

## ***XI. “Out of Egypt I Called My Son”***

15-Feb-04

Hosea 11:1-11

Bentley Chapter 18

*Theme:* God is a loving Father whose justice and mercy are perfectly displayed in Jesus Christ.

*Key Verses:* Hosea 11:1, 9 – <sup>1</sup>When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. ... <sup>9</sup>I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror.

### Review

Last week, we looked at Hosea chapter 10. This chapter contains many of the same themes and ideas of previous chapters. Hosea continues banging the same drum: Israel’s two main sins of corrupt religion that leads to societal decay results in judgment. Israel is like a wild vine that produces wicked fruit. They no longer worship God properly, regard Him reverently, or obey Him faithfully. Their hearts are divided and deceitful (1-4). So God is coming in judgment to destroy their idols, remove their kings, and punish their sins (5-8). This message is nothing new. Israel has been behaving this way for a long time, over 400 years since Gibeah. But God is patient. He has waited all this time patiently before bringing judgment, because He is in control of the timing (10). Just as they were once grapes in the wilderness and became a wild vine with false fruit, they were once a trained heifer who had the easy life threshing grain, but now they will feel the yoke of slavery and be forced to work hard plowing the rocky fields (11). God says, “I’ve been patient and given them plenty of time to seek the Lord (12), but they have wasted the time and plowed, reaped, and eaten wickedly (13). Therefore, you will be destroyed. Your reliance on strength of arms and fortresses is futile – your king will be overthrown. Bethel, the center of your corrupt religion will also be destroyed (14-15).” Corrupt religion leads to societal decay and results in judgment.

If we are all sinners, how can we avoid the inevitable slide into judgment that Hosea portrays? “How can we who are marred by sin actually live to God? The answer comes from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ, who put Himself forward in the fifteenth chapter of John not as the degenerate vine that Israel had become because of her divided heart, but as that ‘true vine’ to which those who are His have been joined. Union with Christ is the secret of all fruitfulness, and this means that the essential element is new life.” Hosea says, “Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you” (10:12). Christ says, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (Jn. 14:5). The overall theme of the chapter can be stated in this way: Instead of a divided heart, we must have a plowed heart that seeks the Lord and abides in Christ.

### Introduction

If Hosea chapters 1-3 is all about the way God the Husband loves His wayward wife, then Hosea chapter 11 is all about the way God the Father loves His wayward son. Hosea chapter 11 is one of the remarkable chapters of prophecy in all of the Scriptures. In Hosea chapter 4-10 we have been looking at the sins of the people and primarily seeing God’s judgment, His wrath, His displeasure. But here in Hosea chapter 11, we have a unique insight into the Father’s love for his disobedient children. Just as a parent who disciplines his or her child feels no pleasure in the

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discipline, here in Hosea 11 we see the anguish that God feels as He executes judgment on Israel. Hubbard explains: “Yahweh is portrayed as a parent, grieving over Israel, the rebellious child. Only the personal language of the family is intimate enough to carry Hosea’s message of God’s love for his people. There can be little doubt that Hosea’s own suffering over the lot of Gomer and their children contributed to the unparalleled insight he gives us into the heart of Yahweh.” Kidner says, “This chapter is one of the boldest in the whole Bible in exposing to us the mind and heart of God in human terms.” Boice points out, “The love of God has been present all along, but from chapters 4 to 10 the notes of discipline and judgment predominate. Now, although judgment is still present, the emphasis falls on God’s prevailing and unquenchable love. What an amazing love this is! In chapter 11 Hosea writes of the love of God in reference to Israel’s past, present, and future.”

### Exposition

#### **A. The Wayward Son (11:1-7)**

##### *1. Called from Egypt (11:1-4)*

Verses 1-4 tell us about Israel’s past. “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. As they called them, so they went from them; they sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved images. I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them” (1-4).

Hosea takes us back to the beginning, to the birth of the nation. “Out of Egypt I called My son” (1b). I’ll have more to say on the New Testament implications of this verse in a moment. But first, remember how God demonstrated his love towards His people by calling them out of slavery in Egypt through an awe-inspiring display of His power—the ten plagues, the Red Sea crossing, the manifestation of God’s presence at Mt. Sinai. Why did God “stoop” down to free Israel from Egypt? God says in verse 1, “Because I loved him” (1a). God’s love is on display here. It is not some mushy feeling, it is a love that acts in history. It is a love that redeems. It is a love that calls us to Him.

