

THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

Text: Entire book of Hosea

esp., Hosea 4:12; 5:4

INTRODUCTION

I. HOSEA'S BACKGROUND

- A. The entire people of God, except for a very small remnant, was decadent and utterly corrupt
 - 1. Israel was morally falling apart at the seams
 - 2. The evil which Amos had condemned earlier had grown rapidly worse
 - 3. This led to political anarchy and chaos
- B. Religious apostasy and refusal to know God led to
 - 1. kings and princes finding their entertainment in the people's sinning (7:2ff)
 - 2. a degenerate priesthood wringing its hands in greedy glee over the sons of the people because their coffers were enriched through sacrifices (4:6-8)
 - 3. killing, stealing and bloody violence (4:1-2; 6:8; 7:1; 10:4; 11:12)
 - 4. sin is rampant 8:1; the people will not tolerate rebuke (4:4)
- C. Kirkpatrick says, ". . . The picture is drawn with a force and feeling which attests an eyewitness . . . who is keenly and bitterly alive to the sense that his own country is being dragged headlong down to ruin by the sins and crimes which he rebukes but cannot reform . . ."

II. HOSEA'S MARRIAGE ACTUAL BUT SYMBOLIC OF ISRAEL'S RELATION TO GOD

- A. Hosea is commanded to marry a "whorish" woman which symbolizes the attitude of the people of Israel toward God
- B. He is further commanded to give his children symbolical names depicting God's attitude toward the idolatrous people.
- C. Hosea means: Salvation, or, the Lord saveth, which is appropriate for the mission and message of Hosea
- D. It was out of Hosea's actual experience that he was able to know and feel more acutely what God felt about Israel. He was able to preach with a broken heart about the broken heart of God.

III. SO THE REAL THEME OF HOSEA'S MESSAGE IS "SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY."

- A. The primary condemnation is for the spiritual harlotry of the people . . . their unfaithfulness to God . . . which led to the specific sins
- B. Hosea's message is for the *people of God*
APPLICATION TODAY: ALL WHO CLAIM TO BE PEOPLE OF GOD
- C. We shall analyze the book of Hosea as we study and make application of this admonition against the "spirit of harlotry."
 - 1. Condition (just what is the "spirit of harlotry")
 - 2. Cause (how does one become infected with it)
 - 3. Cure (how does one overcome it)

DISCUSSION

- I. CONDITION (what attitudes or attractions betray possession of "the spirit of harlotry?")
 - A. Promiscuousness (permissiveness; indiscriminateness; looseness)
 - 1. The promiscuous person is one who has few convictions—wants to try everything; accept every idea;
 - 2. 4:1-2 ". . . There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; **THEY BREAK ALL BOUNDS** and murder follows murder . . ."
 - 3. The promiscuous person is fickle . . . 6:4 . . . "Your love is like a mourning cloud, like the dew that goes early away . . ."
 - 4. The promiscuous person is actually an insecure, selfish person. This is true in one's relation to God and in one's relation to the opposite sex.

Marion Hilliard, M.D., Toronto, Canada, Reader's Digest, says, "Adolescent boys need to know that promiscuity is habit forming and can make a shambles of their adult lives. Promiscuity is, in fact a mass of contradictions. It is not the indulgence of confident, capable men, but of men who have been defeated. It doesn't attract men of achievement, but only men looking for achievement. Promiscuity destroys a person, much as a narcotic does. It has the identical effect of blacking out disappointments and making a man feel 9 ft. tall—and it has the same hangover the next day, with the disappointments still unsolved and the man even less able to cope with them. The promiscuous man is not oversexed at all; he's undersexed. He's not looking to give some-

SERMON FROM HOSEA

thing, but to get it. This desolate pattern can be set in adolescence. A boy must not indulge himself in his youth if he wants to be a coherent, secure adult. He might keep in mind that gluttons don't enjoy the taste of food. An adolescent boy can check on his own incipient gluttony by means of a bit of introspection. When he contemplates his date for the evening, is he considering the reward he will get for his investment? Does he choose her with his mind on getting the most return? This is downright immoral. No boy should expect a girl to pay for her evening's entertainment by permitting petting."

SEXUAL PROMISCUITY AND RELIGIOUS PROMISCUITY BOTH BETRAY "THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY." PERMISSIVENESS—LOOSENESS—FICKLENESS IN RELIGION IS SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY.

LOOSENESS TOWARD GOD'S COMMANDS AND STANDARDS IS SPIRITUAL PROMISCUITY AND THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY.

B. Prostitution (abasing oneself, degrading oneself for gain)

1. The harlot or prostitute is one who allows herself to be violated for money . . . she gets no real sense of love or satisfaction out of sex (which is what God intended it to be) for she has abased and degraded it.

