

HOSEA

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to the book of Hosea as we continue our study through the Word of God. We are beginning a portion of Scripture that has been called the Minor Prophets and consists of 12 books. Over the next several months as we go through these books keep in mind that the focus is Israel and many times the Last Days or the Day of the Lord, the End Times.

As you will see much of what is being said did not take place in their day or even in our day for that matter, but they are still future. And like I have said, the focus is the nation of Israel. Keep in mind that there are some 2576 references to Israel in the King James Bible, some 75 of those times in the New Testament! And in just these twelve books we see Israel spoken of 105 times and Judah another 63 times!

God is not done with Israel and the Jewish people and ever since 1948 when they became a nation once again and that is very evident. And as you will see, these books speak of repentance, forgiveness and the restoration of the nation of Israel, ultimately culminating in the nation as a whole receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior!

Now when people hear that these books are called the "*Minor Prophets*" they can come to the conclusion that they are of less importance than the Major Prophetic books. That, of course, is not the case. This is speaking of the volume of the book, how long they are and not the content of them as we will see. And like I have said, they are packed with prophetic words and lessons for us to apply to our lives.

This evening we are going to begin our study in the Minor Prophets with the book of Hosea. Keep in mind that Hosea ministered from around 755 B. C. to around 710 B. C. during a time of prosperity and relative peace in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It is during the reign of King Jeroboam II and as you may remember, he was a bad king. In fact, there really were no good Kings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

You will also notice that sometimes the Northern Kingdom of Israel is also called Ephraim and it will be the Northern Kingdom of Israel that is the focus of his ministry. Other prophets that were contemporaries of Hosea were Amos who also ministered to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Isaiah and Micah ministered to the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Now as we read through this book we are going to see sin which brings about judgment which causes God to seek to restore His people as they call upon Him. You see, when we turn against God, when we are unfaithful to Him, He has to act, He can't condone our sin.

And as He brings about His judgment upon sinful man He will not leave them in that condition. He is trying to awaken them out of their spiritual sleep. He is seeking to win back those who have forsaken Him. It truly is a picture of God's rich love and Israel's spiritual adultery!

I like the way that G. Campbell Morgan put it. He said of this book, "We have in the book of Hosea one of the most arresting revelations of the real nature of sin, and one of the clearest interpretations of the strength of Divine love. No one can read the story of Hosea without realizing the agony of His heart. Then, lift the human to the level of the Infinite, and know this, that sin wounds the heart of God."

It is as John 3:16-17 tells us, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”** That is the love of God for sinful man.

Now the name, **“Hosea”** has the same base word as Joshua and the Greek form, Jesus and it means salvation. God is going to paint for us a picture of His great love for His people even though they had turned away from Him and to do that He will use Hosea and his life as this object lesson.

This book can be summed up as follows. Hosea is going to tell of the Assyrian invasion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the fall of Samaria because of their sin and their refusal to repent and turn to God.

But God does not leave them in captivity. When Israel repents and returns to the Lord He will have mercy on them. It is as Henry Gehman wrote, “Hosea presents the exhaustless mercy of God which no sin of man can bar or wear out. The master thought of Hosea’s message is that God’s mighty and inextinguishable love for Israel will not rest satisfied until it has brought all Israel into harmony with itself.”

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Hosea chapter 1 beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

HOSEA 1

VERSE 1

1. As I have said, the name Hosea means “salvation” and it comes from the same Hebrew root as “Hoshea” or Joshua. And as we will see, Hosea is going to show us that salvation is only found in turning to the Lord and away from sin. A very important lesson to learn!

2. Now we don’t know much about Hosea except that he ministered to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and we are given a time frame of his ministry as he lists four Kings from Judah and one King from Israel.

All we know about this man is found in this letter. We know who his father was as he was the son of Beeri. We know that he was married and had children. And the only other thing we really know about him is that he was a prophet of God, he spoke forth the words of God.

I guess I am encouraged by that fact, because I see God use common people for His glory, to get His message out. Hosea was available and God used him to illustrate what Israel was doing by looking at a woman who Hosea was to marry.

Thus, not only was Hosea available, but he was obedient to what God instructed him to do, no matter how difficult it was. And we will see that as we move on and hopefully we will learn to take those steps of faith, whenever and wherever God is calling, no matter how difficult they may be, as Hosea did.

