13:14-16

HOSEA

some description of the cold-blooded cruelty of the Assyrian conquest here. Children will be dashed to death upon the pavements of village streets; women, pregnant with child, will be ripped open with the swords of the soldiers. For a record of the actual fulfillment of this see II Kings 8:12; 15:16.

QUIZ

- 1. Why is rebellion against God a prelude to self-destruction?
- 2. How did God give them a king in anger and take away a king in wrath?
- 3. Why does the prophet liken Israel's situation to child-birth?
- 4. What is the promise concerning victory over hell and death to Israel?
- 5. Where is this promise quoted in the New Testament and what is its meaning?
- 6. What is the "east wind" that will come and destroy impenitent Israel?
- 7. Where is the record of the fulfillment of verse 16?

LOVE RECONCILING

PEACE REMAINS—LURED

TEXT: 14:1-3

- 1 O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
- 2 Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.
- 3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

QUERIES

a. Why is Israel directed to "take . . . words" unto Jehovah?b. Why does Israel pledge not to "ride upon horses?"

PARAPHRASE

Return, O Israel, by taking the right steps toward God. You have stumbled in taking the wrong steps of sin and rebellion. It is still possible for you to return, but if your return is to be in the right way, it must begin with a prayer for the forgiveness of your sin. So take

PEACE REMAINS

with you words of repentance asking the Lord to forgive all your guilt and accept the only good thing that you are able to bring, the sacrifice of penitent lips. Taking the right steps toward God also includes, O Israel, renunciation of trust in world power such as the alliances you have made with Assyria, renunciation of your own military forces, renunciation of idolatry, and trusting completely in the Lord because you have no other One in whom you may trust.

SUMMARY

Israel is given directions for a proper response to the salvation God has offered earlier (13:13-15) and will offer (14:4-8). The proper response is penitent prayer and complete faith in God as their Father.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . RETURN UNTO JEHOVAH . . . FOR THOU HAST FALLEN . . . Few books in the Bible close on a higher note, with a more climactic appeal, than Hosea. Some, like Genesis, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, II Samuel, II Kings, Jeremiah, and others end on ominous, tragic notes. Other books, of course, close with a joyful note, but none is more dramatically impressive in this regard than Hosea. One gets the feeling from verse 1, here, that Hosea has just offered Israel its last call to repentance before the awful judgment falls. The Hebrew word for "fallen" here is *kashalta* which means literally, "stumbled; made a false step." Israel is exhorted then, to "return" which is equivalent to taking the "right steps" toward God. Jeremiah says it thusly: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16), (cf. also Psa. 16:11; 23:3; 25:10; 119:35; Prov. 2:8-9; 4:11; Isa. 2:3).

v. 2 TAKE WITH YOU WORDS . . . TAKE AWAY ALL INIQUITY . . . SO WILL WE RENDER . . . THE OFFERING OF OUR LIPS . . . One of the first, and most necessary, steps to be taken is that of confession of sin. If we are honest with ourselves and honest with God and confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). However, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (I John 1:8). The work of the Holy Spirit today is to "convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" (see comments on John 16:8-9 in Gospel of John, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press). God cannot bless until man realizes and acknow-

14:1,2

ledges he is estranged from God and takes the necessary steps to return to the grace of God. The very word "confess" in Greek is *homologao* which means literally "to say the same as." When we confess that we are sinners we simply "say the same as." God says in His word. And until we do we are rebelling against His word. So with Israel—she must "say the same as." God has been saying to her through the prophet Hosea. She has stumbled through her false stepping and must now confess it.

The phrase "accept that which is good" refers to Israel's plea to God to accept the only good thing they are able to offer Himthat is the sacrifice of penitent lips. They had no merit of their own to offer. He must love them freely (cf. 14:4). God is pleased with the sacrifices of penitent, worshipping lips (cf. Heb. 13:15-16; Psa. 107:22; 116:17; Jer. 17:26; 33:11; Jonah 2:9). And this is what Israel is directed to offer, penitent praise from their lips which would be better than the sacrifice of bullocks (cf. Isa. 1:10-20; Micah 6:6-8).

v. 3 ASSYRIA SHALL NOT SAVE US . . . After prayer for pardon and for acceptance of themselves, and thanksgiving for acceptance, comes the promise not to fall back into their former sins. Trust in man, in their own strength, in their idols, had been their besetting sins. Now, one by one, they disavow them. First, they disclaim trust in man. No longer are they to put their trust for security in political alliances with godless, heathen nations, forgetting that God can protect them from any enemy, regardless of how powerful that enemy might be. The sin involved in making such alliances is, first of all, a manifest lack of trust in God, and second, certain compromises with paganism is necessary in any such alliance.