A book entitled, "The Call Girl," by Greenwald, case studies by an eminent psychologist of about 18 women successful beyond words in their profession, states: "The average income for each call girl was \$35,000 a year. For that kind of money they must have been beautiful and reasonably intelligent; and with that kind of money they could afford good clothes, leisure, and "some of the good things of life." With them there was no fear of "conception, infection, or detection." They knew how to handle themselves and their careers. Yet they all turned to liquor and dope; and finally went down the drain."

2. Israel PROSTITUTED its relationship to God and the purpose for which God chose her. 4:17-18—"Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. A band of drunkards, they give themselves to harlotry; they love shame more than their glory (Jehovah)."

8:4—"They made kings, but not through me, they set up princes, but without my knowledge. With their silver and gold they made idols."

ISRAEL PROSTITUTED HERSELF TO THE DEVIL . . . ALLOWED THE EVIL ONE TO VIOLATE HER IN ORDER TO GET MATERIAL GAIN . . . ISRAEL BECAME AN ADULTERESS AND LEFT HER HUSBAND GOD, AND WENT AFTER OTHER LOVERS (WORSHIPPED PAGAN IDOLS, MADE ALLIANCES WITH PAGAN EMPIRES)

HOSEA

THE CHURCH (AT LEAST THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE THE CHURCH)
HAS PROSTITUTED ITSELF IN MANY REALMS TODAY

ALLOWED ITS PURPOSE OF SALVATION TO BE VIOLATED IN
ORDER TO GAIN FAVOR WITH THE WORLD . . .

ALLOWED ITS PURPOSE OF SERVING MANKIND TO BE PROSTITUTED
TO GAIN WORLDLY WEALTH

The National Council of Churches General Board met recently and voted to (1) stop the bombing of North Vietnam (2) quit threatening Red China (3) press for Red China's admission to the UN (4) create conditions for cooperation between the U.S. and Communist countries (5) recognize the government of Cuba (6) acknowledge the rights of East Germany (7) remove restrictions on imports from Communist countries (8) condemn the idea that the world is divided into two camps—Free and Communist. THE MEETING HAD LITTLE OR NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST AND THE SALVATION OF MEN ACCORDING TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE N.T.

YES, WHEN THE CHURCH PROSTITUTES ITS RELATIONSHIP AND PURPOSE, IT IS EVIDENCE OF "THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY."

C. Putridness (rotteness, decadence, foulness) such a state is not only useless, but dangerous

1. Israel had become putrid, rotten, foul, useless 7:8-9
". . . Ephraim is a cake not turned . . . gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not." "Israel is defiled . . . Ephraim is sick . . . Ephraim is corrupt . . . a vulture is over the house of the Lord . . . Israel is a useless vessel . . . They have deeply corrupted themselves . . . They have become detestable like the thing they love . . . Ephraim is destined for a prey"

2. It is not necessary to remind you that in many segments of so-called Christendom, today, the church has become putrid..

IN SOME PARTS IT IS LIKE THE PUTRID, SICKENING CHURCH OF LAODICEA WHICH THE LORD SAID WOULD BE SPEWED OUT OF HIS MOUTH!

a. Some churches are dead in ritualism

b. Some are rotten with immorality

c. Some are so stingy they are sickening

d. Some are so concerned with things of the world they are corrupt and perverted

INSTEAD OF BEING SALT OF THE EARTH THEY CONTRIBUTE
TO THE DECAY OF SOCIETY

WHEN THE CHURCH IS PUTRID THE WHOLE SOCIETY IS PUTRID—
SOCIETY IS REAPING A HARVEST OF IMMORALITY, CRIME, VIOLENCE,

SERMON FROM HOSEA

BROKEN HOMES, HOPELESSNESS AND FRUSTRATION . . . BECAUSE THE CHURCH'S WITNESS IS ROTTEN.

In Washington D.C. recently, 3 Lt. of USMC were dining in a Washington restaurant with 3 girl friends. A group of 3 or 4 Negroes walked in, opened fire, killing two Marine officers and wounding the other officer and one of the girls. The crime was hushed up, kept almost off newscasts and out of newspapers, lest the arrest of the Negroes if reported, be falsely labeled "police brutality" and start a riot . . .

In another city, a PTA meeting was being held in a schoolhouse. A gang of teenagers broke into the school, and before the eyes of these parents and teachers, proceeded to smash up and wreck the furniture.

In many high schools even men teachers must walk down halls two or more together for their own protection . . .

YES, THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY IS EVIDENT . . . BUT WHAT ARE THE CAUSES . . . WHY IS THERE A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY IN THE CHURCH????

II. CAUSES

A. Pride; the proud do not trust in God . . . they trust in themselves . . . they are unfaithful . . . in their pride they cultivate the spirit of harlotry

1. Pride was the door by which the spirit of harlotry entered the heart of Eve then Adam
2. "The pride of Israel testifies to his face" Hosea 5:5 "The pride of Israel witnesses against him" Hosea 7:10
3. Israel was proud of its material progress; proud of its international deals; proud of its religiosity; proud of its past . . . etc.

