless upon the men, women and children. It was the last promise of destruction that Hosea presented to the adulterous Northern Kingdom before he was given the opportunity to present the Lord's last appeal for salvation and the promise of His plans for the future.

### The Lord's Last Appeal

**Hosea 14:** <sup>1</sup> Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. <sup>2</sup> Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity and receive *us* graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips. <sup>3</sup> "Assyria will not save us, we will not ride on horses; nor will we say again, 'Our god,' to the work of our hands; for in You the orphan finds mercy." <sup>4</sup> I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them. <sup>5</sup> I will be like the dew to Israel; He will blossom like the lily, and he will take root like *the cedars of Lebanon*. <sup>6</sup> His shoots will sprout, and his beauty will be like the olive tree and his fragrance like *the cedars of Lebanon*. <sup>7</sup> Those who live in his shadow will again raise grain, and they will blossom like the vine. His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon. <sup>8</sup> O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; from Me comes your fruit. <sup>9</sup> Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; *Whoever* is discerning, let him know them.

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<sup>40</sup> Hosea 13:4

For the ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.

The Lord's last appeal was simple, "Return, O Israel to the Lord your God." To return to God, Israel needed to call upon Him. Just as Hosea's wife was unfaithful to him, Israel was unfaithful to the Lord. Just as Hosea retrieved his wife from the beds of other men, the Lord wanted to retrieve Israel from her ungodly covenants with other nations. Just as Hosea tried to persuade his wife to be faithful, the Lord tried to persuade Israel to be faithful. Just as Hosea was willing to shower his wife with blessings, the Lord was willing to shower Israel with blessings. In the last words of Hosea we see that not only could the Israelites have avoided the coming doom, they could have risen to a greater power, gaining more prestige and dominance in the world than they had ever possessed. All they had to do was turn from idol worship and the Lord would heal their apostasy and love them dearly. He was their only source of salvation and they rejected Him.

In the last verse of the book, the Lord changed Hosea's message from a nationwide plea to one for individuals.

**Hosea 14:9** Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; *Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.*

Name a sin and someone in the Northern Kingdom had committed it! The same applies to today. Just as wise people of that day could understand what the Lord said, wise people today can see the Lord's problem with Israel and personally repent for their part in today's national sin and personal sin. Sin is a heart issue but the Lord's compassion and grace are issues of the soul. The discerning person knows the difference and will forsake the desires of the heart and give himself to the Lord and receive salvation. The Lord's ways are never wrong and a person who belongs to Him will live his life in the Lord's ways. When the Lord said, "You will have no other gods before Me," the righteous believe that and hold to it. The same is true for the Lord's other commands not to have idols, give false witness, lie, steal, murder, covet, commit adultery and so on. We will know the righteous because they will worship the Lord God, never take advantage of another person or never enter into relationships with the harlot or another person's spouse. Those who do enter into those relationships are sinners proving that their heart has a sin issue. If they do not give that sin to the Lord eventually, the Lord will use it to cause them to stumble. In their stumbling, they will either turn from their sin or prove to the Lord and themselves that they never truly belonged to Him in the first place. For the people of Hosea's day, only 10% would listen and turn to the Lord. The others would remain entrenched in their well-honed ways only to bring the destruction upon them and their families. We can only wonder how many people are in the same situation today, indecisive over the choice that makes a difference in their eternal destination. How many really belong to the Lord?