Second, they disclaim trust in their own strength. War was almost the only end for which the horse was used among the Jews. They measured their own military strength by the number of horses their king could command (cf. Deut. 17:16; I Kings 10:28; II Kings 18:23; Psa. 33:17; Prov. 21:31). Civil defense is not necessarily spiritual defense. National security is not necessary spiritual protection. Without spiritual health there can be no national strength. Men today may boast of man-made satellites and of intercontinental ballistic missiles with the terrifying potential of nuclear energy, but what can any people do without God? "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us" (Psa. 124:2-3). This will ever be true in spite of our military might. Third, they must renounce all idolatry. We have dealt at length with the nature and causes of Israel's idolatry. It would be superflous to add to our former comments, only to remark how foolish indeed to trust in gods made with their own hands.

The phrase "in thee the fatherless findeth mercy" must be another step Israel must take in its way to humbleness. Israel must recognize that it is an orphan and since it is homeless, fatherless and helpless, must throw itself completely upon the mercy of Jehovah who will give mercy to those who so trust in Him.

The words of the Chronicler come to mind as we contemplate Hosea's closing admontion. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (II Chron. 7:14). The three-stage program offered by Hosea to Israel for her salvation would fit the situation of America today: (1) Repent, change the mind in relation to God's word and will; (2) Confess its sins; (3) Renounce its vain hope in political alliances and treaties with godless, tyrannical governments whose avowed goals are enslavement of the world (instead of "building bridges to our enemies" we ought to be repairing bridges made by our pioneer ancestors of trust and praise to God); renounce its pride in its military and economic prowess; renounce all the idols it worships (sex, affluence, sports, sophistication, intellectualism). But, since America is not necessarily "God's people" any more than any other nation, the primary application of Hosea's admonition must be made to the Church (God's chosen nation ever since the Day of Pentecost), see the sermon on Hosea at the end of this book for this application.

QUIZ

- 1. How had Israel "fallen" by its iniquity?
- 2. Why is Israel exhorted to confess its sin?
- 3. What is the only good thing Israel has to offer to God?
- 4. Name the three-fold renunciation Israel is directed to make?

PEACE REMAINS—LAVED

TEXT: 14:4-6

- 4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him.
- 5 I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

14:3-6

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

QUERIES

a. How will God "heal" their backsliding?

b. What do the figurative pictures of Israel as certain trees represent?

PARAPHRASE

I will cure you of your faithlessness and fickleness and I will love you freely and in spite of what you have been for when you have repented, confessed and renounced your sins, My wrath will have been turned away from you. I will nourish you and give you fruitfulness, stability, beauty, and purity like the refreshing dew nourishes and gives all these things to the lilies, the cedars of Lebanon and the olive trees.

SUMMARY

When God's people shall have humbled themselves and turned to Him in penitent thanksgiving, He will shower them with His love and blessings.

COMMENT

v. 4 I WILL HEAL THEIR BACKSLIDING, I WILL LOVE THEM FREELY . . . The Hebrew word translated "freely" here would be more literally, *impelled*. G. Campbell Morgan puts it, "Freely means of My own will and My own heart, quite independently of them or of their deserts. I will not love them in response to their love. I will love them in spite of their rebellion . . . I will love them because I cannot help loving them. That is God. And it is because of that deep thing in the nature of God that He first said, 'I will heal their backsliding,' I will cure the malady of their apostasy."