But perhaps an even more important question is, “Why does God love Israel?” What would cause God to love this group of hard-headed, stiff-necked people? God tells us in Deuteronomy: “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Dt. 7:6-8). God chooses because God chooses. God elects because God elects. God loves because God loves. God does these things because He is God (see verse 9).

As an aside, please realize that God’s electing call of the nation is somewhat different than His electing call of individuals. It is clear from Scripture that not every individual within Israel was saved. And yet Scripture is also very clear that there were saved individuals within Israel. So we can say that in general, God called the nation of Israel to be a holy nation, a separate nation, a nation upon which God’s special love was shown; but not every individual within Israel was elect of God. Furthermore, it was God’s general will that salvation would be found in and through Israel – so Rahab and Ruth amongst others were grafted in. And so, when God brings

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judgment upon apostate Israel, He is judging the sin of the unregenerate. The elect within Israel are still saved, even if they suffer alongside the wicked.

The same can be said today for the Church. The Church is to be holy, set apart to God. Salvation is generally found within and through the Church, which is the New Testament Israel of God. Those who are saved by God's grace are to be added to the Church. But unfortunately, not everyone within the Church is elect of God. And as those who reject God and His Word continue to exert influence within the Church, within its seminaries, within its pulpits, the likelihood of God's judgment upon an apostate Church will increase. But even in that event, the elect of God are never lost. They are still beloved children of the heavenly Father.

Continuing on, Hosea uses the tender language of a loving Father with His young Son to illustrate His love for His people and their utter dependence upon Him. Of particular impact is the picture of the Father teaching the son how to walk in verse 3. I remember quite clearly Michaela's first steps. We adopted Michaela in Russia when she was 17 months old. Because of slight undernourishment, under-stimulation, and warm woolen booties on slick wooden floors, Michaela had not yet taken her first steps when we met her. But within a few days of feeding her, encouraging her, and giving her good shoes, she took her first steps in Russia before we came home. God the Father does the same thing for His people. He gives them all the things they need to grow and mature. He encourages and exhorts them. He gives them aid. When they fall down he fixes their "boo-boos" (v. 3). He takes a personal interest in them. How amazing is that?

In verse 4, the description of God's care almost sounds as if Israel is a farm animal. We've already seen Israel called a "stubborn calf" in 4:16 and a "trained heifer" in 10:11, so Hosea's use of this image is not surprising. Again, we see the tender care with which God takes care of His people. "Gentle cords ... bands of love ... take the yoke from their neck ... stooped and fed them" – God pampers His people.

But while God loves and cares for and pampers his people, they start to grow up. And like many adolescents, they begin to rebel when they hit the teenage years. When they were a child, they heard God calling them out of Egypt. But then they learned that others were also calling them, and they began to listen to someone other than their loving father. Israel is a wayward son; that's what verse 2 is saying. They heard the call of Baal and ignored the call of God. They worshiped the created thing instead of the Creator. Like the Prodigal Son in the parable, they did not appreciate what God the Father had done for them and left him for the fleeting pleasures of the world. The wayward son has no concern for the loving Father, just as Gomer the wayward wife had no concern for her loving husband. This is who Israel is: the wayward wife, the wayward son.

Now, before we move on, let's take a closer look at the New Testament usage of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew: "When he [Joseph] arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (Mt. 2:14-15). Quite unexpectedly, Matthew takes this phrase and applies it to Jesus Christ! Eaton explains: "Matthew 2:15 is not a quotation of a direct prediction of Jesus' departure from Egypt. Matthew is *expounding* Hosea 11:1 and *re-applying* its principle." In essence, Matthew is identifying a Biblical pattern and applying it to Christ. What is that Biblical pattern? It is the pattern of *exodus*.

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The exodus pattern is one of deliverance unto service. The people of Israel were redeemed from slavery in Egypt in order to serve the Lord. God tells Moses at Mt. Sinai: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:4-6a). Israel was called out of Egypt to serve God and be a light unto the Gentiles. Their leader, Moses, had been threatened by the pharaoh through the annihilation of the Hebrew children. “Not surprisingly the infant Christ, who summed up in His person all that Israel was called to be, was likewise threatened and delivered; and although the details differed, the early pattern was re-enacted in its essentials, ending with God’s Son restored to God’s land to fulfill the task marked out for Him” (Kidner).

