The Book of Hosea

Zanesville, OH | Sunday AM Bible Study

**Chapter 6**

* **6:1-3– *“Come let us return”***
* This section of Hosea has been spoken of widely and many have speculated on the meaning of these first three verses. The theme is repentance but the questions of who is speaking and is it sincere is quite difficult to ascertain.
* There are several possibilities of who is speaking here. It could be:
  + (1) Hosea is encouraging the people to return to God knowing that God ultimately won’t reject His people
  + (2) The people, after seeing their destruction and experiencing judgment, encourage one another to repent and return to God
  + (3) God is quoting the words of His people (as He has done before in 2:7) as He is the speaker in the rest of the chapter
* Perhaps the more burning question one considers in this section is whether or not this call for repentance is sincere if it is indeed the motive of the people to return to God. Some have noted that a lack of contrition and sorrow for sin is striking and it is an argument for the insincerity of this call (Compare with Neh. 9, Dan. 9 and Jon. 3:5-9).
* **Verse 1**– The text commences with an exhortation towards repentance with the phrase *“Come let us return to the LORD.”* The word return is strongly associated with repentance and the need to repent (cf. Deut. 30:2-3; Jer. 3:7; 4:1; 24:7; Hos. 2:7; Lk. 15:17-19).
* The word *“come”* seems to suggest a gathering of the nation more than just a group or a single person. It seems to be referring to the nation as a whole in seeking the possibility of repentance.
* The reason for this return is given in the verse pointing us back to the previous chapter where God spoke of the slaughter that would overtake and overwhelm the people (cf. 5:11-14).
* They are torn and wounded just as God said would occur. An expression of a reversal of these circumstances is stated much with surety rather than leaving it in God’s hands (He will heal, He will bandage).
* **Verse 2**– The language of sure reversal and restoration continues in this verse (He will revive, He will raise). The use of *“two days”* and *“three days”* should not be taken literally. The point of the passage is that after a set time (short period) God will restore His people to life (Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:1-14).
* Some suggest this is a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus but there is no evidence to support this here. It can be used as an analogy that as God would heal His people after a *“set time”* so He would also raise Jesus after a *“set time”* (1 Cor. 15:4).
* The language in this verse takes the reversal idea a step further by implying God is able to bring back life to that which is dead and to raise those who have been dead (1 Sam. 2:6). The verse ends with the statement that if this is done it will be for the sole purpose of living before God.
* **Verse 3**– After this raising and revival in verse 2, they must strive to know God. This was the reason for their downfall (cf. 4:2, 6, 11, 14). The mention of the word *“know”* in this verse is to emphasize the intimacy of the relationship they are to pursue with Yahweh. To know God is to seek Him intimately (Hos. 2:20; Jn. 17:3; 1 Jn. 2:3).
* God coming to His people is as certain as the dawn. The cycle of creation that God has set in order with certainty is here used to parallel His faithfulness in helping His people if they return to Him.
* Another illustration of God’s creation is used with the use of the rain and spring rain. The people of Palestine knew just when to expect the rains for their crops because it occurred year after year without fail (Deut. 11:13-14). As such, the idea is that God will come to them as the rain goes to the crops.
* **6:4-11– God delights in loyalty**
* **Verse 4**– God is pictured in this verse in an emotional state of conflict with His feelings. God is capable of feeling just as we are. Moreover, the language is reminiscent of a parent dealing with a rebellious child who will not listen (Jer. 3:19; 5:23; Hos. 11:8).
* God questions what He will do with Ephraim (Israel) and Judah because of their rebellious state. He describes their loyalty in this verse as that which doesn’t last long at all. Their loyalty to God quickly fades, it comes and it goes and it is short-lived (1 Sam. 15:22; Psa. 78:34-37).
* **Verse 5**– God speaks of the slaughter the people faced because of the disloyalty. He chopped them up in pieces according to the word of His mouth and the prophets (Deut. 28:15-68; Jer. 5:14; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16; 2:16). The judgment experience is pictured as devasting that the people are left in pieces.
