

10439U

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA - 1968

THE DOOR OF HOPE

Speaker: Bro. Maurie Stewart

Study #2: Hosea 3 and 4

Reading: Hosea 3&4

In the prayer that was uttered by our presiding brother this evening, we came before the throne of grace, and we pleaded with the Almighty, b&s, that the vision of that glorious hope might be so saturated in our minds, that the things of this life would assume their true position, as nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit!

As we stated last evening, one of the most important verses in all scripture, has a mighty bearing on this study, in that it's the one, b&s and young people, it was the one commandment that Israel had failed to keep, and it is the one commandment that we can fail to keep. Just as it meant a denial to Israel of the joy that God had set before them, so it can mean a denial to us, of that glorious prize of eternal life. That commandment was given to Israel and when they came and were delivered out of the land of Egypt, it is given for us in Deuteronomy 6 verse 4, and we read there, 'Hear O Israel, Yahweh our Elohim is one Yahweh and thou shalt love Yahweh thy Elohim with all thine heart'. There is the key point, **thine heart**, 'and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and He goes on to say, 'and these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart'. When the Pharisees came into the picture, b&s, it was an outward manifestation of these glorious truths; when Israel was under the leadership of Jeroboam II, in the midst of this great material prosperity; it was not their hearts that were driving them to worship God, not in any way at all, it was the material prosperity and they were doing all they could to make a big outward show but these commandments were not in their hearts. This is a warning that comes to me and you in these closing days of Gentile darkness; and what an exhortation it is, that these glorious truths must become **a driving force in our lives**, that they must saturate us so that we are as that one spoken of in Psalm 1, 'that in His law doth he meditate day and night'. We do this, b&s, by the constant and diligent study of the word of Almighty God. This principle is now brought home forcibly to Hosea as we begin chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

For God tells Hosea, 'Go yet, love a woman'. Now Hosea had married an adulteress because he had married an Israelite. As we stated the other night, and we stated in our

first session, to marry an Israelite was to marry an adulteress; one who had turned against God, one who was participating in the illicit life of Baal worship. This was where Israel had gone to, she had become unfaithful to her Husband, to the One who was married to her, and that One was Yahweh. Now God says, 'you've married her, you married Gomer, now love her!' What a command! 'Go love a woman, beloved of her friend', now this phrase beloved of her friend means in the Hebrew 'a lover of evil' and this is exactly what an Israelite was! Go yet love a woman! the very heart of this chapter is **God's love to those who are not worthy of it!** Do we recognize ourselves? b&s, it's God's love to those who are not worthy of it, and it was the proper conception of this love that enabled the prophet to bring back his wayward wife. She was not worthy of his love, because Gomer had gone after other men, even as Israel had gone after other gods; and God is now causing Hosea to see the position that he is in, and to see what his love really is! We know that one of God's greatest attributes is that of **love**, but there is a great difference, b&s, between divine love and human love! Now Hosea discovers it; Christ revealed it even to the giving of His life to manifest it! and all true disciples must not only preach it but they must manifest it, b&s, they must manifest it if they are to participate in its benefits.

Now in the English language, we only have one word for 'love', and as we mentioned briefly the other night, in the Greek we have 3 words; we can consider only 2 here, one is '**eros**'__a word that's constantly used in classical Greek, but a word that **never** appears in the New Testament. The other two, one is **phileo** (5368) and one is **agape** (26), and this word 'agape' is never used in classical Greek, but is used almost exclusively in the New Testament. This word '**agape**' love is speaking of that love which is divine love. Eros indicates human love such as 'I love my child', this type of love, agape used in the New Testament means **divine love**, and this is the love now, that God revealed to Hosea and which was greatly exhibited by Christ. It's described for us in this 3rd chapter. The Greeks saved their love for the educated! they saved their love for those who were intellectual, this was 'eros'. But Christ added an entirely different conception! when Christ came into the world, He had '**agape**' love, and this included not the proud, it included not the wise, it included not the haughty, but He came to the poor, to the weak, to the halt, to the maimed and to the blind. Not because they merited it, b&s, and this we must remember, not because they merited that love, but because **God is love!** Now we read constantly in the scriptures, don't we? that the cross was a stumbling block to the Jews, and why was it? it made shipwreck of their self righteous pride; it was foolishness to the Greeks, because it made havoc of their intellectual pride; but **agape** love is unmerited love! and we can be thankful, we can be thankful, b&s, that **agape or divine love** is not controlled by education or righteousness. You see, if Hosea could not obey the command of God with 'eros' or human love, for how could a man take an adulteress to his heart? how could he take an adulteress to his heart and truly love her? one who had been unfaithful to him. But in taking back his wife, he captures a true meaning of divine love! That love that's exhibited in God's promise to take back the children of Israel, and when we come to spiritual Israel, b&s, we must remember that we must manifest 'agape' love in our own lives now, so that we may be participants of agape love in the day of judgment.

Now in this first verse, we're constantly coming in contact, with those things which pertain to idolatry. It speaks strongly to us, b&s, of how low Israel had gone! If you'll notice in that first verse, we read of the 'flagons of wine'. Now these flagons of wine were used for the libations, they were poured on the ground in tribute to idols. They were drunk at idol feasts, the flagons of wine actually in the RV signifies 'great' as you will see also in the margin, but it is referring in the RV to 'cakes of raisins'. When we investigate these services to the Baal, we find that these **raisin cakes** were used in relation to that service. They were made of pressed grapes and fine meals; they're mentioned in connection with Moab in Isaiah 16 verse 7 in the RV; in Jeremiah 7 verse 18 they are used by the worshippers of the queen of heaven.