3. One more point before we move on. Sin is like a snowball rolling down a snow covered mountain. At the top it may roll kind of slow and not be very big. But as it goes farther away from the top it picks up more speed and it gets bigger and it begins to take out things that are in its path. In other words, sin brings death and destructions to the lives of people and nations who go down that path and it gets more and more wicked, more immoral, more depraved as it does. This is a lesson that the Northern Kingdom of Israel will learn.

And as we look at our nation, look at how fast immorality, wickedness, depravity is growing and we are seeing how this wickedness is destroying lives.

VERSE 2

1. God call's Hosea to marry a woman who will turn out to be nothing but trouble, she will be unfaithful to him. I don't believe she started out unfaithful, but what was in her heart eventually was manifested in her actions. Another way to translate this verse, which I believe makes it much clearer, is the Lord is telling Hosea to "Go, take to yourself a wife who will prove to be unfaithful." And her children were "Children of (a wife of) promiscuity."

And Hosea said, "Are you kidding me!" No, he didn't say that but he may have thought that. Think about it, what if the Lord told you to do something that was going to be difficult in your life, something that was not going to be easy, would you do it?

I am not saying that God is going to tell you to do what Hosea did, but what about teaching Sunday School or being in the Nursery, working in the sound room or with the worship team or maybe being an usher, going on a missions trip or whatever. It may not seem as big of a deal as this was for Hosea but it may be for you because fear has caused you to freeze and not go forward. If God has called He not only has equipped you for the work but the work for you, thus, take those steps!

2. Now let's look at what God told Hosea to do. Why in the world would God instruct Hosea to do that? I believe Hosea 12:10 points to the reason why. It says, "**I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets.**"

Thus, this will be an object lesson to the people. When they look at Hosea's wife they are looking at themselves and how they are unfaithful to the Lord, committing spiritual adultery. And like I have said, Hosea's name means "salvation" and we are going to see Hosea, representing the Lord, reach out to his unfaithful wife and restore her back to him, save her. Thus, this is symbolic of what the Lord will do with unfaithful Israel, how He will reach out to them and restore them, bringing them back to Him, to save them!

3. In the Northern Kingdom of Israel, it was the best of times and it was the worst of times, to borrow a phrase. Things were going well, there really was no need for God. And this departure away from God left a void in their lives.

But that was quickly filled with the god's of pleasure, sexual desire, prosperity, money, power, intellect - they were committing spiritual adultery. This is a powerful lesson for us to learn especially in the days we are living in where these same gods are being worshiped as man has turned away from the true and living God!

VERSES 3-5

1. So we see Hosea obedient to the Lord and he marries Gomer, whose name means "to complete or finish." In a negative sense this word speaks of the permanent termination of that which previously existed. In other words, because of the pull of prostitution in her life, she will break the marriage covenant and go into the life of harlotry! Again, it is a picture of the Northern Kingdom of Israel turning from the Lord and embracing all these other gods, it was spiritual adultery!

Now some have a hard time with this and they feel that God would never make a person do what Hosea did, it would not be right, it would not be fair. And they are right, it is not fair, it is not right but that does not negate what did take place. I think Boice puts a light on what he did and what our Lord has done. He wrote, "If Hosea's story cannot be real (because 'God could not ask a man to marry an unfaithful woman'), then neither is the story of salvation real, because that is precisely what Christ has done for us." A very good point!

2. So we see Hosea marry Gomer and she has a son who is named Jezreel. Understand that not only will his wife be an object lesson, but also his children, their names will be an object lesson of what God is saying to them. The name, "**Jezreel**" means "scatter."

Thus, what God is saying is He will break the bow or the power of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they will go into captivity at the hands of the Assyrians because they have departed from the Lord and refused to return to Him. They will be scattered throughout the land!

But there is a second point regarding this name, Jezreel. It also speaks of the Valley of Jezreel. Remember that Jehu killed Joram, King of Israel and Ahaziah King of Judah plus 42 of his relatives. He also killed Jezebel. And it did not end there.

