

XII. Lessons from a Reformed Supplanter

22-Feb-04 Hosea 11:12-12:14 Bentley Chapter 19

Theme: Like Jacob, we must cling to God for blessing and return to the Lord God Almighty.

Key Verses: Hosea 12:3-6 – ³He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled with God. ⁴Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke to us—⁵that is, the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is His memorable name. ⁶So you, by the help of your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually.

Review

Last week we looked at Hosea chapter 11. In this chapter, 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 discipline, here in Hosea 11 we see the anguish that God feels as He executes judgment on Israel. Hosea first portrays God as a doting Father, taking care of the infant nation of Israel, calling them out of the slavery and sin of Egypt into His service. We saw His sovereign, electing love in choosing Israel out of the nations. But His child rebels against His authority. Rather than walking after the Lord, Israel walks after the Baals – after the pleasures of this world. 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 were so self-sufficient that they no longer needed Him. Unlike the Prodigal Son, Israel refused to repent and return to the Father. Therefore, the Father again pronounces judgment and destruction of His wayward son.

Hosea then gives us some insight into the mind of God by describing in heart-wrenching terms the love of a Father for an ungrateful son. God laments over the impending doom of His people. The Father's love for His people is great, but He still cannot let sin go unpunished. Why is this? “For I am God, and not man.” 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.” And so, God in His perfect holiness declares that judgment must come. But He also announces hope of restoration. God is like a roaring lion, calling His people back to Himself. But this time, there is a change of attitude; this time, “they shall walk after the Lord,” not after the Baals of this world. And so, Hosea portrays a great homecoming of God's “sons,” a homecoming that is fulfilled every time a new believer trusts in Jesus Christ for salvation.

The final take home point from last week is the answer to the dilemma posed in Hosea 11. “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

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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.

Introduction

Today, we are going to look at Hosea chapter 12. In this chapter, Hosea uses multiple illustrations from Israel's past, many of them drawn from the life of the patriarch Jacob. These "blasts from the past" are intended to show Israel how they are to turn away from their deceitful practices and return to God. "The ingrained deceitfulness of Israel is nothing new. The forefather of the nation — Jacob who was renamed Israel — was a man of ingrained and habitual deceitfulness. The people of Israel are 'Jacob' indeed — just like their ancestor. And yet there are other lessons to be learned from the story of Jacob. He was a deceiver and yet experienced God's grace" (Eaton). The nation of Israel can experience God's grace too, if they return to God. This again is the message of Hosea: Return to your loving Husband.

Exposition

A. Deceivers (11:12-12:8)

1. Israel (11:12-12:2)

We start our study of Hosea chapter 12 with the last verse in chapter 11. I will be reading these verses from the NIV translation, which I think does a better job with Hosea 11:12 than the NKJV: "Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, the house of Israel with deceit. And Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One. Ephraim feeds on the wind; he pursues the east wind all day and multiplies lies and violence. He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt. The Lord has a charge to bring against Judah; He will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds" (11:12-12:2, NIV).

For the greater part of his prophecy, Hosea has been concerning himself with the sins of the northern kingdom of Israel, also known as Ephraim. But in this section, the word of the prophet comes to the combined houses of Israel, to both Ephraim and Judah. (I will be using the term 'Ephraim' today to refer to the northern kingdom of Israel to differentiate between the patriarch Jacob who later was renamed 'Israel.') The Hebrew in the second half of Hosea 11:12 is difficult to translate. In the NKJV translation, Judah is contrasted with Ephraim and presented in a favorable light: "Ephraim has encircled Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; *but Judah still walks with God*, even with the Holy One who is faithful" (11:12, NKJV). The problem with this translation is that "the Lord also brings a charge against Judah" (2) just 2 verses later. This is why I prefer the NIV translation at this point: "Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, the house of Israel with deceit. *And Judah is unruly against God*, even against the faithful Holy One" (11:12, NIV). Hosea further cements this parallelism between Ephraim and Judah by a reference to their joint ancestor, Jacob (2). Hosea will go on to give examples from the life of Jacob as illustrations of how a deceiver can be reformed. For that is what all of God's people, both Ephraim and Judah, need.