So he says 'he bought her' verse 2, 'for 15 pieces of silver'. This was paid by Hosea and it's interesting that this was the price of a slave; the price of a slave was 30 actually, 30 pieces of silver and her purchase price was just exactly half of that of a slave. And the principle here is that Israel must now be humbled, her rations must be limited to a homer and a half of barley, till she be sufficiently humbled by a competent time of trial! Remember that once God had given Egypt as a ransom for Israel, but now that they had gone a whoring from Him, He will only give 15 pieces of silver. What a lesson, b&s, before we can acceptably come to God, we must realize, we must realize the theme of the prodigal son! 'I am no more worthy to be called thy son', this is a picture of God using poverty as a moulding furnace for Israel. The first step up is down! 'To this man will I look, to him that is of a humble and contrite spirit and trembleth at My words'. As we look at the 13th chapter of Zechariah, and as we look at the 7th chapter of Micah, and as we see Israel and Judah coming back into the Land, and being purged and cleansed, we see this humbling process taking place; and they will be purged and they will be humbled, they will be brought to their knees before they are finally made the nucleus of the kingdom of God upon the mountains of Israel.

Then in verse 3 we read, 'Thou shalt abide for me many days: thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee'. This was to be a time of separation, it was to be a time of discipline for the returned Gomer! with Hosea's desire that this isolation would make Gomer become his constantly, that she would become faithful to him in this period of trial, and it would give Gomer an opportunity to repent and to count the cost! If only she would abstain from evil and her evil ways, then Hosea would take her again! Let them typically again wander 40 years in the wilderness; let them come through the wilderness of the people, they must experience, they must keep silent, they must wait for the salvation of Yahweh, and in the mean time, they must bear their yoke! This all adds deep spiritual significance, b&s, it's pointing forward to that future redemption of Israel!

In complete keeping of this we read in verse 4, 'For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim'. **Many days without a king**, this prophecy has been literally fulfilled, hasn't it? since the

destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD.70; they had neither king nor prince nor any civil government of their own. They have lived as exiles without priest, sacrifices, Urim and Thummim, without prophet, oracle or communication of any kind from God. It's very comparable to Gomer's time of seclusion or waiting. Then we read they are without an image and this speaks of an epitaph or a teraphim as we read in the Septuagint. Without a sacrifice, without an altar, without a priesthood, without oracles, in other words, without the direction and the guidance of Almighty God, without the Urim and Thummim. 'The image' speaks to us of the pillar or idol of the type that God forbade them to erect. 'The ephod' speaks of the high priest's ceremonial garment, 'the teraphims' speak to us of the idolatrous images, and the Urim and the Thummim belong to the breastplate that was attached to the high priest's garments; they were to be without any means of public worship, they were to be without any idols in place of their God. This was to be their punishment, and it has been fulfilled, hasn't it? b&s, What a joy it is that we've seen this time coming to an end.

Verse 5, we read of the mercy of God again. Note how in chapters 1 and 2, b&s, we have judgment coming upon Israel; but we are never left to close those chapters without the mercy and love of God being sent to us; showing that we serve a merciful God. For after this enunciation of God's purpose with Israel, to purge them, to cleanse them, He concludes chapter 3 as He has chapters 1 and 2 that, 'Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Yahweh and David their king; and shall fear Yahweh and His goodness in the latter days'. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, they shall repent of their iniquities, they shall forsake their idols, they shall serve God; they shall serve David their king and this, of course, is the restored throne of David. The restored throne of David spoken of throughout the scriptures of truth, when the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem; and they shall fear Yahweh! Why fear the law which passeth all understanding? the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, we're told in Psalm 111 verse 10. We're told in Ecclesiastes 12 verse 13, 'fear Yahweh and keep His commandments'; we're told in 1 John 4 verse 18 that 'perfect love casteth out fear; and Paul speaks of the weight of glory in 2 Corinthians 4 verse 17, 'the greater the glory, the heavier the obligation'. Remember this, b&s, let us remember this in these closing days of Gentile darkness, the greatest requirement is to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God', Micah 6 verse 8, and the greater the glory, the greater the privilege, the heavier the responsibility. We are the most privileged of all people, as we come into these closing days of Gentile darkness, as we see more visible manifestations of the power of God in the fulfilment of His eternal Word; in the world about us tonight, we have the greatest responsibility of any era of Christadelphians!

Our purpose is that of the cherubim, **to keep the way of the tree of life**; we are spiritual Israel, we are living in the exact condition of Israel in the time of Jeroboam II; we are living in an age of materialism which threatens to pull these things away from us, and the same command that Israel disobeyed is the one which is going to determine our entrance into the kingdom of God. 'Thou shalt love the LORD thy God (not outwardly) but with all thine heart inwardly, (inside then outward, b&s). No one forced us

here tonight, we came because we love Him, didn't we? we came here tonight because we love His words, and we are anxious to study His words of truth, and this is heartfelt praise before the God of Israel. This must be our driving force, b&s, 'without faith it is impossible to please God', but how does that faith come? Paul tells us in Romans, that 'faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God', and how do we hear the Word of God? it is by diligent study and meditation and living by the Word of God, day by day. Now this is a message of Hosea if we can take it, b&s, this is his warning message, **Israel failed to obey this message**, and as such they were cast out; and we stand within sight of the Promise Land ourselves, but by the same token we stand in sight of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, who's about to come down into the Land. We must make our choice and we must manifest that choice, b&s, in our actions and in our heart.