ALL THIS PRIDE OPENED THE DOOR TO SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY
"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate."
Prov. 8:13

Obadiah said to Edom, "The pride of your heart has deceived you . . ."

BISHOP OXENAM, ONCE HEAD OF W.C.C., said, "The doctrine of substitutionary atonement to me is immoral. They are my sins . . . I will atone for my own sins . . ."

GREAT SECTIONS OF CHRISTENDOM BOAST OF THEIR MATERIAL WEALTH . . . HOARD IT . . . BOAST OF THEIR POLITICAL POWER AND SPEND THEIR ENERGIES CULTIVATING IT . . . BOAST OF ITS PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INTELLECTUALISM . . . Pride in all this creates the tendency to be unfaithful to God . . . this opens the door to the spirit of harlotry.

HOSEA

OTHER SEGMENTS OF THE CHURCH BOAST OF THEIR NUMBERS, OF THEIR RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES, OF THEIR RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND THEIR PRIDE IN THESE THINGS HAS INFECTED THEM WITH A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

B. Parrotism (imitating, longing to be like another)

1. The church has imitated and copied the world and has prostituted itself away from God
2. Robert Sinsheimer, prof. of biophysics at Cal Tech, declares that the scientist has now in effect become both Nature with a capital N and God with a capital G. GOD IS NO LONGER NEEDED
3. The church has aped that claim . . . GOD IS DEAD. A survey of some 3000 clergymen (Prot.) by McCalls, Feb. 1968, reveals a considerable number rejecting altogether the idea of a personal God; a majority not believing in the virgin birth; and disbelief in the deity of Jesus; salvation is not the major task of the church.
4. Theologians advocate and many church members are only too happy to practice SITUATION ETHICS . . . "NEW MORALITY" . . . WHICH IS ONLY THE OLD IMMORALITY DRESSED UP IN NEW TERMINOLOGY . . . IMITATING WHAT THE WORLD HAS BEEN ADVOCATING AND PRACTICING FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME!
5. This was the cause behind Israel's spirit of harlotry in Hosea's day, WANTING TO BE LIKE THE WORLDLY NATIONS ABOUT THEM!!!

THE CHURCH IS A BODY OF INDIVIDUALISTS . . . MY FRIEND IF YOUR SECRET DESIRE IS TO IMITATE THE MORALS OF WORLDLY FRIENDS . . . IF YOUR SECRET DESIRE IS TO POSSESS THE THINGS OF THE WORLD . . . IF YOUR WISH IS TO REALIZE THE GOALS AND AMBITIONS OF THE WORLD . . . THEN YOU ARE HARBORING IN YOUR HEART THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY.

MINISTERS, ELDERS, CONGREGATIONS . . . NEVER ENVY THE POWER, WEALTH, PRESTIGE OF WORLDLY INSTITUTIONS, FOR SUCH ARE THE SEEDS OF THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY!

C. Perversity is also a cause of this spirit—this might also be called stubbornness, obstinacy

1. "they rejected knowledge . . ." 4:6
"Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn . . ." 4:16
"they love shame more than their glory" 4:18
"When Ephraim saw his sickness . . . he went to Assyria . . ." 5:13

SERMON FROM HOSEA

"like an oven their hearts burn with intrigue; all night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire . . . all of them are hot as an oven . . ." 7:6-7

"They made kings, but not through me . . . they set up princes but without my knowledge . . ." 8:4

"They turn to Baal, they are like a treacherous bow . . . because of the insolence of their tongue . . ." 7:16

"The more I called them, the more they went from me . . ." 11:2

"Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit . . . the more his fruit increased the more altars he built . . ." 10:1-2

"MY PEOPLE ARE BENT ON TURNING AWAY FROM ME . . ." 11:7

Like those whom Jeremiah exposed in Jer. 6 . . . "we will not" **STUBBORNNESS WILL CAUSE THE HEART TO HARBOR A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY**

THE CHURCH AND INDIVIDUALS MUST LEARN TO REPENT . . . MUST LEARN HUMILITY

THE CHURCH MUST LEARN TO GIVE IN TO THE WILL OF GOD BECAUSE HAUGHTINESS LEADS INTO A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

III. THE CURE

A. Perception: We need to see or recognize our condition

1. Israel could not see itself as God saw it "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"

2. "I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress they seek me" 5:15

SO IT IS SOMETIMES THAT AFFLICTION AND DISTRESS IS NEEDED TO MAKE US SEE

3. God sent them prophet after prophet . . . "Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth . . ." 6:5

THANK GOD THERE ARE STILL SOME PREACHERS, CHRISTIANS AND CHURCHES CUTTING THROUGH THE FACADE AND VENEER OF SOPHISTICATED AND AFFULENCE WHICH IS HIDING THE CANCEROUS SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY . . . BY DECLARING THE CONVINCING, CONVICTING WORD OF GOD!