Ahab had 70 sons whom Jehu had killed and these men cut off their heads and brought them to Jehu in Jezreel. Thus, Jezreel was the sight of this ruthless massacre! (II Kings 9 & 10). And God did avenge the bloodshed that took place in Jezreel when Shallum assassinated Zechariah, (752 B. C.), the fourth of Jehu's descendants and the last, cutting off Jehu's dynasty forever. (II Kings 15). And as related to Israel, they will fall into captivity by the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B. C. God did avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel by judging the house of Jehu!

VERSES 6-7

1. Now I don't want to be dogmatic about this but when you look at the sexual promiscuity of Gomer, it is very possible that her second child, Lo-Ruhamah was not Hosea's. I truly believe that this child was not Hosea's and I will show you why. The reason I say that is because of the difference in verse 3 where we read, "**... and she conceived and bore him a son.**" And then here in verse 6 we are told, "**... and bore a daughter.**" You see, she did not have a daughter by Hosea but this child was born out of one of her encounters with another man. We see that she conceived this child but there is no mention of Hosea being the father.

And the thing that truly makes me believe that this child was born out of harlotry is what we are told in Hosea 2:4-5, **“I will not have mercy on her children, For they are the children of harlotry. For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my linen, My oil and my drink.’”** That is the clincher for me!

2. God instructed Hosea to name this child Lo-Ruhamah and this too will be an object lesson for the Northern Kingdom of Israel. First of all “Lo” means “no” and “Ruhamah” means “mercy.”

Imagine naming your child that. “No Mercy, get over here!” But this was to show where the Northern Kingdom was at, they have crossed over the line and now God’s mercy towards them has come to an end. Judgment was coming by the hands of the Assyrians.

Now in contrast to Israel’s captivity, Judah will be saved. The interesting thing here is their salvation will not come as a result of their military might, but by the hand of the Lord. You may remember the story of King Hezekiah who ruled the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

After the Assyrians took captive the Northern Kingdom of Israel they started to move southward towards the Southern Kingdom and Jerusalem. The army of Assyria that destroyed Israel also attacked Judah, but they did not conquer them.

Remember that Sennacherib, King of Assyria surrounded Jerusalem with his forces and the Assyrians tried to get Hezekiah and his people to surrender peaceably. But Hezekiah refused, called on his prayer partner, the prophet Isaiah, and they laid their requests before the Lord.

And we are told the outcome of that prayer in II Kings 19:35, which says, “**And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses - all dead.**” (Also found in Isaiah 37). You see, the Lord saved them, destroyed the enemy, and Judah did not even lift a sword in this battle, just as the Lord said would take place!

VERSES 8-9

1. Once again this might not be Hosea’s child. And as bad as things were before, that God was not going to show them anymore mercy, now, with the naming of this son, Lo-Ammi, it shows how far away from God they had gone.

This name means, “not My people” and it is not a sentence against them, it is just putting forth the reality of the situation. They did not want to be God’s people anymore and God was not going to play games with them.

2. But I thought God was compassionate and full of mercy, what is going on here? Look at verse 10 and you will see.

VERSE 10

1. How can this be? How can God, who was going to show no mercy to these people show them mercy? How can God who declared that they were not His people any longer because they have turned from Him now call them “**My people**”?

There is only one way that can happen and that is when they repent of their sin and turn to their Savior! God had brought them to the place where they were broken and all they could do is look up and when they do, God is there with His arms of forgiveness opened wide for them!

I believe that the ultimate or final fulfillment of this is seen as the Jewish people turn to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, they repent of their sins and this will take place during the Tribulation Period culminating just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ!

VERSE 11

1. Now this is interesting because it is talking about a united nation, no longer a Northern and Southern Kingdom, which at this point was in effect for some maybe some 180 years with no hope of their being a restoration of the nation. But God said that He would unite them once again.

That means Hosea was looking to a future time of restoration for the nation. Now some see this as speaking of what took place back on May 14, 1948 when Israel became a nation again. For almost 2,000 years they were without a homeland, which is unheard of a nation being without a homeland for that long and keeping their identity!

What happens is a people without a homeland get assimilated into other cultures and they lose their own. But not Israel, they even kept the Hebrew language, and this new nation was not divided, it was one nation, just as God said. The rebirth of the nation of Israel has begun, in the physical sense, but their spiritual restoration as a nation is still in the future.