CHAPTER 4

So we come to verse 1 of chapter 4, and note how this chapter 4 begins to expand on this very theme; God says and He gives this sad commentary concerning the people who were to bear His name; the people who were to be His living manifestation in the earth. Listen to these words, b&s, 'Hear ye the word of Yahweh, ye children of Israel. For Yahweh hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the Land'; now why does He have a controversy? Why! and note these 3 fingers are pointing back at spiritual Israel today, while this one accuses natural Israel of yesterday. He says, 'because there is no **truth** nor **mercy** nor **knowledge** of God in the Land', This controversy is between Yahweh on one side, with Israel and Judah on the other; the reason for the controversy is that there is **no** 1.) truth, 2.) mercy, and 3.) knowledge of God in the Land, and it refers to the mind of the people and their heart felt attitude to God. What did God say in Deuteronomy? 'you shall have these things in your heart', now He is warning them through Hosea, that because these things are not in their heart, that destruction waits for them! the lack of knowledge automatically eliminated mercy. We're told in Proverbs 23 verse 27, aren't we? that 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he!' the wisest man that ever lived is showing us that that dynamo that drives us on, **is the knowledge that is in our heart!** that which is in our mind, that which controls our thinking power, that which controls the driving power of our body, b&s. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he! and when a man substitutes the works of the flesh, for the fruit of the Spirit, there soon will be a vicious practice in his life.

Now verse 6 which we'll come to in just a moment, warns that My people are destroyed for lack of **knowledge**. Hosea speaks here, b&s, of the knowledge of God. Secular knowledge without the knowledge of God is woefully weak and inadequate and when we can say with Paul in Galatians 2 verse 20, 'that Christ liveth in me', then we can say that we're beginning to acquire the knowledge of God. But look where that secular wisdom had lead Israel!

We read in verse 2, 'By swearing and lying, and killing and stealing, and committing

adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood'. By swearing and lying where there is no truth, there will be lies and perjury; where there is no mercy, there will be killing, slaying and murders, and private stealing soon becomes public robbery, and the downward progression of sin leads to man's destruction. Blood toucheth blood we read here, it was at this time that so much blood was shed in contention for the crown or rulership in Israel, we remember that Shallum slew Zechariah, then Menahem slew Shallum, then Pekah slew Pekahiah, and Hoshea slew Pekah; the land was polluted with blood. It was filled with blood from one end to the other.

Verse 3 we read of a time of trouble then, 'therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away'. That is, fruitful seasons shall be denied; for the God whom they had denied controls all; God had warned them in Deuteronomy 28 that we referred to in our first session, that if they disobeyed the LORD their God, that land that once flowed with milk and honey would become a barren desolate waste. The sky over their head would become brass and the ground under their feet would become iron, but they went ahead. He says in this verse, 'that they that dwell therein shall languish', in other words, when God's judgment to end the earth, epidemic conditions shall prevail with all the resulting consequences such as death and mourning. What are we seeing today? we're seeing identically the same thing! The world cries out, 'God is dead', we see a time of trouble and confusion coming on the earth such as never was. It speaks here also of 'the beasts of the field and with the fowls', in other words, the famine adds misery by being death to cattle and all domestic animals; just as God creates, so God can destroy! Israel must realize this, and mankind today must realize this, b&s, for this is the reason the judgments of God are coming upon the earth. Man is serving the creature rather than the Creator. Man looks upon the universe and sees the splendour but he does not think of the One who created it; as we're told in Hosea here, this will even reach to the fishes of the sea for they shall be taken away and here are schools of fish that God in His tender mercy has provided for the sustenance of man, which should be caused to turn away from the shores. All of this was done because of the iniquity of the Land and there's a warning here, b&s, if we're able to take it; that God's purpose does not change and His principles do not change, and it will be the violation of these same laws that will bring the time of trouble such as never was!

In verse 4 we read, 'Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest'. Not only was Israel turned to idolatry, here we have a sad commentary, 'the priests had turned to idolatry' and now as we begin this section of chapter 4, we see where the priesthood or those who had been shepherds of the flock, to where they had turned. They were making merchandise of that which belonged to God. Yet let no man strive with thee or let no man contend, none can say, let me pluck the mote out of thy eye because he knows there's a beam in his own. One of the reasons for Israel's widespread moral deterioration was the corruption of the priesthood. How it had been corrupted! instead of them being sources of illumination, the light in them had become darkness. Do we sense a familiar note? b&s. Where is

the truth today in comparison with the time that it was born under Dr. Thomas and Brother Roberts? I cannot talk for Australia but I can for America, the light in them had become darkness, the real sources of illumination are entered, and when the light beam within becomes darkness, there can be no external light! This was the great principle of the Urim and Thummim, and without that light shining through those precious stones, they were only ordinary stones, and without that light of God shining through natural Israel, they were only ordinary people. B&S, without that light of the Urim's inner workings of Almighty God shining through the cherubim in these last closing days of Gentile darkness, we are nothing but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. The priests had not only sunk to a new low in their indulgence of evil, but they encouraged the people to sin also. The reason that the people's sins increased, so did the sin offerings increase, and as the sin offerings increased, so did the wealth of the clergy, and it was certainly true in Herod's temple in the days of Jesus the Christ. This verse teaches us that as long as there is any hope, that a man should be reprov'd of his sins; but when a man becomes hardened beyond bending, then man should no longer strive to turn his brother back to God; when a man completely rebels as Israel had rebelled, then God says, 'I can do no more!

