

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Sunday School

What Can America Learn from Hosea?

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"A generation which ignores history has no past and no future."

Robert Heinlein

Can today's Christian profit from an Old Testament prophet?

Book of Hosea, also spelled "Osee," is the first of 12 Old Testament books called the Minor Prophets. These books are considered to be one book in the Jewish canon. Hosea began his prophetic activity during the reign of Jeroboam II (c. 786–746 BC). His prophetic announcements indicate that he was active until near the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, the scene of his entire ministry (721 BC).

So, what can a prophet from about 2,750 years ago teach us about our lives today? Critics of the Bible claim that such writings were produced by ignorant, uneducated farmers and shepherds and that God did not author anything (if there IS a god!). However, if you've studied your Bible, you know that it is a miracle in itself. The Bible proves itself to be the Word of God every time we open it. Let's take a look at some specific observations made by Hosea about the sin that had engulfed God's chosen, and compare them to our society, today. One might simply substitute "America" for "Israel" in the passages we are going to explore.

As an overview, much of what we Christians call the "Old Testament" contains the cyclical falling away and restoration of Israel across centuries of history. It should be emphasized that the descendants of Abraham were specifically chosen by God to be a "peculiar and separate" people. They were given the very important job of being human representations of God's presence among the pagan (non-Jewish) nations in which they lived.

Genesis 12: 12 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will

make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

In other words, the Jews were a specific people, undefiled, charged with scattering throughout the nations and to "be a blessing." They were to be evangelical representations of the Living God to all those with whom they cohabitated. They were to draw non-Jews to God. Does this remind you of the role we Christians have?

1 Peter 2: 9 "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;"

Illustration: When my father passed, I learned that I was to be the executor of his will. I was specially tasked with carrying out my father's final wishes. His written, legal will was the guideline for the job I had to do. I did my best to carry out that job faithfully. It wasn't that I was loved any more or less by my father, or that I was to receive any more than other heirs, it was simply his wish that I do the job. I took it seriously.

Let's compare this to Israel. God chose them to carry out specific jobs; record His Word, be a witness to all nations, serve as the lineage for the Messiah, etc. God started fresh with Abraham and Sarah, a genealogy, a new bloodline, that had not been corrupted by heathenism (2150-1975 BC). He tasked them with living according to His direction, His prescribed laws, and they would live under the umbrella of His blessings. Israel had many enemies, and struggled along the way, but NOTHING caused them more pain and misery than their constant failure at remaining faithful to God.

About 2,000 years after it all got started, Israel had fallen so deeply into idolatry and apostacy – ESPECIALLY THE PRIESTS – that Hosea began speaking God's prophetic words to them. Note that special emphasis is heaped upon the leadership, which had become corrupted and led their people into that same corruption. God is a righteous judge and those who are in authority, in leadership, are teachers, etc., are held accountable to those positions....positions that naturally come with their own sets of temptations.

Hosea 1: 1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, son of Beerai during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel:

2 When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD.”

God had Hosea start a family in a manner that replicated the sins of Israel. Surely, this would enable Hosea to understand the pain that unfaithfulness causes God!

3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4 Then the LORD said to Hosea, “Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. 5 In that day I will break Israel’s bow in the Valley of Jezreel.”

6 Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, “Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means “not loved”), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. 7 Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the LORD their God, will save them.”

8 After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. 9 Then the LORD said, “Call him Lo-Ammi (which means “not my people”), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

God commanded Hosea to construct a family that was a “selfie pic” of Israel. Two things seem to stand out;

A) the rottenness of Israel had completely engulfed them all. They had chosen unfaithfulness to God and chosen the ways, religious practices and the physical sins of the societies around them. This is why God refers to them as “adulterous.”

B) In verse 7, God is saying that HE, alone, will save Judah....not by man-made weapons....but by the hand of the creator.

Hosea 2: 4 “I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery.”

This is a harsh indictment, but I’m wondering; how many such warnings had God had sent His holy priests in the years leading up to this point. Those who served

in the Temple had the very important and specific role of being God's mouthpiece to His people. How often had God warned the Temple Priests that they were in violation – that they were behaving like 'harlots' by prostituting themselves to pagan gods? Perhaps this old saying is verified here: "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link."

