

## November 5

**Scriptures:** Read Hosea 11-14

**Key Verse:** "...For the ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them." (Hosea 14:9)

### Overview

From chapter 11 to the end of the book, Hosea focuses upon the fatherly love that God has had for them since the very beginning when He called them out of bondage in Egypt. With a beautiful picture of a child with his gentle and kind father teaching him to walk, Hosea illustrates God's care and love for Ephraim (Israel). He did not burden them with heavy yokes. Rather, He made it easy for them to obey and follow Him, and all the while He provided for their every need (11:1-4). As they grew to maturity, they should have realized all that God had done for them. But their response to Him was one of ingratitude and disrespect. They refused to turn to Him (in repentance); they were "bent on backsliding". Although it grieved the heart of God to give His son Ephraim up for punishment, His justice demanded it. Since He is "God, and not man", He will not lie but will fulfill that which He has purposed (cf. Num. 23:19), yet His mercy is much greater than that of a man (cf. 2 Sam. 24:14). Although Israel deserved to be annihilated, God promised not to give them the full extent of His wrath (which would have wiped them off the face of the earth). He would preserve a faithful remnant, and at the time when He (the Messiah) comes with regal strength and might ("roar like a lion"; the second coming), they will come to Him with humility and fear, and He will give them their eternal inheritance (11:10-11).

In chapter 12, Hosea returns to the situation of Israel in his day. He condemns them for their lies and deceitful dealings with their treaty partners. Their deceit leads Hosea to remember their forefather Jacob (meaning "deceitful") who deceived his brother Esau and his father Isaac (Gen. 27). Yet in contrast to Jacob who became honourable and pleaded with God to bless him (Gen. 28; 32:24-29), his descendants did not have that same desire. Hosea exhorted them to be like Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, meaning "prince with God". However, they did not even deserve to be called by the name of Israel, so Hosea calls Ephraim, "a cunning Canaanite!" (12:7), for the Canaanites were notorious for their deception and oppression. Ephraim had become rich through oppressive means, and yet claimed to have no guilt.

The Lord, however, who knows and sees all, had sent His prophets to expose Israel's sins, which was actually an expression of His love for His people and a desire for them to repent. God had given parables, signs, and numerous visions to His prophets in order to warn Israel of coming judgment if they did not repent; yet they ignored the prophets' warnings. Hosea used the prophet Moses as an example of the truth and value of a prophet, for without him the nation would not be in existence. However, in Hosea's day, the true prophet was an object of reproach and ridicule, and many were even killed. This terrible sin, along with their idolatry, provoked the Lord the most, and as Hosea proclaims, they would be repaid with reproach and the penalty of blood guiltiness (12:10, 13-14).

In chapter 13, Hosea explains that when Ephraim (meaning "double fruitfulness") was young and humble before the Lord, he was exalted and God promised him, through Jacob, that he would be

greater than his elder brother Manasseh (Joseph's other son; cf. Gen. 48). Indeed, other than the tribe of Judah, Ephraim became the largest tribe. But from the moment Ephraim worshipped Baal, they died spiritually (13:1), and like an infection, their idolatry kept spreading. When Satan gets a foothold in someone's life, it takes a miracle of God's deliverance to be set free. Ephraim, however, did not turn to God but continued to exalt their idols. Therefore, the Lord would send the dreaded east wind to dry up the once fruitful Ephraim (13:15) and cause them to disappear like the dew, chaff, or smoke (13:2-3).

Through Moses' repeated warnings and the commandments of the Law, the Lord had stressed that if the children of Israel were to be His people, they were to have no other gods before Him. Only the true and living God could save them; there was none other (13:4; Ex. 20:1-5). Another repeated warning of Moses was that when God gave them possession of the Promised Land and blessed them with wealth, they were not to forget Him; yet this is exactly what they did (13:5-6; cf. Deut. 8:10-11). They forgot that every blessing comes from Him and that He alone is their strength. When they asked Samuel for a king, the Lord knew their motivation. It was because they wanted to be like the other nations who had a hero to lead them into battle and win wars for them. In so doing, they rejected God, choosing rather to trust in man (13:9-11; 1 Sam. 8:5-7).

In his closing exhortation (ch. 14), Hosea gives the hope of restoration for all those who forsake idolatry, repent, and trust in God. The Lord promises to make them fruitful, pleasant, and strong — something which will be ultimately realized in the Millennial Kingdom of Messiah Jesus. The closing warning is for the wise (those who fear the Lord) and prudent (those who put their faith into practice) to walk in the ways of righteousness, which is in the Rock, the Lord Jesus (14:9; cf. 1 Pet. 2:7-8).

## **Prayer**

Oh God, grant us the grace to be genuinely sorry for our sin, and forgive us for the times when we're only sorry for the consequences of our sin.