

=SMALL BOOKS OF THE BIBLE=

Lesson 6

Hosea

INTRODUCTION: Several books of the Bible deal with the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah was the one who prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, and he was the one who stayed in the land with the poor people whom the Babylonians did not want. The prophet Ezekiel went to Babylon and ministered to the wealthy and the tradesmen who were captives in Babylon for seventy years. The prophet Isaiah prophesied mainly before the captivity, warning Israel of coming judgment. Such is also the case with Hosea. Hosea ministered before the captivity, warning the Jews and predicting the captivity.

THE STORY: In preaching to the Jews, the prophet Hosea used an illustration concerning the events of his own life. He had married, but his wife had become a harlot. She had committed open sins and harlotry. She went to the depth of sin, leaving her family and selling her body to the hands of wicked men. For years she was the worst kind of fallen woman. As an old man, Hosea went to the slave market one day. As he was watching the slaves auctioned off, he saw an old woman for sale; she was the very one who was his wife. He purchased her to himself and took her to his own home. This personal experience in the life of Hosea was used by him in his warning of Israel. Let us notice the applications.

- I. ISRAEL WAS TYPIFIED BY HOSEA'S ADULTEROUS WIFE. Israel had committed spiritual harlotry. She had gone after other gods and had forsaken Jehovah. Hosea prophesied that she would come to no good end because of this sin, but that some day God would redeem her to Himself, and she would return once again to the land of Israel. In the Bible, Israel is pictured as the wife of Jehovah, and the coming captivity is pictured by Hosea's wife being gone so long in sin. God is telling them, however, that just as Hosea's wife was bought back, He will buy Israel back. He points to the day when they shall return to their land. He also points to the day when the kingdom will come and Jesus shall reign for a thousand years. Then they will safely inhabit their land.

- II. THE STORY ALSO PICTURES THE LOVE OF GOD FOR SINNERS. Just as Israel is the wife of Jehovah, the New Testament Christians form the bride of Christ. The plan of salvation is pictured here in the fact that all of us are sinners by nature, but we have been redeemed by the One against Whom we have fought.

Backsliding is also pictured here. Though we have gone into sin and have gone away from God, God wants us back, and He accepts us back when we come.

- III. LESSONS. There are several lessons to be learned from the story.
 1. Young people should be taught to stay clean. They should be warned of the sins of the wife of Hosea.
 2. We should be forgiving one to the other. We are not to hold grudges and possess an unforgiving spirit.
 3. Sin brings sad results. Hosea's wife certainly pictures this. Many long years she continued her downward way. (Teacher, think of the people in the Bible who sinned. Think of the judgment and results that followed. Think of Samson, David, Naomi, Cain, Lot and others. The far-reaching consequence of sin is unbelievable.)
 4. God is a forgiving God and will accept us back. Think of the wonderful verses and promises that remind us of the forgiveness of God, such as Isaiah 1:18 and I John 1:9.
 5. The lack of unity causes downfall. One of the reasons that Israel had gone into sin, spiritual adultery and idolatry is that the land had been divided. Before the death of Solomon, his wicked son, Rehoboam, became the king of all Israel. Rehoboam was such a wicked man and was so oppressive that the kingdom was divided into two parts. Because it was divided, it became an easy prey to the Babylonian enemy. Divided kingdoms always fall easily. Divided churches also fall easily. When Christians are united, they can stand better. Someone has rightly said, "United we stand; divided we fall." There is a lesson here in Christian unity, oneness, love, etc.

6. We can be encouraged by God's willingness to receive us back. Though the Israelites here were facing 70 years of captivity, the prophet yet encouraged them that God would receive them back someday. God does not cast His people away forever. Those who are not His people, He casts away forever, but His own He will receive back. The spiritual person needs spiritual encouragement and optimism, even in a time of gloom and pending judgment.