Illustration: Do you recall the heartbreaking reports out of Arizona of the military veterans who were left on waiting lists by the Veterans Administration Hospitals? Many had DIED while waiting on an appointment to see a doctor! How many letters, phone calls, emails, and visits were made to government offices...and ignored... in order for that situation to reach such a tragic level? It was clearly a problem of chronic, long-term neglect at all levels of leadership.

Hosea 4: 1 "Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. 2 There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed."

Among the many idols of the pagan cultures that Israel was forbidden to worship was Molek, and other idols to which children were sacrificed.

Leviticus 18: 21 "Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molek, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.

Deuteronomy 12: "31 You must not worship the Lord your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

Definition: Child sacrifice is the ritualistic killing of children in order to please or appease a "deity" to achieve a desired result. Child sacrifice is thought to be an extreme extension of the idea that, the more important the object of sacrifice, the more devout is the person giving it up.

Let us apply this concept of "child sacrifice" in two modern ways:

A) by allowing the culture to raise one's children, the kids become indoctrinated in the leading-edge concepts of paganism and social ills. Parents who care that

these concepts form their own, and their children's, world views are practicing a form of 'Virtue Signaling' in this culture.

B) Abortion always has been, and always will be, purely for the purpose of sexual freedom. When freedom that abandons all personal responsibility is the idol of the land, babies are sacrificed to this god. (Take the population of Rhode Island and count up the next 25 states from smaller to larger. The populations of those 26 states are approximately the number of aborted babies in the USA since Roe v Wade.)

4: 6 "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. 7 The more priests there were, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful. 8 They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness. 9 And it will be: Like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds.

As in our culture, the number of "priests" (churches, TV preachers, cults, internet services, etc.) does not indicate the faithfulness of the people. Verse 7; shows there's an inverse relationship between a large number of priests and the faithfulness of the people. It's as if the many "religious figures" had created a "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" kind of blanket that hid sin from view. The follower is just as guilty of sin as the leader.

4: 12 My people consult a wooden idol, and a diviner's rod speaks to them. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God. 13 They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant. Therefore, your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery.

The "diviner's rod" has been interpreted in several ways, such as a magic wand, an Asherah pole, or some type of wooden staff used to predict the future or guide seekers into "wisdom." How many fiction stories and movies have had some sort of scepter, ring, amulet, crystal or other object that brought the bearer special powers, wisdom or fortune? The bottom line, here, is that ANYTHING THAT TAKES THE PLACE OF GOD IS SIN. Again, this behavior is compared to prostitution; a woman that takes the place of your wife is a harlot.

The Ten Commandments were certainly ensconced in the Jewish culture and the Temple teachings, given about 800 years prior. How could 'God's chosen people' be so casual about breaking ... I count FIVE commandments....as their lifestyle? The passage, above, demonstrates complete disregard for Commandment #1.

Exodus 20: 3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children to the third and fourth generations of those who reject me,"

Are you seeing the connection between Israel in the 7th century, BC and America in 2021? Look at what our culture was when our nation was in its formative years. Almost every community was built around a church. Worshipping God was the central aspect of Americanism. Our Bill of Rights guarantees the freedom to worship as we please, and most chose Christianity. It was our lifestyle, our education, our world view, our hope for successive generations. Christianity was the foundation of our laws, our social structure, our foreign affairs, our benevolence to other nations.

But, look at how far we have fallen. As with Israel in 750 BC, America has devolved into a cesspool of wickedness, sin and debauchery. And as the old saying goes; 'a fish stinks from the head down.' This is a way of saying that the failures in leadership work their way down through the rest of any group. But, who are our 'leaders?'

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "**Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.**" So, the right to vote; "one person, one vote" has been our mainstay of selecting those who make and enforce our laws. This is akin to Israel's constant desire for a "king." The problem with these systems, in which 'the people' select their ruler, is that 'the people' tend to vote selfishly and shortsightedly.

Illustration; imagine a sixth-grade class being given the assignment of electing a 'class president.' Each candidate gave a speech explaining how their leadership would benefit the group. One young gal got up and promised free ice cream every day. Who do you think got elected?