We remember a few years ago, and I don't know whether it was an Australian brother that made this statement, but it was made at Idyllwild at the bible school, and this statement was made that 'as great as God is, there's one thing He cannot do, He cannot get to a man that will not bend to Him.' This is the reason there is no forgiveness for the sin of rebellion, and this is the reason that God emphasizes to this will I look, 'to him that is of a humble and contrite spirit and trembleth at My word'. What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God'. The people had willingly fallen into this very same pattern, instead of reflecting the light which should have emanated from the priest, they reflected the darkness that was coming from the shepherds of Israel. What a responsible position, b&s, what a responsible position that teachers have that are in the truth today!; the lecturing brethren, the exhorting brethren and all of those who are having to lead the flock towards the kingdom of God. What an important position and what a responsible position is ours. What a responsible position is that of those who listen, what a responsible position is that of those of the body of Christ. These are not things made with mortal hands, and Israel learned this the hard way!

God says now in verse 5, because the priesthood has taken this attitude, because the brotherhood has taken this attitude, and beware, b&s, because we stand within sight of the judgment seat of Christ, He says in verse 5, 'therefore shalt thou **fall** in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night and I shall destroy thy mother'. He's saying, priests and people alike shall fall in the most open and public manner, why? that the heathen may know that Yahweh is LORD. He says 'the prophet' shall fall; that is, a **false** prophet shall fall even while he is taking his prognostication from stars, the meteors and so forth, and this was position that the priests had fallen into; they had become worshippers of Baal, of Astarte, they were sun worshippers, they were moon worshippers. Then He said, 'I will destroy thy mother', and of course, this refers to the

mother city; both Jerusalem and Samaria, Samaria had become the very symbol of idolatry, for it was here, 35 miles north of Jerusalem where Jeroboam the son of Nebat had lead Israel, and the sad commentary is that Jeroboam the son of Nebat caused Israel to sin! It was in Jerusalem that the kingdom of Judah had stayed.

Now verse 6, and what a warning, b&s! What a warning! 'My people are destroyed, why? for a lack of knowledge'. When we come to the New Testament, 'without faith it is impossible to please God, and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God'. We're not exempt, are we? the same principle is before us! What had God told Israel in that very first command? Let's go back for just a moment to Deuteronomy 6, the importance of this verse becomes very, very prominent, b&s, as we look at this prophecy of Hosea. Not only was Israel to put these commands in their heart, not only was it to be the guiding force that directed them, but God says in verse 7, 'thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou riseth up and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when Yahweh thy Elohim shall have brought thee into the land which He sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou built not' and so forth. Then in verses 12 and 13, 'Then beware lest thou forget Yahweh, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Thou shalt fear Yahweh thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For Yahweh thy Elohim is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of Yahweh be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth',

What had they done? When they went into the land of Canaan, God's word was to destroy the Canaanite; but they intermarried and intermingled, they disobeyed this first command, that came thundering to them from Sinai. Paul gives us the counterpart in our lives in Romans 6, doesn't he? and He says here in Hosea that 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge'. These laws and these ordinances were not embedded in their heart and their mind, else the world would be on firm and secure footing today, b&s; if this was secular knowledge, the world would be on a firm and secure footing today, for never in the history of mankind has secular knowledge been as high as it is today. Never was knowledge of this type any further advanced than it is now, but Israel had not forsaken secular wisdom! They had forsaken the **true wisdom** or the knowledge that can only be found in God.

Hosea is not alone in this, this is not computed only to Hosea; Ezra set his heart upon the study of the law of God, upon obeying it and upon teaching the truths and regulations to Israel. We're familiar with this in Ezra 7 verse 10, aren't we? but note carefully in Ezra that he not only makes these things apart of his own life, but he made them apart of his own life **before he made any attempt to teach it to others!** Ezra's approach is the right approach, it is the biblical approach; God told Israel first to put these things in your life, and then diligently teach them to your children. Ezra gives us

the same picture! even though the Word of God is that knowledge by which a man can be saved, yet this knowledge must not only master a man's thoughts, it **must master his heart**, it **must master his will**. It's not abstract or theoretical but personal knowledge of experience as Paul cries out to Timothy, 'I **know** whom I have believed', there's no question there! Man does not so much discover this knowledge but as God reveals it, and it requires God Himself to speak, to discipline and to chasten. Paul learned this in the school of adversity; modern thought today and secular wisdom is as imaginations and dreams, in other words, education-secular, factual and scientific is the answer!