* God’s word will make you bitter or better. In this case the people experience the former consequence because of their iniquities and failure to serve God with all their heart. The judgments of God are clear, discernable and bright like the light which goes forth (Psa. 37:6).
* **Verse 6**– God takes delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice. The people are pictured in 5:6 coming to God with a plethora of sacrifices but it will not help them. No amount of sacrifice will ever be able to substitute for the loyalty of heart God desires of His people (Prov. 21:3; Mic. 6:6-7; Matt. 9:13).
* Likewise, God delights in knowledge of Him and not burnt offerings. He wants us to know Him intimately and to put earnest effort into our relationship with Him and no amount of burnt offerings would substitute for that (Psa. 51:16-17).
* **Verse 7**– Israel broke its covenant with God (cf. Ex. 24:3, 7-8; 2 Kings 17:15) just as Adam broke his covenant with God in the garden (cf. Gen. 2:16-17; 3:17-24). The trend that began in Genesis 3 has continued throughout the course of man’s life (Rom. 5:12-14). The covenant hangs on the idea that God gives life, but sin brings death.
* The word *“there”* is striking in this text. As Adam was placed in the garden (a paradise of sorts) so too the Israelites were brought safely to the promised land (a paradise of sorts) and just like Adam they too broke the covenant in these places. The idea of the word may also mean that wherever the people went they dealt treacherously with God (See 5:7).
* **Verse 8**– Gilead here seems to have reference to the mountainous area of land east of the Jordan bounded on the north by Bashan (cf. Gen. 31:21; Deut. 3:12-17). The Israelites committed great evils here as evidenced by the phrase *“tracked with bloody footprints.”*
* This could be referring to the assassination of Pekahiah by Pekah in 2 Kings 15:25. It fits well with the timeline here in the book and would also fit the description of the evil and bloodshed that took place.
* **Verse 9**– The priests are singled out yet again for their vile and sinful acts. Here, they are compared to a band of raiders (robbers, thieves, thugs) who lie in wait to commit murder (may mean bloodthirsty or committing acts of violence). This is strikingly similar to the story told in Luke 10:30-31.
* Shechem is a significant location in Old Testament times dating all the way back to the period of the patriarchs (cf. Gen. 12:6; 33:18-20). Shechem was the name of the man who possibly raped Dinah the daughter of Jacob and the location where Levi and Simeon enacted bloodshed for what was done to Dinah (See: Gen. 34).
* Shechem later became one of the six cities of refuge (cf. Josh. 20:7). It was located in a narrow valley between Mount Ebal and Gerizim west of the Jordan river. It was the site where Joseph’s bones were buried (cf. Josh. 24:32) and where Joshua delivered his second parting address (cf. Josh. 24:1-15).
* Rehoboam was made King here (cf. 1 Kings 12:1) but later Jeroboam used it as his residence (cf. 1 Kings 12:25). It is also the site where Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman (cf. John 4:5).
* The point could be that the priests are killing those who are fugitives on the way to the cities of refuge or it could mean that they themselves are killing others and they flee to these cities for refuge to protect themselves.
* *“It was a halting-place for the pilgrims of the northern tribes, in their way to the feasts at Jerusalem; so that these murders by the priests coincide with the tradition of the Jews, that they who would go up to Jerusalem were murdered in the way”* (Barnes).
* **Verse 10**– Reverting back to the major theme of the book, God laments of Israel’s idolatrous practices and their consistency in it (Jer. 2:12-13; 3:6; 5:30-31; 18:13; 23:14). Through their idolatrous practices they have defiled themselves and God sees it all (Hos. 5:3).
* **Verse 11**– Judah is remembered for their sin too. It is as if God is saying *“I haven’t forgotten about what you are doing.”* The harvest spoken of here is one of judgment (Joel 3:13; Mic. 4:12; Matt. 13:24-30; Rev. 14:14-16).
* Because of the way this verse is worded, one might suggest that this is referring to blessing and not judgment but that would not fit within the context. The point of this passage is to suggest that the harvest (judgment) will begin God’s plan of restoration of the people (See: Hos 3:2-5).