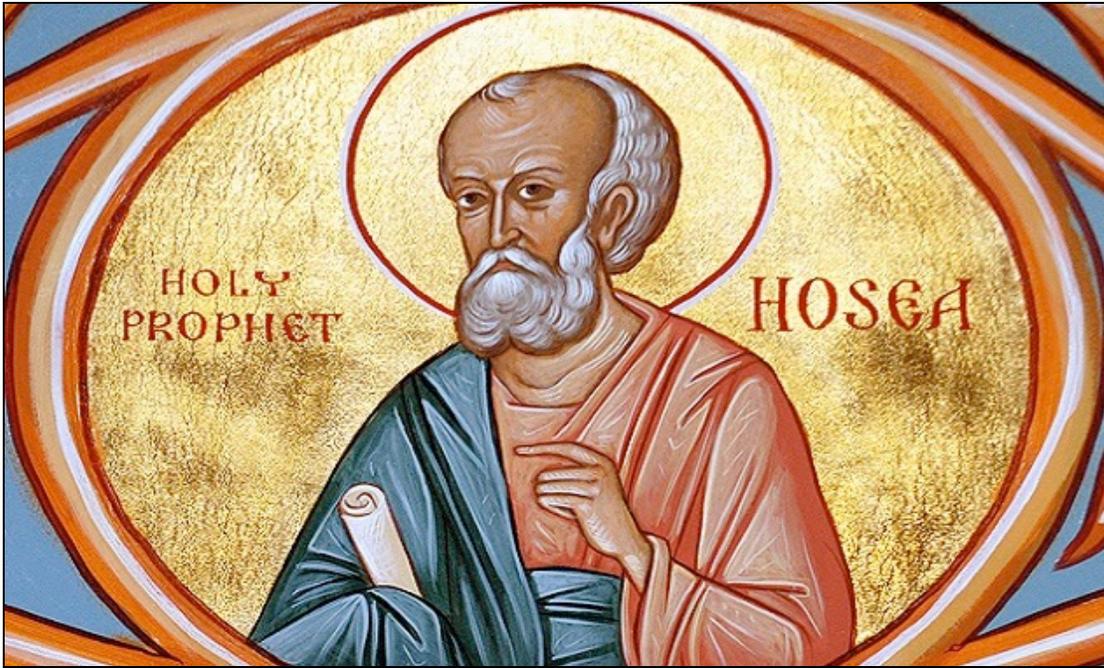


# HOSEA 6, 7: THE DEPTHS OF SIN



T. M. MOORE

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Hosea 6, 7: The Depths of Sin*

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## Hosea 6, 7: The Depths of Sin

It's important to remember that the book of Hosea probably originated as a series of sermons, preached, perhaps, over many years. This explains why there is a good bit of repetition in these chapters, and why the intensity tends to ratchet up in places.

God had sent prophets to Israel for years, trying to turn the nation away from its rebellion and back to Him. Not only did the people not heed the words of the prophets, they plunged deeper and deeper into sin, following the practices of the pagan peoples around them.

Hosea brings the message of judgment. It's too late for Israel to turn back to the Lord now. But He will bring them back to Himself, once His judgment has run its course. For now, Hosea lays bare the depths of Israel's sin, justifying the wrath and shame which are to come.

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We hope you find this study of Hosea instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 Call to Return

*Week 5, Monday: The God Who heals*

Hosea, speaking for God, calls the people to return to Him. He will deal harshly with His people, but His love means He will be ready to receive them back when they return. Hosea points the people beyond the judgment of God to His welcoming and receiving love.

We need to linger over verses 1-3, beginning with the first 2. Because returning to the Lord in order to know Him is a calling each of us needs to heed, every day.

And don't miss the nod toward Jesus implicit in our passage for today.

*Read Hosea 6*

*Meditate on Hosea 6.1, 2*

1. It is often characteristic of God's prophets to identify with the people in their sin ("let us"), even though they themselves may not be guilty of the specific sins in view. Why is this a good idea?
2. As strong as God can be in disciplining His people, He is just as strong in restoring them (v. 1). It is always the case, when God sends His prophets to warn the people of judgment, that He points beyond the judgment to a day of restoration. Judgment, as it was endured, would prove the reliability of God's Word and the strength of His power. Given this, why was it important to hold out the offer of restoration before judgment actually began? What can we learn from this about trusting the Word of God?
3. Notice the goal of God's work of restoration at the end of verse 2. What does it mean for someone to "live in God's sight" (the Hebrew is literally, "before His face")?
4. The mention of "two" and "three" days for judgment is not to be taken literally (v. 2). Israel would suffer judgment much longer than that, and Judah for 70 years. It is likely that not even Hosea would have seen this phrase as a pointer to Christ, but we know it to be so. But wait: Who suffered for two days before the third day, the day of restoration? Does the suffering of Israel as a nation point to the suffering of Christ? If so, what does the suffering of Christ tell us about the judgment of God?
5. What were the primary hindrances keeping the people of Israel from hearing Hosea's call to return to the Lord? How can we prevent such hindrances from making us deaf to the Lord's call for repentance?