H.G. Wells one of the great Americans said, 'that civilization is a race between education and catastrophe'. But secular education prepares you for making a living, but it does not prepare you for living a life! and there is a vast distinction! The inner conflict between knowing and doing, between desire and duty, is the very heart of the human problem; Isaiah 30 verse 21 we have the divine admonition, '**This is the way, walk ye in it**', but Paul says something in Romans 7 verse 23 that we all realize, b&s, he says, 'I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind'. But you see, secular education makes absolutely no attempt to face that problem, it gives us information about everything else besides **ourselves!** and leaves mankind (how does it leave him?) it leaves mankind in the realm of a glorified guinea pig. It teaches him positive thinking and he has great ability of his own, but the greatest individual in the world is that person that he looks at in the mirror every morning. This exhortation is in the sight of God, **an abomination!** it works in direct opposition, and God said, 'because thou hast rejected knowledge' and that knowledge is the wisdom of God. He said that because they had rejected knowledge; they might have become wise, if they hadn't rejected God's merciful offer for improvement! There's a warning here, b&s, that we could be guilty also by letting fleeting, temporal things of this life rob us of our opportunities to study His Word. I warn you that in America today, we have realized this, we've seen it, we have seen it's subtle influence and it's taken its toll.

What is His answer then in this verse? It's a sad one! He says, 'because you have done this Israel, thou shalt be no priest to Me'; possibly the words here are addressed to a particular priest, but more than likely to the entire priesthood who had turned their hearts to idolatry. For in the providence of God, one people, Israel, were chosen for the salvation of all men. The nation itself was the bearer of salvation, and when the nation proved inadequate because of infidelity, God's method became that of progressive reduction; first Israel, then Judah, He turned from the nation to the remnant, a further reduction of this remnant is made to warn man, and that man was Jesus the Christ. It is through this One, that the remnant, natural and spiritual, will be saved. We have the dire warning once again, b&s, as we come within sight of the judgment seat of Christ, that 'many are called, but few are chosen', why? We go back to Deuteronomy 6, this is the answer, that these principles must be **in the heart**, 'thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy strength and with all thy mind', and what challenges that command today? **materialism on every side! secular education**, a desire to acquire the things of this life, a nice home, nice cars, everything of a material nature; and what we do and what suffers, b&s? As we get extra jobs, as we get extra means of making

the necessary money to gain these things, what is it that suffers? You know and I know very well, the **truth** suffers, **the word of God** suffers, just as it did in the days of Jeroboam II!

So God says in verse 7, He says identically the same thing! 'As they were increased, so they sinned against Me'. What is He saying? that the old, old story is ever been true of riches and prosperity in relation to God; and this is the reason that Jesus Christ warned that 'it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God'. Why? because the material things of this life become such an obsession that the truth suffers and dims away. The love of money, the root of all evil, worldly prosperity is an insidious danger to spiritual life. The gold mines of Peru helped to lift the fortunes of Spain, but the men abandoned honest work, and they became avaricious adventurers; you know, we live a long time, b&s, before we find out a great fact, **that life is qualitative rather than quantitative!** It is the quality of a man and not what he possesses that is important. We have to go through trial and trouble and tribulation before we realize that the true values in this life are not monetary. But Hosea is trying to tell us is this; God has told us this from the very beginning; David cried in the 146th Psalm verse 3 to 'put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help'. Why do you say that, David? verse 4, 'because his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish', and nothing tries a man more than prosperity. Nothing tries a man more than prosperity, and in prosperous times we say with one side of our mouth, 'we hope Christ is coming back to the earth', but on the other side, 'not yet, we're doing quite nicely, thank you!' It's human nature, isn't it? b&s, or do you have that problem in Australia?

Let not these temples (and that is what our bodies are today, b&s) let not these temples become a den of money changers! for God will not dwell in a temple where there are other idols, anymore than He'd do it in the days of Ezekiel, when Ezekiel saw that Shechinah glory leave the mercy seat, go over to the threshold, pause for a moment, go over the mountain and across the brook Kedron, to the mount of Olives and ascend back to heaven. God sent that Shechinah glory back in the person of Christ, He came to the temple and found identically the same thing; they had not purged it, and He said, 'you've made My Father's house a house of merchandise'; He claims that He pitched them out, but just before He goes back to God, He cried and said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou who destroyest the prophets and killeth them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not'. Note these words, He says, your house now (no longer My Father's house) your house is left unto you desolate'; and Paul in the 3rd chapter of 1 Corinthians says, 'your bodies are the temple of the living God; God no longer dwells in temples made with hands; Christ in you, the hope of glory'. What is the resounding exhortation? have you brought money changers into that temple? is there a body that have moved heathen idols into that temple? God says, I don't want you doing this, I'm dwelling in you! you are My cherubim, one in whom God dwells, one in whom God rides, but if you bring in an idol, if you bring in competition into this temple of God, I will leave it just as I did in the days of Ezekiel, just as I did in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be

destroyed when I come back! This is the message, b&s, here it is!