And, so it is; the voters get who they vote for. The elected leader is a representation of the will of the people. In America, a great many people are upset with the current conditions in our leadership, but where were those concerns 30 years ago? It seems we only become “informed” when conditions reach a boiling point.

Hosea 7: 3 “They delight the king with their wickedness, the princes with their lies.”

I dare say that I DO NOT find any concerned, morally righteous, people in the crowd when the Scribes and Pharisees were shouting to Pilate to crucify Jesus. Where were those that knew better? Why do the scriptures not record opposition to murdering an innocent man? Nor do I read of any friends of the Apostle Stephen attempting to intervene when the Jewish leaders dragged him out to stone him.

There’s an old saying; ‘All that is required for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.’

Do you read the words of Hosea and wonder if what he said came as any surprise to the people of Israel? Was anyone listening to him and looking around and shrugging their shoulders? Above all the peoples in the land, the Israelites KNEW what sin was! Nobody ‘accidentally’ picks up a prostitute. Nobody ‘accidentally’ puts their child on the altar of a false god. Nobody ‘accidentally’ walks away from God and patterns their life after a false god.

It’s no accident that the most recent census shows that there are now more Americans rejecting religion than accepting it. It’s no accident that our largest institutions; schools, government, most corporations, etc., have removed God from their buildings and processes. It’s no surprise that the lies of racism are perpetuated through every aspect of our media, entertainment, education, politics, sports, etc.

Can it be that the SURPRISE comes when a good person confronts evil and says; “No! That’s wrong!” It would surprise me, because I come across a whole lot of wimps among the righteous.

Remember Ephraim? He was the second son of Joseph and a grandson of Jacob. His name means “doubly fruitful,” because “God has made Joseph fruitful in the land of his suffering.” Ephraim was a strong tribal leader until...

Hosea 13: 1 When Ephraim spoke, people trembled; he was exalted in Israel. But he became guilty of Baal worship and died. 2 Now they sin more and more; they make idols for themselves from their silver, cleverly fashioned images, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of these people, “They offer human sacrifices! They kiss calf-idols!”

(The calf images were kissed like those of the Madonna in present day Roman Catholic churches. To kiss is to show adoration, devotion and worship.)

See the comparison? America is 7th century, BC Israel. As a nation, we have prostituted ourselves to false gods such as comfort, relaxation, amusement, convenience, wealth, absence of responsibility, ‘peace’ (however one defines it), good health, etc.

Hosea 6: 4 “What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. 5 Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth— then my judgments go forth like the sun. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

7 As at Adam, they have broken the covenant; they were unfaithful to me there. 8 Gilead is a city of evildoers, stained with footprints of blood.

9 As marauders lie in ambush for a victim, so do bands of priests; they murder on the road to Shechem, carrying out their wicked schemes. 10 I have seen a horrible thing in Israel: There Ephraim is given to prostitution, Israel is defiled.

OK, what’s the #1 reason good people do nothing in the face of evil? Is it not that they might suffer personal rejection, embarrassment, or social ridicule, or similar fate? If a building is on fire, you don’t comb your hair before getting people out.

Hosea 9: 7 The days of punishment are coming; the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac.

America has been burning with increasing intensity for decades. It's time to do good things, righteous things, and stop being so uselessly NICE.

Hosea 10: 3 Then they will say, "We have no king because we did not revere the LORD. But even if we had a king, what could he do for us?" 4 They make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore, lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field.

Sounds like the former land of the free. How about an alternative course?

1 Corinthians 6: 19 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body"

The body of the Christian is the Temple...the "church." Your body is the place the Holy Spirit resides. 'Church' happens when you testify the truth of God. Whether in the face of sin, or helping someone understand who Jesus is, the truth must be forever on our lips. Wherever we go, 'church' should be in session. Count the number of people you've seen saved in a church building in the past ten years....is it going to dawn on us that THAT is not where it happens in this new culture? We MUST resist this culture's mandate that we Christians keep our faith inside the building with a cross on it.

When you read Hosea's words, what was Israel doing...and NOT doing? That's pretty much our own story. OK, now let's take it the other way!

Hosea 14: 1 "Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! 2 Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. 3 Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount warhorses. We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion."