

The prophet Ezekiel pictured the Presence of God departing from Judah. In Ezekiel chapters 8-10 we see God preparing to forsake the Temple because of the abominations being practiced there. Then, in Ezekiel 11:22-25, God forsakes the Temple, not to return until the Messianic kingdom (the church) is depicted in Ezekiel, chapters 40-48. *Ichabod* means "the glory has departed from Israel" (cf. I Sam. 4:21) and this might be the name emblazoned over the gates of Samaria, Jerusalem and the Temple in the days of Hosea. The condition upon which God promises His return is "acknowledge your offence, and seek my face," and the method by which God plans to bring about this condition is "in their affliction they will seek me earnestly." So, Christian, "Count it all joy . . . when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him." (James 1:2, 12.)

### QUIZ

1. What does the "far-sounding" horn signal? Why warn Judah?
2. How were the princes of Judah breaking God's boundaries?
3. In what way was Israel "content to walk after man's command?"
4. What warning did Hosea give Israel and Judah about international alliances?
5. What have great leaders of our own country said about alliances?
6. How is God like a lion in His actions toward Israel and Judah?
7. When did God withdraw from Israel? When did His Presence return?
8. What are the conditions and what is the method God uses to restore His Presence?

### ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— HER INCONSTANCY

TEXT: 6:1-11

- 1 Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.
- 2 After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him.
- 3 And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.

- 4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away.
- 5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.
- 6 For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.
- 7 But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.
- 8 Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity; it is stained with blood.
- 9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way toward Shechem; yea, they have committed lewdness.
- 10 In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing: there whoredom is found in Ephraim, Israel is defiled.
- 11 Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for thee, when I bring back the captivity of my people.

### QUERIES

- a. Why the sudden promise of Jehovah's healing?
- b. In what way did God "hew" the nation by the prophets?
- c. Does verse 6 mean the prophets preached abolition of animal sacrifices?

### PARAPHRASE

In view of this illuminative word of imminent judgment, and of the fact that in uttering it God has indicated His willingness to leave a door open for our return, Come, let us return to the Lord; out of love our God has afflicted us and so He will heal us if we return to Him. In a very short time, a time certainly determined by God, He will revive and raise up His trusting children and we shall live in His sight. Let us then strive zealously to obtain a heartfelt knowledge of the Lord in keeping His commandments. His response to help us is as firmly established as the dawning of the day. His nurturing us is as certain as the nurturing latter rains which come just before the harvest. But what shall I do with you Ephraim and Judah? Your love is fickle—it is as transient and vaporious as the dewy mists which are dispersed every morning when the sun bears down. And because your love is so fickle, vanishing again and again, I have through the word of the prophets carved on this nation like on a piece of hard wood trying to shape it into a holy nation. Through the pronounce-

ments of the prophets, I have suspended judgment and death over their heads. My judgments were so obvious, so conspicuous, the whole nation should have heeded them and repented. I do not want your sacrifices without love; I do not want your burnt offerings without a heartfelt knowledge of Me. But this nation rebelled against Me, distrusted Me and transgressed My covenant with them just like Adam transgressed the covenant I made with Him. Let me cite an example; the region of Gilead is a rendezvous for all sorts of wicked men and it is full of blood-thirsty men. Gangs of priests rob and kill using Levitical cities as sanctuaries. Those hoodlums also commit lewd and sensual sins in the land. In the land of Israel I see abominations and crimes of every kind being committed. Whoredoms, both literal and spiritual (idolatry) are defiling the people I called to be a holy nation. When I come to punish, in order to root out ungodliness and bring My people back to their true destination, you also, Judah, will be judged and chastened by captivity.

### COMMENT

v. 1-3 COME, AND LET US RETURN UNTO JEHOVAH . . . AFTER TWO DAYS . . . ON THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RAISE US UP . . . LET US FOLLOW ON TO KNOW JEHOVAH . . . These three verses should, if we can follow context at all, be a part of the preceding chapter. They should never have been put into another chapter, and thus separated contextually. God has spoken of His withdrawal from the nation of Israel; He is going to leave them to their choice which has been sin. But He leaves the door of repentance open. And Hosea appeals to the people, as one of them, to return to God through that door which God has left open. Hosea's words here are some of the most tender and beautiful words found in the Bible. God wounds in order that He may heal! God chastens in order that He may bless! K & D says, "As the endurance of punishment impels to seek the Lord (ch. v. 15), so the motive to return to the Lord is founded upon the knowledge of the fact that the Lord can, and will, heal the wounds which He inflicts." Every child of God "has need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised" (Heb. 10:36). We have discussed the matter of chastening earlier in this work so we will not go into it in detail here. Suffice it so say that one of the greatest lessons to be learned from the Old Testament prophets is that God chastens like a loving Father in order to bless the penitent and to punish the impenitent.

Two and three days are very short periods of time. The phrase used here in verse 2 expresses the certainty of what is to take place within a short period of time. It is a short time, a time known only to God, but a time definitely established and determined by the omniscience of God. Just as certainly as the Perfectly-Righteous and Perfectly-Just God punishes sin, so He will certainly save those who repent. This is Hosea's main intent in these words. Thus the primary audience is Israel, the northern kingdom. Whether "on the third day he will raise us up," refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Lk. 24:44-46) in either a symbolic or allegorical way, or not, we cannot say dogmatically. However, in the light of Hosea 11:1 (cf. Matt. 2:15) and other such passages, we take the position that this phrase is a prophecy of the Messiah's resurrection. At least it probably refers to the conversion of "spiritual Israel" (the church) to the Lord its God, through faith in the redemptive death and resurrection of the Messiah. This is one of those prophecies with *double emphasis* (see our notes on Interpreting the Prophets).

The knowledge of Jehovah which Hosea exhorts his fellow countrymen to zealously strive for is an experiential knowledge of the heart as well as the head. It is the knowledge of which John the apostles writes, "And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (I Jn. 2:3ff). If Israel knows her God practically, by keeping His commandments, then forgiveness and blessing is sure to follow such knowledge. Again this reminds us of the apostle John, ". . . if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I Jn. 1:9). God is faithful; let us be faithful. Indeed, the faithfulness of God, as demonstrated in His mighty miracles witnessed and recorded in history, is motive enough to inspire us to faithfulness. This is what Hosea is inferring when He says, "his going forth is sure as the morning, etc." This is the refrain running throughout all the prophets as they attempt to direct the attention of the people back in history to God's dealings with their forefathers—God is faithful; let us be faithful. This is the primary reason for the coming of Jesus Christ, to confirm once for all, the faithfulness of God (cf. II Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:17-18). The Lord will rise upon Israel like the morning dawn (cf. Mal. 4:2; Lk. 1:78; Eph. 5:14; II Pet. 1:19). As surely as the dawn follows the night (cf. Jer. 33:20, 25) according to divine government, so surely will blessing follow repentance. As surely as the rain, falling from heaven, nourishes the earth and produces fruitfulness, (Isa. 55:10-13), so will the "going forth" of the Lord

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to bless a penitent people produce fruitfulness. The "latter rain" is the rain which usually comes in Palestine just before harvest-time.

v. 4 O EPHRAIM, WHAT SHALL I DO UNTO THEE? . . . FOR YOUR GOODNESS IS AS A MORNING CLOUD . . . Contrasted with the unchangeable character of God and the absolute certainty of His promises, is the fickleness of Israel. Anyone who has lived on the seacoast or in low-lying areas will appreciate the figure of speech in verse 4. The early morning mists and fallen dew are quickly "burned off" by the hot sun; the mists vaporize and vanish. This is like the righteousness and love of Israel. It comes and goes. It appears for a short time, sporadically, then vaporizes and vanishes when the sun of tribulation or materialism bears down (cf. Matt. 13:20-21). The same figurative use of the word "dew" is to be found in Hosea 13:3. While the same prophet uses "dew" (Hosea 14:5) as a simile to express the refreshing salvation of Jehovah. Usage such as this should make Bible scholars cautious about insisting that a word must always have the same interpretation throughout the Bible! So, Hosea, speaking for God, says, "O, Israel, what else can I do to you to bring you to repentance? I have tried all kinds of chastisement to bring you back to trust in Me. All that is left is obliteration."

v. 5 THEREFORE HAVE I HEWED THEM BY THE PROPHETS . . . Because of their fickleness God had sent prophet-preachers to the nation. Through them God had "hewed" or carved the nation; He had worked it like a piece of carving wood, trying to shape it into a holy nation according to its true calling. But because the people would not be "hewn" the messages of the prophets "slew" them. In other words, their messages pronounced salvation upon the penitent but inevitable judgment upon the impenitent. The nation, for the most part, chose the sentence of death pronounced by the prophetic message. God's call to repentance or judgment is always plain, forthright, unambiguous and bright as "light." There can be no excuses by any man that God's wrath is not revealed (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; John 3:16-21).

v. 6 FOR I DESIRE GOODNESS, AND NOT SACRIFICE . . . This verse does not mean, of course, that God wanted the Jews at this time to cease all Mosaic sacrifices and offerings. Indeed, to the last man of them the prophets insisted that the people return to the law of Moses (cf. our Special Study eight, pages 91-92). What God is protesting as to Israel's sacrificing is the faithless, heartless

manner in which they were being done. The people who were offering the sacrifices were not doing it because they had faith in Jehovah—there was no love in their hearts for God. Their offerings were abominable, revolting, sickening to the heart of God. What God wanted was faith and love to accompany the sacrifices; without this they were vain, useless—even worse than useless (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-17; Micah 6:8; Psa. 50:8ff; Psa. 51:15-17, etc.).

v. 7 BUT THEY LIKE ADAM HAVE TRANSGRESSED THE COVENANT . . . God's first covenant was with Adam, and, subsequently to all mankind as represented in Adam. The promise was life from God; the provision was perfect obedience; the penalty of failure was death. This covenant with Adam expressed its promises and threatenings in visible signs—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man (Adam) fell ("transgressed the covenant") and God, by His great mercy and love, provided a way of salvation apart from man's personal obligation to sinless obedience as the condition of life. God covered man's sin by grace; but man had to appropriate that grace by faith in God and faithful obedience to whatever covenant conditions or dispensation for this grace God imposed at whatever time in history man found himself to be living. Before Moses God administered His covenant of grace through patriarchal-sacrificial mediation. After Moses God dispensed His grace through the Levitical mediation. Both of these dispensations necessitated faith, without which they brought inevitable judgment. Each was a different dispensation (or administration) of the one, overall, covenant of grace begun by God in Gen. 3:15 when man fell from the covenant of perfect obedience. Each dispensation had conditions dictated by God to be kept according to the free moral choice of man. Each dispensation was but a foreshadow, figure, prophecy of that final full and complete dispensation of God's covenant of grace to be realized in the atoning work of Jesus Christ when God interposed Himself (cf. Heb. 6:17; II Cor. 5:17-21). In Christ God discharged all man's responsibility to sinlessness in His own Person. But, in order for man to appropriate this imputed righteousness so freely administered by the covenant of grace, man must respond to the covenant in faith, love and obedience. This Adam did not do; and this the nation of Israel did not do. The question of the moment, however, is, are we responding in faith and love and obedience to the covenant of grace which God so abundantly and certainly revealed in Christ Jesus which is now administered in the conditions recorded in the New Testament?!

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v. 8 GILEAD IS A CITY OF THEM THAT WORK INIQUITY . . . Gilead, as a city, is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It is the name of a district standing for the whole territory of the land of the northern kingdom east of the Jordan river. This was probably the "bad lands" of Israel—a rendezvous for robbers and murders.

v. 9 . . . TROOPS OF ROBBERS WAIT FOR A MAN, SO THE COMPANY OF PRIESTS MURDER . . . Gangs of apostate priests were robbing and killing and fleeing to these "bad lands" and using Levitical cities as sanctuaries. These criminals were finding protection by using sacred cities of refuge in which to hide. This verse indicates they were guilty also of unnatural and perverted acts of sexuality ("lewdness"). All such behavior was a natural consequence of Israel's accommodation of the pagan, heathen idolatry of neighboring nations. Moral breakdown always follows rejection of God's eternal truth!

v. 10 . . . WHOREDOM IS FOUND IN EPHRAIM, ISRAEL IS DEFILED. Undoubtedly this is a reference to both physical whoredom (cf. Hosea (cf. Hosea 4:2; 4:13) and idolatry which is called spiritual whoredom (cf. Hosea 5:3-4; 14:8, etc.). To "defile" is to contaminate or pollute. This is what Israel had done. She was contaminated with moral rottenness. She had made herself unacceptable to the holy, righteous, loving God by refusing Him and doing everything within her power to despise Him.

v. 11 ALSO, O JUDAH, THERE IS A HARVEST APPOINTED FOR THEE . . . Judah has disregarded the exhortation of Hosea in chapter 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." The southern kingdom has allowed itself to become defiled by idolatry also. Therefore, when God comes to judge and punish the covenant people (beginning with the northern kingdom, Israel), in order to purge them of this defilement and bring them back to their true destiny, Judah also will be judged and chastened by captivity. This verse has nothing at all to say as to *when* God will "bring back the captivity" of His people; the *when* has to be determined from other passages, which announce the exile of both Israel and Judah, and the eventual restoration of those who are converted to Jehovah (and it includes "all the nations"). Thus we must conclude that the complete "bringing back the captivity" of God's covenant people finds its ultimate fulfillment in the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (the church on Pentecost) when all nations will "come up to Jerusalem." The captivities of both Israel and Judah was the START of God's plan of restoration! This is what is meant in this verse.

## QUIZ

1. What do verses 1-3 of this chapter tell about the character of God?
2. What is the primary meaning of "after two . . . three days" in this context?
3. Could these "three" days have reference to Christ's resurrection? How?
4. What does Hosea mean by "knowing" the Lord?
5. How were the people "hewn" by the prophets?
6. Does this chapter teach that the prophets preached cessation of sacrifices?
7. How did Adam transgress God's covenant?

### ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— LOVE OF SIN

TEXT: 7:1-7

- 1 When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood, and the thief entereth in, and the troop of robbers ravageth without.
- 2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness; now have their own doings beset them about; they are before my face.
- 3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.
- 4 They are all adulterers; they are as an oven heated by the baker; he ceaseth to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough, until it be leavened.
- 5 On the day of our king the princes made themselves sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with scoffers.
- 6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait; their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.
- 7 They are all hot as an oven and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.

### QUERIES

- a. Why would the king "be glad" about the people's wickedness?
- b. Why the likening of the people to a baker's oven?
- c. How would the king "stretch out his hand with scoffers?"