It is as Ezekiel 37:21-22 says, **“Then say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.’”**

Now I don’t believe that this is the complete fulfillment of what God is saying here in Hosea. I think it is still future, I think it is ultimately looking at the Kingdom Age! The reason I say that is the majority of the nation, the majority of Jews have not been restored back to God because their sin separates them from God. It will not be until they repent of their sin and ask Jesus Christ to be Lord and Savior of their life that they will restore that fellowship with the Father.

It is as Paul said in Romans 11:25-27, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’”**

Only Jesus can take away their sins and thus, they will turn to Him but not until the Tribulation Period as a nation and many towards the end of the Tribulation Period! And if you think about it, the One who will lead this nation will be their Messiah, it will be Jesus in the Kingdom Age!

HOSEA 2**VERSE 1**

1. This goes along with what we were reading in the closing verses of chapter 1 of Hosea. God is saying to the nation that there is coming a day when those who had turned from Him and were not His people will once again be His people! God is not done with the nation of Israel and if you still might have some doubts, by the time we get to Hosea chapter 3 you will see the love of God for His people!

VERSES 2-5

1. Hosea charges his wife with physical adultery just as God charges Israel with spiritual adultery! And notice what she is going after, the lusts of the flesh, material things, she is selling her body for the things of this world. But as Paul said in Hebrews 11:25, sins pleasures pass away, they don't last and many have found that out the hard way just as Gomer will!

2. Make no mistake about it, we are no different today. We sell our lives for all kinds of pleasures. There is the drug epidemic, the sexual promiscuity epidemic, the perversion of sexual relationships outside of marriage and outside that of a man and woman, we lust after so many things thinking that in them we will find lasting pleasure and what happens is that it is another door we go through looking for that satisfaction.

Listen to what John tells us regarding what we should not go after and what we should go after. In I John 2:15-17 we are told, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

You see, what is driving you - this world or the Lord? It is easy to tell. For example, do you spend more time watching a football game then you do with the Lord? And you can put any activity in there and you will see what is driving you. But also understand this, those things are passing away!

How many people gave it all for the Green Bay Packers or any time during their winning season, and now that has passed away. But the Lord remains, He is unchanging. So I will ask you once again, what is driving you? It is important we do spiritual checks, not guilt trips but we do need to evaluate our walk with the Lord! The Northern Kingdom of Israel were religious, they just didn't have a relationship with the Lord. All that activity to satisfy the flesh and the spirit was dying inside of them and they did not even recognize that fact because the pleasures of this world was more important to them!

VERSES 6-8

1. Why did God put up these hedges with thorns? To bring Israel to repentance. What was the point of these hedges? That as they tried to go off the path away from God it would hurt them and this was done to get them back on the path, back on track.

But as much as God did this she was going around them. She was pursuing, chasing after her fleshly desires and she was never satisfied! Understand this, you will never find true satisfaction in the things of this world, in the god's of this world.

A great example of a man who had everything and yet had nothing was King Solomon. Solomon had money, silver was so common it was thought of as nothing. He had possessions, ships would come in regularly bringing in all kinds of things for him. He had women, 700 wives and 300 concubines! He was very intelligent, in spite of having 700 wives and 300 concubines. He wrote over 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. He wrote books on various things, like trees or dendrology, animals or zoology, birds or ornithology, insects or entomology, and fish or ichthyology.

And yet his life was empty, why? Because the Lord was absent from it. In fact, this is the conclusion that he came to in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, "**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.**" Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

It is as Pascal said, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the human heart." How sad to see people running to and fro to straighten their lives out when the Lord can and will. How sad to see people trying to fill that void in their lives with anything and everything except the Lord, the only one that can fill that void. And in doing so they will never be content! They will be empty, just as Solomon was until he returned to the Lord.

And God is patient, He will wait and sometimes it takes us to hit rock bottom before we realize where we are at and what we need to do. We all remember the story of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15. He thought he had it all until he found himself eating food with the pigs - that is what the world has for us, pig slop!

And it says that “**He came to himself**” or he saw the light and came to his senses and he returned home to his father. How many of you are tired of eating pig slop? Like the prodigal son all you have to do is return to the Father, He is waiting with His arms open wide to embrace you!