Ultimately, Christ is the fulfillment of all that Israel was called to be. Christ is “a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel” (Lk. 2:32). Christ fulfilled the covenant made at Sinai. Christ obeyed the voice of God. Christ kept the covenant. Christ is a special treasure above all others. Christ is the King of Kings. He is the great high priest. He is the Holy One of Israel. All that God called Israel to be in Exodus 19, Christ is. Christ is the true Israel; He is the greater Moses. And as the greater Moses, Christ calls all of His elect out of Egypt as well. When Christ saves us, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13). So, in a real sense, all of us who are trusting in Christ for salvation have also been called out of Egypt. God says to Israel, “Out of Egypt I have called My son.” God says to Christ, “Out of Egypt I have called My Son.” And to you and me, God says, “Out of Egypt I have called My sons and daughters.” Let us follow the example of Christ, not of wayward Israel, and remain faithful to the call.

### 2. Return to Egypt (11:5-7)

Verses 5-7 return us to Israel’s present situation. It is beginning to sound like a broken recording in the book of Hosea: “He shall not return to the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to repent. And the sword shall slash in his cities, devour his districts, and consume them, because of their own counsels. My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him” (5-7). What is the present fate of Israel? Death, destruction, and captivity. Their fortified cities (8:14) and their self-reliance (10:13) will not help them. Verse 6 is very reminiscent of 10:14 – a grim reminder of the consequences of sin.

Once again in Hosea we have Egypt and Assyria paired up (cp. 7:11,16; 8:9,13; 9:3,6). We’ll see the same pairing up of Egypt and Assyria again in verse 11 and next week again in chapter 12:1. Remember, in Hosea the references to both Assyria and Egypt recall to us the great themes of captivity and the need for redemption through exodus. The NIV translates verse 5 as a rhetorical question, making the parallelism more apparent: “Will they not return to Egypt, and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent?” (5, NIV). Israel had been called out of Egypt by God, but because of their wickedness, God was going to send them back into captivity. Although their captivity would be in Assyria, theologically God was saying that Israel was effectively returning back to Egypt.

In these verses, Hosea gives three reasons for the “return to Egypt”: “because they refused to repent” (5c); “because of their own counsels” (6d); and because they are “bent on backsliding” (7a). All three reasons are very similar. They describe the self-sufficient one who has no need

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for God. Israel was a child who was loved by God. But then Israel “grew up” and “grew out of” their dependence on God. They thought they no longer needed Him. The whole Baal thing was so much more hip! Israel was like the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32) up to a certain extent, but unlike the Prodigal Son, Israel refused to repent and return to the Father. This is the main theme of Hosea – “Return to your loving Husband” or in this case, “Return to your loving Father.”

Instead, they became a post-Christian society – a society that no longer believes that God has a place in their culture. A post-Christian society no longer needs the Word of God because they rely on their own counsels. A post-Christian society is bent on backsliding – on pushing the envelope towards greater and more outrageous sins and flagrant denials of the proper place of God in the culture. A post-Christian society is one that refuses to repent of its sin but continually searches for new avenues for self-entertainment. Israel was a post-Christian society, and so is ours. The nation of Israel, the church of Israel, was punished for their arrogance, for their self-absorption, for their denial of God, by captivity in Assyria, a theological return to Egypt. The Church of our day is in danger of similar judgment if we continue down the same path as Israel.

### B. Sovereign Love (11:8-11)

In verses 1-4, we have seen the love of God toward Israel in the past. In verses 5-7, we’ve seen the tough love of God for Israel in declaring judgment for rebellion and refusal to return to God the Father. And that brings us to the future of God’s love for Israel in verses 8-11.

#### 1. The Father’s Resolve (11:8-9)

But first, let’s take a peak into the mind and heart of God. Hosea describes in heart-wrenching terms the love of a Father for an ungrateful son: “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; my sympathy is stirred” (8). Admah and Zeboiim were two of the five cities on the plain that God destroyed way back in Genesis 19. The other two cities which were overthrown at the same time are a bit more familiar: Sodom and Gomorrah. But Admah and Zeboiim were also destroyed at the same time: “The whole land is brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and His wrath” (Dt. 29:23).

What God is prepared to do is to wipe out Israel just like he wiped out Admah and Zeboiim. He was “giving them up” and “handing them over” to total destruction. And yet, can you hear the depths of God’s love? “How can I ...? How can I ...? How can I ...? How can I ...? My heart churns within Me.” It reminds me of the love of a parent for a convicted murderer. A man may be on death row for mass murder, but somewhere he has a mother that still loves him and thinks the best of him. It’s heart-wrenching. The murderer has done terrible crimes, but his mother overlooks that and only sees her beloved son. But God goes this analogy even further. He is not only the Father of the condemned criminal, but He is also the Judge and jury that put him on death row.

The Father’s love for His people is great, but He still remains God and cannot let sin go unpunished. That is what the middle part of verse 9 teaches: “For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst” (9c-d). The problem with analogies is that they always break down. When we try to explain God or His behavior with an analogy, it inevitably falls short. The reason? “For I am God, and not man.” That’s a very simple statement, but it is a very profound one. Sometimes we act as if God is a lot like us. Sometimes He forgets appointments or shows

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up late. Sometimes He gets angry and does something He later regrets. Sometimes He gets lazy or selfish or mean and intends to do us harm or mess up our plans or rain on our parade or .... You get the picture. We sometimes reduce God to our level, forgetting that He is God, not man.

And because He is God, He cannot let sin go unpunished. That is part of who He is – it is part of His holy nature. God is the “Holy One in your midst.” Hubbard explains: “*The Holy One in your midst* is a remarkable summation of God’s transcendence and immanence. As the Holy One he has all the power, glory and awesomeness that Isaiah sensed at his commissioning (Is. 6:3). Yet that Incomparable One is present and at work among His rebellious people, disclosing to them His innermost feelings, pledging His compassion (v. 8) despite their disloyalty (v. 7). Holy love, loving holiness — these are the phrases that give us the clearest insight that we possess into the divine nature.”

Perhaps the most difficult part of this section to understand are the three other phrases of verse 9: “I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; ... and I will not come with terror” (9a,b,e). It seems that God is waffling. He has just announced judgment on Israel (again!); then revealed the “pain” that this judgment is causing. Now it seems as if He is relenting and reversing his judgment. “I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not destroy Ephraim, I will not come with terror.” *Again*. I left out the word again in the second phrase” “I will not *again* destroy Ephraim.” I think this is the key to understanding the verse. God is not saying that He has changed His mind. He is God, not man. He is the Holy One of Israel. The judgment stands. And we know from history that Assyria came and destroyed Samaria and took the nation away into captivity in 722 BC. But there is hope in the word “again.”

We know that some of the descendents of Ephraim and Manasseh, tribes from the northern kingdom of Israel, had emigrated into the southern kingdom of Judah before the Assyrian captivity. This is because the book of 1 Chronicles records that some from Ephraim and Manasseh were taken into captivity into Babylon some 136 years after the Assyrian captivity (1 Chr. 9:1-3). So perhaps, verse 9 is a verse of hope towards these people, that they will have a future and a hope. Or, Hosea could be referring to a future opportunity to repent, prior to the Assyrian captivity. Obviously, the people did not repent and the Assyrians did come. Boice explains it this way: “God says that He will not destroy Israel utterly. Although the judgment will come, this will not be the end. Rather, it will be followed by a second regathering of the people (vv. 10, 11). Sin must and will be punished. But that is not all there is to God, and for this we must thank Him eternally. True, God is a God of justice. But He is also a God who acts in love to spare His people.” Or it could refer to something, or Someone, else. More in a few minutes.

### 2. *The Great Homecoming (11:10-11)*

Verses 10-11 are like the great homecoming in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32). Remember how the Father in the parable greets his son, shows compassion on him, and welcomes him home with a feast? Well, here is the great homecoming in Hosea 11: “‘They shall walk after the Lord. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses,’ says the Lord” (10-11).

In verse 10, God is a roaring lion. The last time Hosea called God a lion in 5:14, it was not good news for Israel. In Hosea 5:14, God is a ravenous lion that tears apart and destroys His prey – in

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this case, the nation of Israel. But here in 11:10, God is a very different kind of lion. He is a roaring lion that calls His people back to Him. In judgment, God is a tearing lion. In mercy, God is a healing lion.

In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis, there is a scene in which Aslan the lion roars. It is just after he has come back to life after being slain in the treacherous Edmund's place. Of course, Aslan is a representation of Jesus Christ, "the lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5). "'And now,' said Aslan presently, 'to business. I feel I am going to roar. You had better put your fingers in your ears.'" And they did. And Aslan stood up and when he opened his mouth to roar his face became so terrible that they did not dare to look at it. And they saw all the trees in front of him bend before the blast of his roaring as grass bends in a meadow before the wind" (p. 161). From there, Aslan proceeds to the witch's castle, where Aslan breathes on the statues in the courtyard and brings the witch's captives back to life. After Aslan roars, the captives enjoy an exodus. Aslan roars one more time, just before he attacks the witch. "Then with a roar that shook all Narnia from the Western lamppost to the shores of the Eastern sea the great beast flung himself upon the White Witch. Lucy saw her face lifted towards him for one second with an expression of terror and amazement." This is what the passage in Hosea is talking about. The roaring of Aslan is a terrible thing. It is especially terrifying to those who are his enemies, but it is a wonderful thing if you belong to Aslan. If you are Aslan's enemy – God's enemy – then the roaring lion signals destruction. But if you belong to God, then the roaring lion means "all is forgiven, you have been set free, return home." Ollie, ollie, oxenfree.

Notice that verse 10 says that "they shall walk after the Lord" (10a). That's been their problem all along. They have walked everywhere except after the Lord. They've walked after idols, after Baals, after prosperity, after sensuality, after profit, after comfort; everywhere except after the Lord. That's because the natural man cannot walk after the Lord, cannot walk in obedience to God. The natural man needs to have heart surgery – to have their hearts of stone exchanged for hearts of flesh so that they can obey the Word of God. And so that is what God does - He changes them. You can see it in their response. The people are no longer the silly doves of Hosea 7:11, searching in every sinful place (represented by Egypt and Assyria) for fulfillment except in God. They are trembling doves that have a proper fear of God now – their irreverence and disregard have been discredited. With the roar of His love He converts His people, and they return from Egypt/Assyria (notice again our theological pair relating to captivity in sin).

"And I will let them dwell in their houses" (11c). They return to dwell with the Lord. He is again their God and they are His people. There is restitution and healing. The proper balance between God's transcendence and His immanence has been restored. God is the Holy One of Israel and the people tremble at His call in reverence and holy fear. And God allows them to dwell in their houses, dwell in the Land where His favor rests, dwell in the place where His presence is in a special sense. God is transcendent and God is immanent. God is far above us and God is close to us. God has restored His people. This is the future that Hosea looks forward to.

But who does this apply to? We know from history that the northern kingdom never returned from captivity. In their place, remaining Israelites intermarried with foreigners to create a new race called the Samaritans. The southern kingdom of Judah felt God's wrath in exile in Babylon some 136 years after the Assyrian captivity of Israel, but they did return to the land after a period of 70 years of exile. So perhaps this message of restitution and restoration applies to the southern kingdom of Judah. However, I believe it applies even more broadly to all those who

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are far off and are brought near by God to dwell in His presence. The reference to “His sons” in v. 10 is bigger than just the northern kingdom of Israel. I believe it refers to all of God’s people – past, present, and future. All of us are captives of sin and need an exodus. But we can’t come unless we are rescued. We can’t come unless we hear the roar of the lion. We can’t come unless we are changed so that we walk after the Lord in righteous fear.

The apostle Paul makes this point in the book of Romans, as He quotes an earlier part of Hosea: “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea: *‘I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved who was not beloved.’ ‘And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, “You are not My people,” There shall they be called sons of the living God’*” (Romans 9:22-26). Both Jews and Gentiles are added into the people of God. All in the Church are the “sons of the living God.” So, if you are saved this morning, if you are a vessel of mercy that has heard God’s roar to walk after the Lord, then I join in with the prophet Hosea and say, “Welcome home!”

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to come back to the question of how God can declare both judgment and mercy on the same group of people. The question can be rephrased as follows: “How does God remain God, demanding justice and at the same time displaying mercy?” The answer is found in a person – Jesus Christ. The fierceness of God’s anger, terror, and destruction described in Hosea 11:9 falls on Jesus Christ instead of on His people. God remains a holy God by demanding justice, but He displays mercy by having that judgment fall upon His only begotten Son in our place. Jesus Christ really, truly suffered Hell in our place. He experienced “the stroke that justice gave.” Boice says that “Jesus paid the price of our transgression, with the result that God can be both ‘just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus’ (Rom. 3:26).” God’s wrath doesn’t fall on His people *again*; it falls on God Himself. This is the ultimate example of how God is God and not man. We couldn’t have thought of it. We couldn’t have done it. But God did. God loved us so much, that He could not condemn us to destruction like Admah and Zeboiim. Can you comprehend the love of God that would put His son in the place of destruction instead of you? God called His Son Jesus out of Egypt, so that we could also be called out of Egypt and dwell with Christ forever.

Next week: Lesson 12 – Lessons from a Reformed Supplanter – Hosea 11:12-12:14 – Bentley chapter 19

Close in Prayer.