*Summary*

God's love never fails. Even in the midst of judgment, He points the way for sinful people to return to Him. How might memorizing this passage help you in your daily walk with the Lord?

*Closing Prayer*

But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me;  
O My Strength, hasten to help Me!  
Deliver Me from the sword,  
My precious *life* from the power of the dog.  
Save Me from the lion's mouth  
And from the horns of the wild oxen!

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You have answered Me.  
I will declare Your name to My brethren;  
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.  
You who fear the LORD, praise Him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,  
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!  
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;  
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;  
But when He cried to Him, He heard.

Psalm 22.19-24

*Observations, notes, questions:*

## 2 Know the Lord

*Week 5, Tuesday: The goal of returning*

Since *not* knowing the Lord brought judgment on Israel, *knowing* the Lord must be that for which they long if they would return to Him. Again, the prophet gives the people the words to use, once judgment has done its work, to return to God on His terms.

*Read Hosea 6*

*Meditate on Hosea 6.3*

1. Israel did not “know” the Lord. What does it mean to know God (cf. Jn. 17.3; 2 Pet. 3.18)? What does it look like when people know the Lord? How can we tell by observing someone that he or she knows the Lord?
2. Knowing God is a continuous pursuit. What does that pursuit involve? What would Israel be doing when she pursued the knowledge of God? Is the knowledge of God something that is attained once, or must it be pursued and attained anew every day? Explain.
3. God is as faithful as each new day (Lam. 3.22, 23). How should this guide and encourage us as we take up the pursuit of knowing God daily?
4. How is God’s coming to us like the rain?
5. How does pursuing the knowledge of God work to keep us from coming under the judgment of God?

*Summary*

Knowing God requires effort on our part. We must *pursue* the knowledge of God by all the means He prescribes, and to the depth of knowledge He requires. Knowing God is not just an intellectual activity. It involves our whole lives and selves. God waits to refresh and renew us in our relationship with Him, but we must be diligent pursuing knowing Him if these benefits would be ours.

*Closing Prayer*

O God, You *are* my God;  
Early will I seek You;  
My soul thirsts for You;  
My flesh longs for You  
In a dry and thirsty land  
Where there is no water.  
So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,  
To see Your power and Your glory.  
Because Your lovingkindness *is* better than life,  
My lips shall praise You.  
Thus I will bless You while I live;  
I will lift up my hands in Your name.

Psalm 63.1-4

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*Observations, notes, questions:*

### 3 What God Desires

*Week 5, Wednesday: Outward piety not enough*

As we mentioned before, the people of Israel were very religious, at least outwardly so. They even claimed to know God, and could doubtless point to all kinds of ceremonies and activities entered into in His Name as evidence to back up their claim.

But God does not look on the trappings of worship, which are easy to perform. He's looking for much more from those who claim to know Him.

*Read Hosea 6*

*Meditate on Hosea 6.4-6*

1. God addresses both Israel ("Ephraim") and Judah in verse 4. Evidently the situation in each country bore many similarities. How did God regard the faithfulness of these two nations? What images might He have used to indicate the kind of faithfulness He was seeking?
2. Meditate on Psalm 50, which was written probably some time much earlier, during the time of Solomon. How can you see that the teaching of Psalm 50 has application to the situation in Israel and Judah which Hosea addresses? Does Psalm 50 speak in any way to the Church in our day?
3. Look at the images God uses to portray the ministry of the prophets He sent to Israel and Judah (v. 5). Why are these apt? What effect did God intend the preaching of the Word to have on these nations? Is this how we think about preaching today? Explain.
4. God is always looking for what His Law requires (cf. Matt. 22.34-40). What's more important, that we be faithful in "church" and at "worship," or that we love God and our neighbors? Explain.
5. The people of Israel appear to have been completely untouched by the prophets God sent to them. What keeps people from hearing the Word of God? Does preaching that fails to address the reality of sin help a people in knowing God and showing mercy to their neighbors? Why not?

*Summary*

It is not possible to love God when you will not listen to His Word. It matters not a whit how faithful you are in worship or serving at church if you have no mercy or love for your neighbors. What is God to do when His Word is ignored and when what we want is more important than what He wants? This is what He was forcing Israel and Judah to face up to, as the clouds of judgment began forming on the horizon.

*Closing Prayer*

Will the LORD cast off forever?  
And will He be favorable no more?  
Has His mercy ceased forever?  
Has *His* promise failed forevermore?  
Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? *Selah*  
And I said, "This *is* my anguish;  
*But I will remember* the years of the right hand of the Most High."  
I will remember the works of the LORD;  
Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.