2. And here is the amazing thing. Even when she was blessed she did not recognize that it was God who was blessing her, she thought it was the pagan god’s or her own doings.

It is as Jeremiah tells us as he spoke to the people, warning them to turn back to God and they responded by saying, “**As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you! But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble. But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.**”

Jeremiah 44:16-18.

Today, we are no different. We see our good fortune as just that, a result of our hard work or praying to a certain god, when the reality is, God has blessed us. May we not forget that fact! He makes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

3. And look at what they were doing with these blessings they received from the Lord or that Gomer received from her husband. She was using it with other lovers just as the Northern Kingdom of Israel was using it to worship false gods, Baal! And God is going to chasten them more so that they might return to Him! Let's read on and see what He will do.

VERSES 9-13

1. During the time of Jeroboam II Israel enjoyed a time of great prosperity. But she used her prosperity for idolatry and the pursuit of ungodly pleasures as we read in verse 9 and verse 13. Thus, God will take away her prosperity.

Not only will God take away her prosperity but God is going to expose her sins for all to see. In other words, judgment is coming. It is as Hebrews 4:13 says, "**And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**"

And for Israel, she will be forsaken. Their joy, her feasts will end. The land will be overrun, it will not yield its fruit, all because they have forsaken the Lord. They were reaping what they have sown! And when you are so enraptured with other things, you too will forget the Lord just as the Northern Kingdom of Israel did!

VERSES 14-16

1. God is calling out to His people with tender words of comfort, of hope, and they will respond favorably to His call, they will return to the Lord! The Valley of Achor was the Valley of Trouble. It was the place where Achan's sin caused the children of Israel and Joshua to be defeated. And now this Valley of Trouble has become a door of hope!

How true that is in our own lives. We can run from God and when we stop He is there waiting for us. And that Valley of Trouble we can find the door of hope if we are willing to turn back to Him.

VERSES 17-20

1. God's love is awesome! He doesn't give up but keeps calling out to us, desiring us to return to Him! And He does the same with Israel, a kind of stubborn love, and that should comfort us because without it we would be in trouble!

Now the name "**Baal**" in Hebrew comes from the word "Master" and the two words sound alike. It was the Baals, the idols of the nations that wanted this "master-slave" relationship with man. But not the Lord God; He wants a love-based, commitment-based relationship with His people.

2. And we see in verse 19 that the Lord says, "**I will betroth you to me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to me . . .**" That carries with it the idea of, "A new beginning, with all the freshness of first love, rather than the weary patching up of differences." In other words, God's love for us is fresh, it is new!

And I think the idea here, when this relationship with the Lord is restored it will never be broken again. And I believe that this is looking ahead to the Kingdom Age where there will be no more wars and this earth will be restored to the way it was when God created it, before sin entered it!

VERSES 21-23

1. Again we see here the restoration of Israel. God had scattered them, but now He is planting them. God had taken away His mercy from them, but now He is pouring out His mercy upon them. He had forsaken them as His people, but now He has made them His people and they have made Him their God!

Now we need to understand this. On a physical level they have been restored, placed back into the land back on May 14, 1948. But, spiritually speaking, they have not returned to God. In fact, only about 10% of the nation, 10% of the Jewish people in Israel today are spiritually minded, orthodox in their beliefs. The other 90% of the people are just pure secular in their attitude towards God. But God is going to restore them spiritually one day.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 we see this spiritual restoration spoken of. We read **“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah– not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**

And we also saw that in Romans chapter 11 that God is going to save all Israel, they will come to their Messiah, to Jesus to receive their forgiveness of sins! In fact, the Lord spoke of this back in Matthew 23:37-39 where we read **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”** One day the nation of Israel will be restored, at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period, when they receive Jesus as their Messiah as I have said!

So we see here the complete restoration of Israel and it is pictured for us in the children of Hosea. You see, all three of Hosea’s children were named as marks of judgment but now they have their names restored and made into marks of mercy, grace, and restoration. God is that good!

HOSEA 3

VERSES 1-2

1. What the Lord is asking Hosea to do is amazing but as we can see, it is an illustration of what they did to Him. At this point Gomer has left Hosea, she became a prostitute, selling her body so she can enjoy the pleasures of this world.