So he says, 'Therefore, will I change their glory into shame'. As the idolaters at Beth-el and Dan, had changed My glory into the similitude of an ox and into glass, so will I change their glory into shame and ignominy, in the day of My wrath, their calf god shall not deliver them; women that glory in their beauty should mark well, men that devoted their lives to things material should mark these great truths! Let's read for a moment from 3rd chapter of Isaiah, b&s, verses 16 to 26, Isaiah warns of the same thing, he speaks of a time when idolatry is going to be destroyed and he says, 'Moreover Yahweh said, 'because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go and making a tinkling with their feet. Therefore, the LORD will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and Yahweh will discover their secret parts. In that day, Yahweh will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers. The bonnets and ornaments of the legs and the headbands and the tablets and the earrings. The rings and the nose jewels. The changeable suits of apparel and the mantles, the wimples and the crisping pins. The glasses and the fine linen and the hoods and the veils. And it shall come to pass that instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth and burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword and thy mighty in the war; and her gates shall lament and moan and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground'. Here is the destiny of idolatry! It's speaking to natural and spiritual Israel and it is speaking to those who place materialism above the things of Almighty God. What an indictment!

What an indictment! and I speak against my own country, b&s, what an indictment of the conditions that we find in our land today. In verse 8, he proceeds and shows how these things are building up and he says that this idolatry that's permeating the things of God, this desecration of the first command that came thundering from Sinai, he says, 'they're eating up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity'. Where are they setting their hearts? God said in the 5th chapter of Deuteronomy, 'you're to fill your heart with My law, with My love; it is to be your driving force!' Now what does Hosea say? he says, 'their heart is set on their iniquity; they eat up the sin of my people' and we have here a reference to the sin offering. The sin offering was called for when a soul sinned through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things that ought not to be done. The offering required a young bullock without blemish; the sin offering provided an escape for a false position that is, if the will of God required certain things be not done, then if the man who does them, does things that are displeasing whether he knew it or not! So a sin offering was not exacted until the sinner was made aware of his sin. Then if he failed, this was a deliberate sin against God. This is a significant forerunner of the New Testament doctrine that where there is blindness, there is no accountability! but only where there is knowledge does the ground of condemnation exist. Where there is a great privilege, there is a great responsibility; 'to whom much is given, much is required'; **knowledge makes baptism a command!** To

disobey this command brings us into responsibility to God, and the priests were not thinking of the Mosaic ritual, they were eating the sacrifices to their own joy and profit, they lived on the sacrificial meat, the priests lived on the sacrificial meat and the more they had, the more they were pleased. So this increased with the sins of the people, because the more the people sinned, the more sin offerings, the more priestly banquets. In truth, they were feeding upon the sin of the people! This was the position of the priesthood, and b&s, we can do the same today. Beware! the sin offering was offered contrary to the Law, for their hearts were set on iniquity! They **wished to do** whatever is contrary to God, this is the attitude of Israel, priest and people alike.

So in verse 9 we read, 'like people, like priest'; the priests were to be leaders, they were to influence their flock. The priests were now following the practice of Aaron in golden calf worship. Today, the lives and spirit of our ecclesias depend upon those who are in positions of teachers; those who are placed on our programs as exhorting brethren, those who we place in the position of lecturing brethren, and **we cannot place an ice cube in such a position!** and complain because the audience did not respond!

Verse 10, 'They shall eat, and not have enough'. Now whatever means they may use to satisfy or gratify themselves it should be ineffectual God says; God says, 'I'm controlling things, Israel, and you must realize it, because you've seen what I did in bringing you out of Egypt'. One that follows the flesh shall eat, but he shall never be satisfied! He will drink but his thirst will never be quenched and every evil he indulges in simply wets his appetite. Each successive portion must be increased for his desire is accentuated as satisfaction eludes him. You can go a long time, b&s, even in the truth, before we realize in the fullest sense of the word, **that true happiness comes only from God!** David said, 'I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness', Psalm 17 verse 15!

Verse 11, 'Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart'. Now we're beginning that section of immoral cult practices, these were the things that Israel were participating in; they had gone to the heathen, they were even worshipping God from these heathen shrines. These debaucheries generally go together, there's a moral truth that's applicable to all times in every age, **whoredom and wine**. The special reference here is to the licentious orgies that were connected with Assyrian worship which had lured Israel away from the pure worship of God. Drunkenness played an very integral part in the Canaanite worship to which Israel had succumbed; the wine was an object of worship and bore some special relationship to the Baals who were the god of tillage! They were immoral practices, liquor and lust deprived men of their money and understanding; 'the cocktail hour' may be a more sophisticated name than the old time 'saloon', but rest assured, b&s, and we realize this in America very definitely today, I cannot speak for Australia, but the leopard has not changed his spots; the result is identically the same. So he says, 'it takes away the heart', it darkens the understanding, it depraves the judgment, it perverts the Law, it debases all passion. It takes the mind away from man!

Then in verse 12 he says, 'My people ask counsel, (not from Yahweh), they ask counsel

at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God'. It's rather difficult, isn't it? b&s, to think of those who have been entrusted with the will of Almighty God and with the exemplifying of His Word and His name in the earth, it's difficult to think of them turning to such a low estate! But the 'stocks' (6086) here have reference to their wooden gods that are spoken of in Jeremiah 2 verse 27 and Habakkuk 2 verse 19 where we read that 'their staff declareth unto them', it is an allusion to the divination by rods. What would happen? the diviner would strip half the bark from the rods and throw it at them, and if the bark side landed up, it was a good omen, if it landed down, it was a bad omen. The Arabs used 2 rods, one was marked 'god did' and the other 'god forbid'; so in any crisis or future course of action, it depended upon the one that came out first. This is what Israel was depending on, this is what they were turning to, and God had offered them His guidance and His directions; is it any wonder that His wrath was coming upon them?