Hosea introduces his history lesson on Jacob by stating that Ephraim is a deceiver just like their ancestor: "Ephraim has encircled me with lies; and the house of Israel with deceit" (11:12a, NKJV). Ephraim is further characterized by actions of futility in 12:1. Hosea has earlier used the proverb "to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind" (8:7) to describe the folly of Israel. Here they "feed on the wind" and "pursue the east wind." It is an ill wind that blows no good. Hosea later describes the east wind as an instrument of God's judgment in 13:15. Their folly is further

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described by their actions with the nations of Egypt and Assyria. I believe it is significant that Ephraim is said to be in covenant with Assyria and in a trading partner relationship with Egypt. Beyond the mere political reality of these statements lies the larger truth: the northern kingdom is in bondage to the kingdom of sin and darkness, enthralled in the service of the father of lies. This is the true source of their daily increase of lies and violence of verse 1.

And Judah is not any better. They are “unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One”. Remember how God described Himself as the “Holy One in your midst” (11:9) just a few verses previously. It seems as if Judah is beginning to rebel against God even as their sister Ephraim has already done. Although Ephraim is farther along in their downward spiral slide, Judah is following in her footsteps. Let this be a warning to us. We may believe, for example, that the church in the USA has remained more faithful than the church in England or The Netherlands or Germany. We may believe the PCA has remained more faithful to the Scriptures than other Protestant or Presbyterian or Reformed denominations. But that doesn’t mean we are immune from the downward slide. Judah had Ephraim’s example in front of her, and yet she herself was carted off into captivity just 136 years after the destruction of Samaria. Thus, “the Lord also brings a charge against Judah” (2a). This is the same language that Hosea used in 4:1 to start his catalogue of Israel’s sins: “Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for *the Lord brings a charge against* the inhabitants of the land: ‘There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land’” (4:1). God is continuing His lawsuit against both Ephraim and Judah.

2. Jacob (12:2-6)

And so we come to the common ancestor of both Judah and Ephraim – Jacob. His story is told in Genesis 25-36, and Lord willing, we will be studying that section of Scripture this summer in Sunday school. Most of you are familiar with his story: being born as the younger twin of Esau; *tricking* his brother out of his birthright for a pot of stew; stealing his brother’s blessing by *tricking* his aged father Isaac; fleeing his brother’s wrath; seeing the vision of the ladder to heaven at Bethel; working seven years for the hand of Rachel but being *tricked* by Laban into marrying Leah; *tricking* Laban by breeding healthier livestock and then fleeing his father-in-law; making peace with Laban; wrestling with the angel of God at Peniel by the Jabbok; making peace with Esau; worshiping God at Bethel; having his name changed to “Israel”; and fathering twelve sons – the twelve tribes of Israel. Hosea refers to several of these incidents in the next verses.

a. *Heel Grasper (12:3)*

The first incident in Jacob’s life that Hosea mentions is his birth: “He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled against God” (3). This refers back to Genesis 25: “And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob” (Gen. 25:25-26). At birth, the firstborn was red and hairy, so Isaac and Rebekah named him Esau, which means “hairy.” The second son was a heel grasper, and so they named him Jacob, which literally means “one who takes the heel” but signifies someone who is *deceitful* or a *supplanter*. According to the dictionary, a supplanter is “one who supercedes another especially by force or treachery.” Both of the twins’ names had significance that defined who they were. Esau was hairy – he liked hairy things; more specifically, he liked to hunt and kill hairy things. He was a big, hairy, he-man kind of guy. On the other hand, Jacob was a mild man, a homebody. In modern terms, he probably would be a “computer nerd.” Esau was a man of

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direct action; Jacob manipulated others to get what he wanted. Jacob was a deceiver, a supplanter, a trickster. Jacob tricks Esau, he tricks Isaac, he is tricked by and in turn tricks Laban. Jacob is a deceitful, heel-grasping supplanter. This is who Jacob is.