But now that lifestyle has taken its toll on her body. This body that men were willing to pay for was now worn and torn and nobody wanted it anymore. It was used and abused merchandise and God tells Hosea to go and buy her back, receive her back. And he once again obeys the Lord and buys her back at ½ the price of a slave, 15 shekels!

Why did God command Hosea to go back to his still-unfaithful wife? Not only for the sake of Hosea and his wife Gomer, but also so that they would become a living lesson of the Lord's relationship with His people. They were still steeped in spiritual adultery, yet the Lord still loved them.

2. Now let's look at this first of all from Hosea's position. Yes, the Scriptures do teach that you can divorce your spouse when there is adultery but it is allowed and it is not a command. God hates divorce not only because it breaks up a union between two people that He has brought together but it also destroys the witness of what marriage represents, the union of the church with Jesus, the bride and the bridegroom!

Keep in mind that love is not a *FEELING* it is an act of your *WILL*! Feelings change from one minute to the next many times but your will, what you desire in this relationship should not. Think about it, do you really think that Hosea felt the love for his wife who was cheating with other men? I doubt it but God directed him to love her even when it was hard to do that and I believe in the marriage relationship, if you are struggling this evening, God is calling you to do the same.

Why should I do that? Because that is how God loves you and if He didn't we all would be in trouble! When you look and see God's love, His compassion towards us that should cause us to be more loving, more compassionate not only to our spouse but to those around us who we may feel don't deserve it but God has called us to do it!

And again, this is exactly what God has done for us. We were going after other god's, we were doing our own thing and our lives were battered and torn apart. And as we were in that broken condition the One who loves us so, Jesus Christ reaches out to us and purchases us back to Himself through His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. That is what God has done for Israel and it is what God has done for us. What a great God we have!

VERSES 3-4

1. This is what was to come for them. Their King has been taken away by the Assyrians, and even today there is no King in Israel. And the idea here is that in her fallen state Israel will not have the national or political leadership that she needs.

Not only that but they did not have the Temple or the sacrifices in the Northern Kingdom, it was in Jerusalem where the sacrifices took place, where the Temple was located, in the Southern Kingdom of Judah! And for the nation today, the Temple sacrifices which were started up for a time, have ceased since the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A. D. Thus, in her fallen state Israel will not have the spiritual service that she needs, it will be empty.

And lastly, the priestly garments, the ephod that was used to discern the will of God is not used anymore. And the teraphim or small household gods or idols have been taken away. And in her fallen state Israel will not have the guidance of God, she will not have the direction that she needs to guide her.

God had these removed and thus, she is empty, broken, dry, lifeless but God's desire is to not leave her in that condition. Look at what we are told in verse 5.

VERSE 5

1. I like the way The Amplified Bible translates this verse, it reads, "**Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, [inquiring of and requiring Him] and [from the line of] David, their King [of kings]; and they shall come in [anxious] fear to the Lord and to His goodness and His good things in the latter days.**"

For almost 2,000 years now they have been spiritually dead, but God will restore them, they will return to their King, Jesus Christ, who will rule and reign on this earth for 1,000 years from the throne of David! Yes, physically they are back in the land, they have been restored, but they have not sought the Lord as yet, but they will, for one day all Israel will be saved!

2. Now here is the wonderful thing. God's invitation to eternal life is open to all. In Isaiah 55:3-5 we are told, "**Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you - The sure mercies of David. Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people. Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the Lord your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you.**"

What does it mean to "**Incline your ear**"? It means you need to listen. Yes it is important that we read God's Word but we must then listen to what God is saying to us through His Word and obey. It is not just about information, which is important, it is also about application!

The Scriptures tell us that the Messiah would come from the seed of David and one day His Kingdom will be established over all the earth. And again the thought is that this invitation is open to all. Not only to Israel as we are told, **“Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you. . . .”** Isaiah 55:5.

You see, you don’t have to wait. Any individual right now can enjoy this blessing of restored relationship if they will turn back to the *LORD*. Make no mistake about it, the love of God for fallen man is great.

It is as the Lord said in John chapter 3, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”** John 3:16-21.

May we not forget that love that God has for us and may we love others as God has loved us, ***UNCONDITIONALLY!***