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I will also meditate on all Your work,  
And talk of Your deeds.

Psalm 77.7-12

*Observations, notes, questions:*

## 4 Transgressors All

*Week 5, Thursday: God's covenant rejected*

God's covenant is His grace toward undeserving people. He showed His grace consistently throughout Israel's history, but now the people have shown that they despise His grace and want nothing to do with Him.

Reluctantly, God will give them what they've been seeking.

*Read Hosea 6*

*Meditate on Hosea 6.7-11*

1. This passage has some very strong language in it, which we need to consider carefully. How did the people of Israel "transgress" God's covenant? Is this kind of behavior still a transgression today?
2. What does "treacherously" mean? In what ways were Israel and Judah "treacherous" toward God? Do we ever act in any way like this? Unfaithfulness leads to transgression and treachery. How can a person check the tendency to "drift" into unfaithfulness (Heb. 2.1)?
3. Murder, robbery, lewdness, harlotry: Thus God charges Israel ("Gilead"), their "priests" leading the way. What warning or counsel is implicit in this passage for church leaders today? What can believers do to help ensure their church leaders don't lead them into unfaithfulness, transgression, and treachery?
4. Verse 11 sounds conciliatory, as though God is backing away from His attitude in verses 4ff. Judah would not come under the judgment of God at the same time as Israel, but later. What kind of "harvest" does God seem to have in mind here?
5. Should churches take stock of themselves from time to time, to make sure they're not straying from God's covenant or dealing treacherously with Him? What might this look like? That is, how could a church actually do this?

*Summary*

God takes His covenant seriously. It is the measure of His love for His people. When they spurn His love and transgress His Law, they are dealing treacherously with Him. God must be faithful to His Word, even though His people are not faithful to Him (v. 4). What's the message here for the people of God today?

*Closing Prayer*

Give ear, O my people, to my law;  
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.  
I will open my mouth in a parable;  
I will utter dark sayings of old,  
Which we have heard and known,  
And our fathers have told us.  
We will not hide *them* from their children,  
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,  
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.  
For He established a testimony in Jacob,  
And appointed a law in Israel,

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Which He commanded our fathers,  
That they should make them known to their children;  
That the generation to come might know *them*,  
The children *who* would be born,  
*That* they may arise and declare *them* to their children,  
That they may set their hope in God,  
And not forget the works of God,  
But keep His commandments;  
And may not be like their fathers,  
A stubborn and rebellious generation,  
A generation *that* did not set its heart aright,  
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Psalm 78.1-8

*Observations, notes, questions:*

## 5 Wicked, Thoroughly

*Week 5, Friday: Israel's sin was an open wound*

The depths of Israel's sins are revealed. God stood ready to deliver His people throughout the course of their rebellion. Now, however, the depths of their sins have become clear, and the wound can no longer be healed. Their hearts are as sick as their rulers, and no one calls upon the Lord. God has no other choice but to judge.

*Read Hosea 7*

*Meditate on Hosea 7.1-7*

1. In addition to the imagery of adultery, God uses a mixture of metaphors to describe the transgressions and rebellion of His people. What does each of these suggest?
  - iniquity uncovered:
  - committed fraud:
  - took spoil:
  - made sick:
  - inflamed with wine:
  - hot like an oven:
2. The problem exists first of all in the *hearts* of the people (vv. 2, 6). What is the heart, and why is it the “heart of the matter” where God is concerned (cf. Prov. 4.23)?
3. The condition of the people was pleasing to the kings, princes, and judges of the land (vv. 3, 5, 7). What should the leaders of Israel have done, rather than what is suggested in these verses?
4. Their hearts, God says, were like ovens that were not properly attended (vv. 6, 7). What would you suggest as the proper way of keeping one's heart “with all vigilance”?
5. The people's “over-heated” hearts ultimately consumed even those who ruled them (v. 7). What does this mean to describe? What would a nation or people look like who were calling on the Name of the Lord?

*Summary*

Israel had plenty of opportunities to return to the Lord. He called them by prophets over and over, but they were so in love with their sin and overheated with rebellion that they would not listen to them. From the hearts of the people to the heads of the nation, wickedness and rebellion were an open sore. Only the most serious of “surgeries” – judgment – could remedy this situation. What admonition does this text hold out to us?

*Closing Prayer*

How can a young man cleanse his way?  
By taking heed according to Your word.  
With my whole heart I have sought You;  
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!  
Your word I have hidden in my heart,  
That I might not sin against You.  
Blessed *are* You, O LORD!  
Teach me Your statutes.

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Psalm 119.9-12

*Observations, notes, questions:*

## 6 Compromised

*Week 5, Saturday: The Lord withdrawn*

Israel (Ephraim) had compromised with pagan nations, making themselves corrupt before the Lord. How do such compromises happen? Could they happen to us?