Jacob's manipulation of the people around him also colored his relationship with God. This is what Hosea means when he says "and in his strength he struggled against God" (3b). Boice explains: "Jacob thought he could handle God the same way he was always trying to handle other people. He thought he could trick God or at least manipulate Him to do what he wanted. This is the point at which the story comes home. For what better describes the religion of Israel and Judah (and at times unfortunately even of ourselves) than the attempt to use God. Israel and Judah thought that if they went through the prescribed religious rituals—prayer, sacrifice, feast days—this would inevitably bind God to them and oblige Him to prosper and protect them, regardless of what their true spiritual or moral state should be. People think like this today. They think that if they go through the forms of religion, God will be obliged to prosper them."

Church attendance, Sunday school participation, tithing, nursery work – none of these are guarantees of salvation if your heart is not right with God. Don't fool yourself into thinking you can manipulate God, for you are only deceiving yourself. That's the negative side of the story. But there is a very positive lesson here from Jacob's birth as well. Eaton explains: "The posture in which Jacob was born turned out to be prophetic of his life and his character. And yet he was chosen by God. God determined to use him. The nation of Israel needed to remember this in Hosea's day — and still does in ours. Jacob was chosen by grace. God was determined to make a nation out of him and use that nation to bring blessing to the world." This is the gospel. God chose a deceiver like Jacob to bring blessings into the world. God chooses sinners like us to be His blessings in the world. This is the first lesson from a reformed supplanter.

b. Wrestling at the Jabbok (12:4a)

The second incident from Jacob's life is in verse 4: "Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him" (4a). This is the turning point in Jacob's life, recorded in Genesis 32:22-32. This is the place where he is transformed from Jacob – "deceiver" – into Israel – "prince with God." Jacob was coming to meet Esau after many years of estrangement. However, he was afraid of his older brother, and so he sent his two wives, eleven sons, and possessions away across the Jabbok brook where he was left alone at Peniel to wrestle with the Angel of God. All of his life Jacob had been struggling with men – with Esau, with Isaac, with Laban. And yet, Jacob's real struggle was not with men but with God. In his book *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace: The Gospel in the Lives of Isaac and Jacob*, Ian Duguid puts it this way: "All of his life, Jacob had been struggling and striving against human opposition. The cards had been stacked against him, yet through his craftiness he had often come out on top. Behind him, however, he had left a trail of broken relationships and a history of running away when the place got too hot. He had been afraid of what people could do to him. What Jacob needed to learn was that all of his struggling against men had got him nowhere because the one with whom he must ultimately struggle is God" (p. 113).

So God confronts Jacob and they wrestle all night long. As the sun rises, as a new day dawns, God touches Jacob's hip socket and throws it out of joint. Deprived of his strength, Jacob nevertheless holds on tight. However, the nature of the struggle has been changed. God demonstrated that He was the one in control. Jacob would always bear the reminder of the struggle as he carried a limp from that time onward. Instead of seeking mastery over God

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through the struggle, he clings to God until he is blessed. In his Welwyn commentary on Genesis called *The Book of Origins*, Philip Eveson writes: “After the debilitating touch the struggle changed to one where Jacob hung on until he was blessed. This is interpreted for us as an example of one who was persistent in prayer with tears (Hosea 12:4). All through his early life in Canaan, Jacob had been struggling to obtain the covenant blessing and it had involved his own ingenuity and deception. In God he met more than his match, yet God condescended to engage him in a struggle. This time he won the blessing legitimately through his struggle with God. At the same time it kept him humble and reliant on account of his dislocated hip” (pp. 438-439).

Jacob was changed at the Jabbok. Previously he had been a deceiver, a supplanter. But now God names him Israel – “prince with God.” Duguid comments: “Unlike Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah, his new name is not a variant and an extension of what has gone before but rather a transformation. Unlike Abraham and Sarah, who, once given their new names, never reverted to their old ones, Jacob was from now on both Jacob *and* Israel. God’s work is established in principle in his life, as the new name Israel clearly declares, but it would take a lifetime for that principle to work itself out in fullness. As long as he lived on earth, part of him would still be Jacob” (pp. 114-115). In this, we are all like Jacob. Paul captures this struggle in the flesh in Romans chapter 7. Our sanctification is not completed on earth – it is only when we travel in death to meet the savior that we are glorified.