It is this free love of God (which can only be appropriated by them when they have put themselves in a position to receive it by repenting) which will cure their backsliding. He does not mean that He will merely heal the wounds they have received in judgment for their apostasy. He is going to cure them of the very root cause of apostasy faithlessness, fickleness and unbelief. And how is He going to do this? We are told in the next verses.

v. 5-6 I WILL BE AS THE DEW . . . HE . . . AS THE LILY . . . CAST FORTH HIS ROOTS . . . BRANCHES . . . SPREAD . . . BEAUTY . . . AS THE OLIVE-TREE . . . Earlier the prophet has used "dew" to

PEACE REMAINS

describe the fickleness of Israel's love toward God, "as the morning dew that goeth early away," (6:4). There "dew" represented the evanescent nature of their love toward God, Now "dew" represents the nourishment the everlasting God is able to provide. Because God is as the dew to Israel, he shall blossom as the lily. The lily stands for beauty and purity. God's covenant people, under the dew-like nourishment of God shall be characterized by their beauty and purity. Not only beauty, not only purity, but stability—"cast forth his roots" is synonymous with the stability of the majestic cedars of Lebanon. The branches spreading symbolize magnificence or greatness. The ever-green olive tree symbolizes perpetuity or eternality. Notice the symbolism of it all. Beauty, purity, strength, stedfastness (faithfulness), eternality; and then look at the nation as it was, ugly, impure, deformed, weak and vacillating—withered with the east wind of God's judgment and bearing no fruit.

This, of course, cannot be applied in any ultimate sense to the restoration of the Jews in the days of Ezra and Zerubbabel, for the subsequent history of the Jews does not bear this description out. It is very evidently Hosea's way of expressing God's promise to fulfill the covenant He made with Abraham and Abraham's spiritual posterity (Christians). It is evident that Hosea 14 is entirely Messianic in its terminus ad auem (end). It is a prophecy describing the spiritual inheritance that is to come to the Church and this may be clearly seen by comparing the glorious future of Zion (the Church) as Isaiah describes it in Isaiah chapters 60-66. Read especially Isaiah 60:13, 21; 61:1-4; 62:1-5; 65:17-25, as Isaiah also uses the figures of beautifully fruitful trees to depict the future of God's covenant people. There can be no doubt that Isaiah is speaking of Christ and His Church for Jesus applies at least one of these sections to Himself in Luke 4:16ff! God, through Christ, has purified a people unto Himself. God, through Christ, has given beauty, strength, faith, steadfastness and eternal life to His covenant people! God, through Christ, has healed His people!

QUIZ

- 1. How will God heal the backsliding of His people?
- 2. What does "freely" mean when speaking of God's love?
- 3. How is God to be "as the dew unto Israel?"
- 4. Explain what the different figures of flowers and trees mean.
- 5. Is this a Messianic prophecy and is it fulfilled in the Church today? Why?

14:4-6

14:6-8

PEACE REMAINS-LOVED

TEXT: 14:7-8

- 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the grain, and blossom as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.
- 8 Ephriam shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found.

QUERIES

a. Who's shadow are they to dwell under?

b. Who is "like a green fir-tree?

PARAPHRASE

All the faithful people who dwell in the shady peaceful and restful influence of this new Israel shall prosper in the presence of the Lord. They will produce and bear fruit because Israel is abiding in the Lord. Israel will say, I will have nothing more to do with idols. And the Lord will have answered out of His concern and care, I have become your everlasting source of joy and satisfaction; in Me you have found life and fruitfulness.

SUMMARY

The idyllic portrait of the Messianic age now comes to a climax from the artist Hosea. God's gracious invitation is responded to by new Israel who finds God able to do exceeding abundantly above all that can be imagined.

COMMENT

v. 7 THEY THAT DWELL UNDER HIS SHADOW SHALL RETURN . . . "They" undoubtedly includes all the nations who shall "dwell under the shadow" of the new-Israel. It is "they" now, not "he"—not Israel, but they that dwell under his shadow. It is certainly confirmed from other prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc., that the promises to new-Israel belong to the "nations" (Gentiles) in the coming Messianic age (the Church). Furthermore, as we have noted in our