We read, 'from under their God', in other words, they were moving out from under the overshadowing presence and protection of God. This is how He protected them from the heat of the sun in their escape from Egypt. That is what shall protect us also! as we read in Psalm 91. Now the noted warning concerning Israel's turning to idolatry was this, when Israel gave up the worship of their true God, they filled the void with worship to Baal. It is not an exhortation, b&s, because **every man must have some form of worship!** Paul, you'll remember on Mars Hill, in Acts 17 verse 23 says, 'whom you ignorantly worship; this God declare I unto you'. Hitler denounced the Christian God, but not the gods of power; the Communists deny Yahweh, but in His place they worship Lenin's tomb. Their kingdoms are the conquests of this world, their cross is the hammer and sickle ; Israel still believes in Yahweh but she worships Him from heathen idol shrines built for the Baals and they were worshipped in the spirit of immorality and lewdness. Our real God, b&s, and this we must remember, if we remember nothing else from Hosea, we must remember this, that our real God is not the God we worship, it is **the God we serve!** So where does this take us back to? It takes us back to Deuteronomy 6 again, 'that you should love Him with all your heart', but it was according to a false mental image and that was Israel's downfall. They had a false mental image and this lead them to the worship of a false mental image. They worshipped God alright from heathen shrines but who did they serve? they served Baal, and this is a great lesson from Hosea.

Verse 13, 'They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery'. The high places were selected by idolatry because they came nearer to the heavenly host which they worshipped. 'the shadow thereof is good; their daughter shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery'. Their deities were worshipped by prostitution in the polluted worship of Astarte, the Phoenician goddess of love. They bring much of their idol worship and thus their passions became inflamed, the thick smoke arose to hide them in these immoralities.

Verse 14 he says, 'I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery, for themselves are separated with whores and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall'. Severe language, isn't it? b&s, but remember Romans 15 verse 4 that 'these things are written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope; God says 'I will not punish you hopeless; reproof and chastening means absolutely nothing to you, when God in judgment removes His judgment, the case of that people is very desperate! but while there is hope there is correction. Remember what we're told in the 12th chapter of Hebrews concerning the chastening that comes upon each and everyone of us, He's moulding us, b&s, let us never back away from chastening, let us never complain, let us never ask ourselves why or what have I done to deserve this? but 'what is God teaching me now?' and as we go through the fires of affliction let us constantly remember that we're being moulded for a place in the kingdom of God. So he says, 'for themselves are separated', reference here, of course, is to certain debaucheries which should not be described; it's hard to describe a people any lower morally, Israel had become an absolute stench in the nostrils of the heathen roundabout; they were abominable beyond all precedent. Women consecrating themselves to serving their idols by public prostitution; both men and women acting unnaturally; and on these heathen altars making a pretence of serving Yahweh! What an exhortation and a thundering exhortation to us today!

He turns now to Judah in verse 15 and he says, 'Though thou, Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal; neither go ye up to Beth-aven nor swear, Yahweh liveth'. Israel is now approximately only a month away from the invasion of the Assyrian host, and God now turns to Judah and He says, 'take notice, Judah, do not follow in the paths of Israel' (let not Judah offend) even though there is no hope now for Israel, the exhortation and the warning goes forth to Judah who has the Levitical priesthood; she has a temple life and Jerusalem, He says, 'do not follow her bad example'. Now Gilgal here is situated between Jordan and Jericho on the confines of Samaria, and Gilgal (1537) was the place where the covenant of circumcision was renewed when the people passed over Jordan then by the worship of idols after Jeroboam had set up his idolatry and Beth-aven was the house of 'vanity or idols' (1007) it was a name substituted in contempt for Beth-el, the house of God once sacred to Yahweh. It later was made the seat of worship of the calves by Jeroboam. Also the word '**go ye up**' refers to the fact, that Beth-el was on a hill; '**nor swear Yahweh liveth**', this forming of an oath was appointed by God Himself and it is strictly forbidden in conjunction with idolatry and falsehood; but this made no difference to Israel, they were taking the name of the LORD their God in vain.

In verse 16, 'For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now Yahweh will feed them as a lamb in a large place'. Israel had represented God under the forms of calves, but it's Israel herself who is one, as Hosea says. The implication here is not of a wayward, but is the implication of a stubborn spirit, Hosea was a peasant of the soil; his many references show that he is familiar with animal husbandry; anyone familiar with farm life

will not miss the symbol of the heifer, one who is stubborn, one who is restless, one who is unwilling to be lead, one who is darting hither and thither. This is the terminology that Hosea places them in when he speaks of them as a lamb in a large place, in the RSV there's a question, 'can the LORD feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture?' the answer is very obvious, it is **NO!** it is love service that is acceptable to God, it is not forced service; and here we have a picture, b&s, of peace in contrast to turmoil, a peace that comes from submission rather than being self-assertive! and aggressive which often represents activity as progress and man's opinion for knowledge. The very helplessness of the lamb, the very helplessness of that lamb is the source of its strength, for if speech could be given to a lamb, it would be first to admit its own lack of wisdom to find its way or to defend itself.