So, Hosea reminds us of Jacob wrestling with God at the Jabbok to point out what matters most – we must cling to the Lord and never let go if we are to receive His blessing. As Eveson points out, Hosea is teaching us to be persistent in prayer. Eaton puts it this way: “Jacob prevailed with God and received God’s blessing by determination to lay hold of God and get his request answered. Yet the Israel of Hosea’s day is characterized by unconcern and prayerlessness. The Israel of Hosea’s time had Jacob’s grasping character, but when would they be like him and grasp hold of God, with Jacob’s intensity, emotion and entreaty?” The same question can be asked of you and me: do we grasp hold of God in consistent, relentless, faithful, prayer? This was the key to the transformation of Jacob into Israel. And that is the second lesson from a reformed supplanter.

c. Bethel (12:4b-5)

The third episode of Jacob’s life is in the second half of verse 4: He found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke to us” (4b). There are two Bethel incidents in Jacob’s life, and I’m not sure which one is referred to. Commentators have gone both ways. I’m inclined to think that the ambiguity is deliberate, and that both Bethel incidents are in view. The first time Jacob comes to Bethel is in Genesis 28 as he flees the wrath of Esau after stealing his brother’s blessing from their father Isaac. It is at Bethel that Jacob sees the vision of a ladder to heaven with the angels ascending and descending. Furthermore, God renews the Abrahamic covenant with Jacob at Bethel. God makes this promise: “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you” (Gen. 28:15). Jacob responds by building a memorial pillar and renaming the place from Luz to Bethel (the house of God).

This first incident happened many years before Jacob wrestled with God at the Jabbok. Much later in his life, God tells Jacob to move to Bethel and build an altar there (Gen. 35:1). Jacob cleanses his family of their household gods and obeys the Lord. “And Jacob said to his

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household and to all who were with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone’” (Gen. 35:2-3). God again reaffirms the name change to Israel and repeats the covenant promises once more. Jacob responds by worshiping God at Bethel.

In the life of Jacob, Bethel represents the before and after. The first time he came there, he was a fugitive with nothing to his name but what he wore on his back. He was a deceiver and supplanter. He is awed by the vision of God and the covenant promises, but not necessarily converted by it. Although he builds a memorial and makes his own promises, they somehow seem hollow and empty. Years later, Jacob comes back to Bethel a changed man. God has fulfilled His promises to Jacob. He is now wealthy and prosperous, with a dozen sons and a large community dependent upon him. He is no longer Jacob but Israel – obedient and submissive to the word of God. He cleanses his household of idolatry and worships the Lord properly. He fulfills his promises made so many years ago at the same place, even building another memorial to God there.

This is the same Bethel that we have seen Hosea sarcastically refer to as Beth Aven, “the house of wickedness” (4:15, 5:8, 10:5&7). Bethel had been the “the house of God,” but in Hosea’s day it was a “house of wickedness,” the shrine of idolatry where the golden calf was worshiped. Hosea is telling his countrymen that they need to be like their ancestor Jacob and find the true God at Bethel, not the perverted, man-made idol that they pretended was God. Like Jacob, they need to purify themselves, rid themselves of their idolatrous worship, and put on clean garments symbolic of repentance and a life that is right with God. This is the third lesson from a reformed supplanter.