The writer of Hebrews says, "Ye have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised." 10:36

Christian Reader, June-July 1968, article "WHY, GOD?" A mother tells of bringing baby home with polio . . . working five

HOSEA

years exercising, praying, hoping, doctoring that the boy would recover . . . through years of caring for him and having eventually to give him reasonable answers for his condition, the mother learned why?

One night while putting him to bed, he asked her, "Mother, why did God give me polio?" She used Bible passages to explain, Heb. 12, II Cor. 1 . . . then she heard Elliot begin to pray, "Lord thank you for my polio. I know you have a purpose for me—something special you want me to do. Help me to watch for your leading so I won't miss it . . ."

MY FRIEND, THANK GOD WHEN YOU ARE TESTED AND TRIED . . .
THANK GOD YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO KNOW GOD'S WORD AND
LET HIM SPEAK TO YOUR HEART . . . THIS WILL GUARD YOU FROM
A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY!

B. Penitence; when we have perceived ourselves and our condition as God has . . . then we must repent . . . WE MUST ALLOW HIS WORD TO CHANGE OUR MIND . . . TO CONQUER OUR OWN WILFULL DESIRES AND AMBITIONS

1. "Come, let us return to the Lord, for he has torn that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up . . ." 6:1-3
2. "Return, O Israel to the Lord your God . . . Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to him, Take away all iniquity; accept that which is good and we will render the fruit of our lips." Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, and we will say not any more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands . . ." 14:1-3

GOD CANNOT CURE ANYONE OF A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY UNTIL THEY HAVE CHANGED THEIR MINDS AND RETURNED TO HIM . . . ALL MEN ARE CREATED MORAL BEINGS . . . THE MORAL CHOICE IS UP TO THEM . . . GOD WILL NOT FORCE HIS LOVE ON ANYONE . . . BUT HE WILL LOVE FREELY ALL WHO WILL ACCEPT IT (14:4-7)

C. Practice; seeing our condition and changing our mind as to our need; WE MUST THEN PRACTICE THE WILL OF GOD AS HE HAS REVEALED IT

1. "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, that He may come and rain salvation upon you." 10:12

DO WHAT THE LORD COMMANDS FOR THIS IS RIGHTEOUSNESS (cf. I Jn. 3:7) . . . PUT YOUR UNUSED EFFORTS AND TALENTS TO USE IN THE LORD'S WORK (break up fallow ground)

SERMON FROM HOSEA

2. "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 unrighteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them." 14:9

CONCLUSION

- I. IT IS NO MISTAKE THAT THE BIBLE LIKENS THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITHFUL PEOPLE TO GOD UNTO THE RELATIONSHIP OF WIFE TO HUSBAND
 - A. Hosea's own relation to his wife was typical of the way Israel had acted toward God and how God had acted toward Israel . . . GOD LOVED THEM AGAIN, JUST AS HOSEA REDEEMED HIS WIFE FROM SLAVERY!
 - B. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:25-27
 - C. "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb . . ." Rev. 19:9 "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." 21:2
- II. SO, THE EXHORTATION OF HOSEA TO YOU IF YOU ARE A PART OF HIS BRIDE IN 1968 IS.
 - A. Do not be found guilty of harboring in your heart "the spirit of harlotry."
 1. Check the conditions which betray such a spirit being harbored in the heart."
 2. Be careful not to let pride, parrotism or perversity cause you to sow the seeds of the spirit of harlotry in your heart
 3. Perceive, be Penitent and Practice righteousness
 - B. IF YOU ARE NOT A PART OF HIS BRIDE THEN TO YOU IS THE INVITATION OF THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE Rev. 22:17
- III. MANY PEOPLE TODAY THINK THEY ARE CHRISTIANS . . . THEY ARE MEMBERS OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST
 - A. When two people marry there are certain things they must do and say before they are legally married. No matter how much they may claim to be married, unless they have gone through the initial ceremonies they are not!

HOSEA

B. On the other hand, there are some who have gone through the right initial ceremonies, but they are UNFAITHFUL and they are not really married . . .

IN BOTH THERE IS THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

AND SO IT IS WITH THOSE WHO WISH TO BE KNOWN AS MARRIED TO CHRIST, BUT DON'T WANT TO BE FAITHFUL EITHER IN THE INITIAL CEREMONY OR IN THE SUCCEEDING YEARS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING, IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SERVE, WORSHIP—LOOK OUT! THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY IS TAKING ROOT IN YOUR HEART—IF ONE CHURCH IS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER NO MATTER WHAT THEY TEACH—LOOK OUT!