'As sheep without a shepherd' we're in a very precarious position, and we must recognize ourselves as sheep; we are those sheep, b&s, if we are in the family of God. We read in Jeremiah 10 verse 23, 'O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man to walk and to direct his steps'; but never let us be lead away through arrogance and over confidence in our own wisdom and abilities. Let us never become as a restless heifer, self-assertive, stubborn, a victim of fleeting moods and ill-equipped to meet the real problems of life; it's not easy, b&s, because we're finding that same stubborn will that was spoken of by the apostle Paul, 'when he would do good, evil was present with him'. We still have that heart spoken of in the 17th chapter of Jeremiah, 'that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?' and yet the idea is before us, however, never let us feel that a faithful walk in the truth is easy; there is nothing easy about the truth, nothing! our constant companion is the cross, it's the crucifixion of the flesh. Our way to the kingdom of God is marred by blood, it is marred by tears, it is marred by sweat! Our peace in Christ is not stagnation! we're not offered freedom from danger, **we are offered freedom in danger**, b&s, we are not offered freedom from pain but the tombstone turned that pain into joy; they are ours! For we read in Hebrews 12 and verse 2, 'looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Let us always remember that God does not shield us from battle, **He fights at our side, with us**. Christ was lead as a lamb to the slaughter, but His death was swallowed up in victory!

Hosea goes on to speak of them as 'a lamb in a large place'; lambs like a large pasture but it's not as safe for them as a small one would be protected from wild beasts. God will feed them but it should be with a rod; it should be no longer in the narrow confines of Israel, but they shall be scattered over the vast expanse of Assyria, as an unprotected place in their fold, 'as sheep without a shepherd'. We hesitate to think, don't we? b&s, of those words, 'depart from Me, **I never knew you**', and we're cast back out into that fire or time of trouble prepared for the devil and his angels.

We read at verse 17 that, 'Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone'. It has reference to the 10 tribes, of course, Judah was not so deeply steeped in idolatry, but they later were

lead into it, b&s, and it says Ephraim is joined to idols, then it is and has become incorporated with false idols, and when people identify themselves with whoremongers, they become one flesh with an harlot; the mother of harlots, that which will ultimately be destroyed. The word 'idols' here means in the Hebrew 'sorrows and pains' (6091), it implies the pain which idolatry brings, that which flesh brings. 'Let him alone', verse 15 shows that this warning is to Judah to avoid the contention of Israel's bad example. 'Leave him to his fate, Judah, lest in your efforts to save him, you fall yourself'. It's possible to become such a slave to sin that we become impervious to reason. Mankind comes to the point that they enjoy sin! they are willingly ignorant, Peter says, so let us take special heed to this fact that's exemplified in Revelation 22 verse 11, Hosea is not exhorting us to be 'quitters' when the path seems hopeless or is unproductive! The result is not in our hands, our responsibility, b&s, is in the planting, it is in the watering; Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but **God is the One that builds every increase**. As we're told in Hosea 11 verse 8, God never gives us up, we're the ones that give God up! God never gives us up and this is a great lesson of Israel.

Verse 18 we read, 'Their drink is sour, they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye. The wind hath bound up in her wing, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices'. Their drink is sour, this is a metaphor for utter degeneration of principles. Not mere ordinary sin, but it is referring to **drunkards**, who vomit and smell sour; it is given as a hideous picture that's before us, her rulers with shame do love, rather they have loved shame, they glory in their abominations. So he says, give ye', Proverbs 30 verse 15 we read, 'that their own rulers sold justice for gifts'.

Verse 19, 'the wind hath bound her' and in the RSV we read, 'the wind has wrapped them in its wings', it's a poetic metaphor. Here we have a picture of the violence and speed of the conqueror that will sweep Israel into exile. We have a picture of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, coming down upon the mountains of Israel. We read in verse 19 that, they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices or their altars', in other words, they will discover how utterly inadequate their pagan life had been. The true nature of our pagan deity is never revealed until the day of crisis, and b&s, what is the great exhortation in all this? it is that we must be men and women of wisdom, that we must fill our lives today with an indestructible place of tried gold, that we may withstand the piercing judgment fire of Yahweh. For you know, as we look out upon the eastern horizon tonight, b&s, we've stated this many times and we're not stating something that's unfamiliar at all! we're in this together, aren't we? and as we look to the signs about us on every side, we have the unmistakable evidence that our Master is at the door! One day, and that very soon, we're going to hear the words, 'the Master has come and calleth for thee'.

What if it happened tonight, b&s, what if it happened before we left this meeting tonight? What would our thoughts be? for the first time in our lives we would realize the truth of this glorious prophecy; we would realize that the things of this life are nothing but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. The things that we treasured so in this life, would become as the idolatrous practice that Israel was participating in, when Shalmaneser,

king of Assyria, came upon them. But that day will come! and what is the exhortation? Hosea gives it to us, '**my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge**'; do we want eternal life? do we want to be saved, b&s? then the admonition comes to us in Hebrews 11 and Romans 10, where we're told, first of all, 'that without faith it is impossible to please God'. Then we're told that, 'faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God'. What is the exhortation? The exhortation is that constant infiltration of these glorious words of truth, not outwardly but back to Deuteronomy 6 again, 'into our hearts', so that it becomes a driving force in our lives, so that 'in His Law doth he meditate day and night'. If these things are in our hearts, if it becomes a driving force, b&s, then we have the assurance in Psalm 1, that we should be 'like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall also not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper'.

May this ultimate goal be yours and may it be mine!