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comments on Hosea 1:6-2:23, the promises to new-Israel belong to the Gentiles also since the apostle Paul applied Hosea 1:6ff to them in Romans 9-11. G. Campbell Morgan says, "The fulfillment of all this is coming through Christ. This nation as an earthly people was rejected when Jesus said in the Temple courts, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' Almost immediately after, the Lord was alone with His own disciples, and He said, 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches." Everything of beauty and of glory and of strength and of fruitfulness, is to be produced through Him, and those associated with Him as branches in the Vine." And this new-Israel, as a result of the free lowe of God shown through His Son, will be "drawn" to Him (cf. Jn. 12:32) forever. Israel's response will be, "What have I to do any more with idols?"-Ephraim has broken with idols. What has brought this break with idols? What is it that sweeps idolatry out of the soul of a man, or of a nation? It is the loving care God expresses for men (once they have known and experienced it). Or, as our text puts it, "I have answered and will regard him (new-Israel)." The love of God, as it lhas been revealed through Jesus Christ our Lord, is the power that drives sin, anxiety, and fear out of the hearts of men (cf. I In. 3-4). Whe love Him because He first loved us and if we have this hope iin us we are able to purify ourselves by it (cf. also II Pet. 1:3-4).

v. 8 . . . I AM LIKE A GREEN FIR-TREE, FROM ME IS THY FRUIT FOUND. This is from God's mouth, God compares Himself to a cypress becoming green, not only to denote the shelter which He will afford the new-Israel, but as the true tree of life, on which the mew-Israel finds its fruits-a fruit which invigorates the spiritual life of the new-Israel. We add here the comments of Keil; "The salvation which this promise sets before the people when they shall return to the Lord, is indeed depicted, according to the circumstances and peculiar views prevailing under the Old Testament, as earthly growth and prosperity; but its real nature is such, that it will receive a spiritual fulfillment im those Israelites alone who are brought to belief in Jesus Christ."

OUIZ

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- 1. Who are the "they" of verse 7? How do you know?
- 2. What motivates Israel to renounce idolatry?
- 3. When was all this fulfilled? To whom?

EPILOGUE OR POSTSCRIPT

TEXT: 14:9

9 Who is wise, that he may understand these things? prudent, that he may know them? for the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

QUERIES

a. Why did Hosea add this Epilouge or Postscript?

b. What does it mean?

PARAPHRASE

Whoever is intelligent will understand what I have written. Whoever acts wisely will be convinced that what I say is true. That is, the ways of Jehovah are the only correct, true and right ways. Furthermore, those who are righteous and just will walk in these ways. The wicked, however, will stumble and fall in them just because they are right and true.

SUMMARY

God's ways are straight and true, and we walk, or fall, according to our relationship with those ways.

COMMENT

v. 9 WHO IS WISE, THAT HE MAY UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS? . . . The RSV puts this verse in the form of a declaration and we prefer it that way. Moses declared long before Hosea that keeping and doing the commandments of the Lord was wisdom and understanding (cf. Deut. 4:3-9). Compare also Psa. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 30:3-5. Hosea's challenge is that whoever was wise and prudent in Israel in his day would comprehend that what he was preaching was right! "Prudent" means acting according to intelligence; squaring conduct with conviction.

We may summarize the teachings of Hosea and make them applicable for today: (1) Sin separates from God, and blinds us, so that we lose the vision of Him; (2) Idolatry follows inevitably a loss of the vision of Him. (3) Hosea then reveals the heart and the holiness of God-His love is freely given and eternal, but it is never divorced from moral requirement on the part of man.

We, today, are living in fuller light than Hosea had. We see God as Hosea never saw Him. We see Him in Jesus Christ. There seeing Him, we know, as never before, that He can make no terms with sin; but we know that he stops at no sacrifice in order that He may heal our backsliding.

If we are guilty of idolatry, what will cure us? The vision of God the Supreme Lover, as He is seen in Jesus Christ.

"Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him?

Is not thine a captured heart?

Chief among ten thousand own Him,

Joyful choose the better part.

Idols once they won thee, charmed thee,

Lovely things of time and sense;

Gilded thus does sin disarm thee,

Honeyed lest thou turn thee thence.

What has stript the seeming beauty From the idols of the earth?

Not a sense of right or duty,

But the sight of peerless worth.

Not the crushing of those idols, With its bitter void and smart:

But the beaming of His beauty,

The unveiling of His heart.

Who extinguishes their taper

Till they hail the rising sun? Who discards the garb of winter Till the summer has begun?

'Tis that look that melted Peter, 'Tis that face that Stephen saw,

'Tis that heart that wept with Mary, Can alone from idols draw.

Draw and win and fill completely, Till the cup o'erflows the brim; What have we to do with idols Who have companied with Him?"