*Read Hosea 7*

*Meditate on Hosea 7.8-12*

1. Note the repetition of “did not know.” How is it possible for one to become corrupt before God, the object of His wrath, and not be aware of this?
2. More images suggesting Israel’s desperate condition are used here. What does each of the following suggest:
  - “cake unturned”:
  - “gray hairs”:
  - “silly dove”:
3. Every time the nation of Israel had a problem, the leaders would turn to some surrounding nation for help or protection, while the priests would redouble efforts to placate pagan deities. According to verse 10, what should the people have done, and what would that have involved?
4. Pride was apparently a factor in Israel’s demise (v. 10). How does pride keep someone from seeking the Lord?
5. Look at the last phrase in verse 12: “According to what their congregation has heard” (NKJV). To what does this refer? What lesson is there in this for those entrusted with the ministry of God’s Word today?

*Summary*

Jesus said that no one can serve two masters – much less, dozens of masters, as Israel was attempting to do. Sooner or later our sins will catch up to us, and all the compromises we make with the unbelieving world around us will devour our strength (v. 9). How can we know – as Israel apparently did not – when we are becoming compromised in our walk with the Lord?

*Closing Prayer*

But He made His own people go forth like sheep,  
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;  
And He led them on safely, so that they did not fear;  
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.  
And He brought them to His holy border,  
This mountain *which* His right hand had acquired.  
He also drove out the nations before them,  
Allotted them an inheritance by survey,  
And made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.  
Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God,  
And did not keep His testimonies,  
But turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers;

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They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.  
For they provoked Him to anger with their high places,  
And moved Him to jealousy with their carved images.  
When God heard *this*, He was furious,  
And greatly abhorred Israel,  
So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,  
The tent He had placed among men,  
And delivered His strength into captivity,  
And His glory into the enemy's hand.

Psalm 78.52-61

*Observations, notes, questions:*

## 7 Woe and Destruction

### *Week 5, Sunday: Enemies of God*

Israel had actually become the Lord's enemies, rather than His people. They fled from Him, lied to and about Him, sought His benefits rather than Him, and devised all manner of evil against Him.

And now He will show them the folly of such a course.

### *Read Hosea 7*

### *Meditate on Hosea 7.13-16*

1. God had "redeemed" Israel. What did He have a right to expect from them? What did He get instead?
2. It's clear that, whatever "knowledge" of God Israel possessed, they were more interested in His blessings than in Him (cf. vv. 13, 14). What's the difference? Are believers today guilty of this?
3. God said He had "disciplined" Israel and "strengthened" the nation? How did He do that prior to the days of Hosea? How did they respond? Meditate on Hebrews 12.3-11. How does God discipline His people today? What is He seeking to accomplish when He does?
4. In what way is living a compromised faith telling lies against God (v. 13)?
5. How can we be sure, when we set our hearts to return to the Lord (vv. 14, 16), that we're really seeking to return to Him, and not to just what He can do for us?

### *Summary*

How disturbing to think that "religious" people, who sincerely believed that they knew the Lord (Hos. 8.2), could actually be His enemies, and come under His judgment. How do we keep this from becoming our plight?

### *Closing Prayer*

My soul clings to the dust;  
Revive me according to Your word.  
I have declared my ways, and You answered me;  
Teach me Your statutes.  
Make me understand the way of Your precepts;  
So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works.  
My soul melts from heaviness;  
Strengthen me according to Your word.  
Remove from me the way of lying,  
And grant me Your law graciously.  
I have chosen the way of truth;  
Your judgments I have laid *before me*.  
I cling to Your testimonies;  
O LORD, do not put me to shame!  
I will run the course of Your commandments,  
For You shall enlarge my heart.

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Psalm 119.25-32

*Observations, notes, questions:*

*Questions for discussion*

1. What kinds of compromise are most likely to ensnare believers today? How can we protect against this?
2. Why is it important that we remember God as our Redeemer, even, perhaps (as in Psalm 18), rehearsing the details of how we came to know Him and what He does for us daily?
3. How would you counsel a new believer to guard his or her heart with all vigilance? How can we know when our heart is beginning to desire things other than Christ and His Kingdom?
4. Like the prophets of ancient Israel, believers have a responsibility to encourage one another in the life of faith. What does this require of us?
5. What's the most important idea or lesson you take away from Hosea 6 and 7?

*Glory to Glory*

As we look into the mirror of Scripture, we want to see God's glory and our own condition before Him. Then, yielding to the Spirit to teach, convict, and transform us, we can grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Did you see yourself in any ways in Hosea 6 and 7?

What do you learn about God and His glory from these two chapters?

What new directions or "next steps" is the Spirit leading you to take?

*Prayer:*

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