Hosea goes on to remind us of who God is. “And there He spoke to us—that is, the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is His memorable name” (4d-5). By using the title “Lord God of hosts” Hosea is reminding us of the faithfulness and power of God. Lord or “Yahweh” is God’s covenant name – the name revealed to Moses in the burning bush, which speaks of His covenant faithfulness. Yahweh is the one who delivers on His promises. God reveals Himself to Jacob as the Lord, Yahweh, the faithful covenant God as He renews the Abrahamic covenant with Jacob (Gen. 28:13). As “God Almighty” (5 NIV) or “God of hosts,” He is the master of the armies of heaven and earth. It reminds us of Jacob’s ladder at Bethel, where the hosts of God parade up and down between heaven and earth. Nothing is too difficult for God to achieve – He has all the power and glory necessary to deliver His promises. God revealed His covenantal faithfulness to Jacob at Bethel the first time and displayed that He had the power to ensure those promises would be fulfilled. God confirmed His covenantal faithfulness again at Bethel, and Jacob worships “God Almighty” there (Gen. 35:11; Hosea 12:5 – NIV).

The Lord God of hosts is the faithful, powerful God. This is the picture of God that Jacob knew at Bethel. And this is the same God that the Israelites of Hosea’s day should have known and worshiped. However, the picture of God that Jacob saw and knew at Bethel was a far cry different than what was going on at Bethel in Hosea’s day. Instead of the Lord God Almighty, the powerful, covenant keeping God, the God who by the power of His outstretched arm had called His son out of Egypt and entered into covenant with them at Sinai, instead of the God of the Bible, the people of Israel were worshipping a golden calf. Didn’t they ever learn? The Israelites tried that in Exodus 32 to no avail. And it was of no help to them now. They needed to

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take another lesson from a reformed supplanter and worship the true covenant God, the Lord God Almighty. And so do we.

d. Response (12:6)

In light of who God is, the Lord God Almighty, Hosea reminds Israel (and us) of our response: “So you, by the help of your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually” (6). This is the bottom line of all of these history lessons from the life of Jacob. They are to return to the God of Jacob. Again, this is the overall theme of the book of Hosea: Return to your loving Husband; return to the Lord God Almighty. Hosea 12:6 is couched in similar terms to the more familiar verse in Micah: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8). Hosea is calling the people to nothing less than repentance, to forsaking their sin, their deceitfulness, their Jacob-like character, and to return to the practice of mercy, justice, and service to the true God. The people of Hosea’s day need to be transformed from Jacob the “deceiver” into Israel the “prince with God.” The same remains true for each of us. God calls us to return to Him, to forsake our sin and to walk in justice and mercy. May we learn from our spiritual ancestor Jacob and cling to our Savior.

3. A Cunning Canaanite (12:7-8)

After the lessons from the life of their ancestor Jacob, Hosea returns to the present with another image of deception: “A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales are in his hand; he loves to oppress. And Ephraim said, ‘Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that is sin’” (7-8). Here Israel is pictured as a deceitful merchant with dishonest scales. Of course, this is a direct violation of the law of God: “You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt’” (Lev. 19:36). In addition, there is a play on the Hebrew in this verse. The Hebrew word for “merchant” sounds like the word for “Canaanite.” So Hosea is likening the culture of Israel with the wicked and immoral culture of the Canaanites. “When Israel was sent into Canaan under Joshua, she was given the task of rooting out corruption and establishing a culture marked by holiness instead. Israel’s task was to make Canaan Israel. What happened? Canaan made Israel Canaan!” (Boice).

“Their religion is more like that of the original Canaanite than like the faith given to them by God. Their interest in pagan ways is self-centered and has more to do with getting rich than with pleasing God.” (Eaton). Bentley says: “They were behaving just like the heathen people who were still living around them. They had the idea (which some people still have today) that the provision of great amounts of money is, of itself, a sign of God’s blessing. The Ephraimites were not saying that they had not sinned (12:8). What they were saying was: ‘*They will not find in me any iniquity or sin.*’ In other words, ‘Because I am wealthy I can pay to have my wrongdoing covered up!’”

So, this is the situation. Ephraim (and Judah) are deceivers. They practice deceit and lies. They have broken faith with the faithful Holy One of Israel, the Lord God Almighty, the covenant God, the Lord of the hosts of heaven and earth. They believe that they can hide their sin, but in that they only deceive themselves. Instead of their deceitful ways, Hosea calls them (and us) to learn the lessons of a reformed supplanter and return to God.

B. More Lessons from the Past (12:9-14)

We only have time to look at the rest of chapter 12 briefly. Hosea weaves in a number of additional history lessons for the people of God to consider. “But I am the Lord your God, ever since the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast. I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets” (9-10). God takes them back again to the Exodus from Egypt to remind them of His persistence in dealing with them. In effect, He is saying, “You can’t get rid of Me so easily!” The reference to dwelling in tents and the appointed feast is a reminder of the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the three great feasts of the Law. The Feast of Tabernacles was a memorial in the Law which reminded the people of the Lord God Almighty, the faithful, powerful God. This feast had a double purpose: it was a reminder of the wilderness journey when Israel lived in tents, and it celebrated the harvest, thereby pointing to the great harvest of souls by God. The Feast of Tabernacles thus celebrated God’s great historical redemption of the Exodus, and it anticipated God’s greater redemption achieved through Jesus Christ. Every year the Israelites were to celebrate this feast and remember what God had done for them. But God sent the people many more reminders of His power and faithfulness. The people are also reminded about what God has done through the prophets that the Lord has sent; prophets such as Hosea.

However, despite the twin reminders of the Law and the Prophets, the people have chosen false worship: “Though Gilead has idols—surely they are vanity—though they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal, indeed their altars shall be heaps in the furrows of the field” (11). Here Hosea again points out the futility of idolatrous, corrupt worship. Furthermore, there seems to be a reference back to chapter 10 – to plow up their idolatrous ways, to “break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord” (10:12).

In verse 12, Hosea again returns to the story of Jacob, in his search for a wife: “Jacob fled to the country of Syria: Israel served for a spouse, and for a wife he tended sheep” (12). The reference is to Jacob’s flight from Esau to his uncle’s house where he served Laban 14 years as a shepherd for the hands of Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29). In verse 13, the previous ideas of exodus from Egypt and prophets are again brought up: “By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved” (13). Hubbard explains: “The placement of verses 12-13 is intentional: both verses tell the story of the way in which a bride (or in Jacob’s case, brides) was obtained from a foreign land —Jacob/Israel’s from *Aram*; Yahweh’s from Egypt. The climax of the argument then is not that Ephraim has followed in the footsteps of Jacob, though that is surely part of the story, but that Yahweh was again ready to work through a *prophet*. He had used Moses, as the prophet of the Exodus, and Samuel, as the prophet of the settlement in Canaan by whom Israel *was preserved*. Now another *prophet* held center-stage, Hosea, whom the Israelites had previously deemed mad (9:7).”

Verse 14 finishes off Hosea’s argument: “Ephraim provoked Him to anger most bitterly; therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him, and return his reproach upon him” (14). Crafty Israel’s descendents were rescued by following the prophet Moses. Now they have another opportunity by listening to the prophet Hosea. However, it was not to be. They didn’t listen to Hosea, and so they are left with their guilt of law breaking.

They refused to return to their loving Husband, the Lord God Almighty. So, God returns the reproach of their guilt upon them. God had given Israel the Law and the Prophets in order to turn the peoples’ hearts back to God. But they didn’t listen to the Prophets, and so the Law

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condemned them. God gave them the example of Jacob to teach Israel that they could return to God. But they didn't follow the example of Jacob, and so they lost out on the blessings that a reformed supplanter received. It's too late for Hosea's Israel – but it's not too late for us. Let us be mindful of Hosea's exhortation: "So you, by the help of your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually" (6).

Conclusion

Let me leave you with a concluding thought from Bentley: "But if they were all doomed, why did Hosea call upon them to return to their God? (12:6). It was because he was going to deal with them as individuals. This was the good news for Hosea's hearers, and it is the good news for the people of our day, too. Modern Western society is doomed because of its sinfulness. No one will be saved just by being a citizen of a 'Christian' country. God will only save those who come under conviction of their sin (as Jacob did). But for those who do genuinely repent and turn to Christ there is mercy."

Next week: Lesson 13 – "Return to the Lord Your God" – Bentley chapters 20-22

Close in Prayer.