1 5

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

by Francis Thompson.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days; I fled Him, down the arches of the years; I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears I hid from Him, and under running laughter. Up vistaed hopes I sped; And shot, precipitated, Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears, From those strong Feet that followed, followed after. But with unhurrying chase, And unperturbed pace, Deliberate speed, majestic instancy, They beat-and a Voice beat More instant than the Feet---"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me." I pleaded, outlaw-wise, By many a hearted casement, curtained red, Trellised with intertwinning charities; (For, though I knew His love Who followed, Yet was I ere adread Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.) But, if one little casement parted wide, The gust of His approach would clash it to: Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue. Across the margent of the world I fled, And troubled the gold gateways of the stars, Smiting for shelter on their clanged bars; Fretted to dulcet jars And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon. I said to Dawn: Be sudden-to Eve: Be soon; With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over From this tremendous Lover-

Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!

I tempted all His servitors, but to find My own betrayal in their constancy,

In faith to Him their fickleness to me,

Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deciet.

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

To all swift things for swiftness did I sue: Clung to the whistling mane of every wind. But whether they swept, smoothly fleet, The long savannahs of the blue; Or whether, Thunder-driven, They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven, Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet-Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue. Still with unhurrying chase, And unperturbed pace. Deliberate speed, majestic instancy, Came on the following Feet, And a Voice above their beat-"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me." I sought no more that after which I straved In face of man or maid; But still within the little children's eves Seems something, something that replies, They at least are for me, surely for me! I turned me to them very wistfully; But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair With dawning answers there, Their angel plucked them from me by the hair. "Come then, ye other children, Nature's-share With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship; Let me greet you lip to lip, Let me twine with you caresses, Wantoning With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses, Banqueting With her in her wind-walled palace, Underneath her azured dais, Ouaffing, as your taintless way is, From a chalice Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring." So it was done: I in their delicate fellowship was one-Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies. I knew all the swift importings On the wilful face of skies: I knew how the clouds arise Spumed of the wild sea-snortings;

All that's born or dies

Rose and drooped with; made them shapers Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine; With them joyed and was bereaven. I was heavy with the even, When she lit her glimmering tapers Round the day's dead sanctities. I laughed in the morning's eyes. I triumphed and I saddened with all weather, Heaven and I wept together, And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine; Against the red throb of its sunset-heart I laid my own to beat, And share commingling heat; But not by that, was eased by my human smart. In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek. For ah! we know not what each other says, These things and I; in sound I speak-Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences. Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth; Let her, if she would own me, Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me The breasts o' her tenderness: Never did any milk of hers once bless My thirsting mouth. Nigh and nigh draws the chase, With unperturbed pace, Deliberate speed, majestic instancy; And past those noised Feet A voice comes yet more fleet-"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me." Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke! My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me, And smitten me to my knee; I am defenseless utterly. I slept, methinks, and woke, And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep. In the rash lustihood of my young powers, I stood the pillaring hours And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,

I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years— My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap. My days have crackled and gone up in smoke, Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.

Yea, faileth now each dream The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist; Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist, Are yielding; cords of all too weak account For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.

Ah! is Thy love indeed

A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,

Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?

Ah! must—

Designer Infinite!-

Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it? My freshness spent its wavering showed i' the dust; And now my heart is as a briken fount, Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down over

From the dank thoughts that shiver Upon the sighful branches of my mind.

Such is; what is to be?

The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind? I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds; Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds From the hid battlements of Eternity; Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.

But not ever him who summoneth

I first have seen, unwound

With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned; His name I know, and what his trumpet saith. Whether man's heart or life it be which yields

Thee harvest, must Thy harvest-fields

Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit

Comes on at hand the bruit;

That Voice is round me like a bursting sea: "And is thy earth so marred,

Shattered in shard on shard?

Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me! Strange, piteous, futile thing!

Wherefore should any set thee love apart? Seeing none but I makes much of naught" (He said). "And human love needs human meriting:

How hast thou merited---

Ol all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?

Alack, thou knowest not

How little worthy of any love thou art!

Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,

Save Me, save only Me?

All which I took from thee I did but take, Not for thy harms,

But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms. All which thy child's mistake

Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home: Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:

Is my gloom, after all,

Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?

"As, fondest, blindest, weakest,

I am He Whom thou seekest!

Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

