

Hosea Chapter 6

Verses 1-3: Here, in contrast to the sinful people of Hosea's time (4:1, 6), Hosea included the confession that the future repentant generation would speak (5:15), asking God to "Heal, bind ... up, revive," and "raise ... up." This new generation would be certain of God's mercy to the repentant and the "return" of His favor to those who sincerely acknowledge Him (14:4; Isa. 1:18; Acts 10:43).

Coming with the beginning of Christ's millennial reign (Zech. 12:10 – 13:1; Isa. 43:1-6), Hosea records Israel's future words of repentance (compare 5:15).

Hosea 6:1 "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord ... we shall live in his sight:" The prophet vicariously leads his people in a prayer of repentance and a plea for restoration that can ultimately take place only in the day when Israel as a nation will be converted (Jer. 31:31-34), and God will set up His kingdom over His people and reign for a thousand years.

This is speaking as if their captivity has already taken place. It is the same God that tore them, who will forgive them and cause them to begin again. God chastises His people as a loving parent. He is also full of grace and love for the very same people. God is our Judge, but He is also our Redeemer.

Hosea 6:2 "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

"After two days ... in the third day": Not a reference to the resurrection of Christ (illness, not death, is in the context), but to the quickness of healing and restoration (compare the quickness with which the dry bones of Ezek. Chapter 37 respond). Numbers are used similarly elsewhere (e.g., Job 5:19; Prov. 6:16; 30:15, 18; Amos 1:3).

Hosea 6:3 "Then shall we know, [if] we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter [and] former rain unto the earth."

"He shall come unto us as the rain:" God will no longer deal with Israel like a "moth" and "rottenness" (5:12). Instead, He will deal with them like life-giving and refreshing rain.

This is a call to the study of God and His Word. The way to know the LORD is to diligently study His Word.

Colossians 1:28 "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:"

Colossians 1:9 " For this cause we also, since the day we heard [it], do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;"

Joel 2:23 "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first [month]."

The former and the latter rain are speaking of a time when the Spirit of God falls on the people of the earth like rain.

Acts 2:17 "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:"

James 5:7 "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."

Verses 4-7: The text now turns back to the sinners of Hosea's generation, illustrating the temporary loyalty of God's people with the images of the "morning cloud and early dew," both of which vanish quickly.

"Hewed" describes how severely God had already disciplined His wayward people in an attempt to get their attention, like the cutting of stone.

Because Israel's commitment to the Lord was fleeting and superficial, He had to send prophets with stern words (verses 4-5), calling for a covenantal loyalty befitting a marriage relationship (verse 6). But they violated the marriage vows (verse 7).

Hosea 6:4"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness [is] as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

Here ends the supposed language of the penitents. If it were genuine, and accompanied by a deep sense of sin, it would not be in vain. But the prophet utters the heartrending response and expostulation of Jehovah, who bewails the transitory nature of their repentance.

Your goodness is as a morning cloud": Your goodness is of a short continuance, and gives way to every temptation, like as the cloud of the morning, and the dew, are dispersed at the first approach of the sun.

Ephraim, Judah, and in fact, all of mankind have no goodness of their very own. We all deserve to die, because of the sins we have committed. It is only by the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, that any of us are saved. God is merciful.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God provided the way for us, that we could not provide for ourselves. We may act good for a moment, but our goodness goes away like the dew. Our righteousness is in Jesus Christ. He puts us who will believe in right standing with God.

Hosea 6:5 "Therefore have I hewed [them] by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments [are as] the light [that] goeth forth."

I have severely, continually, and not tiring by the prophets reprov'd, warn'd, and threaten'd. Your hearts have been like knotty trees, or hardest stones: I have made my prophets like laborers, and, my words like axes or hammers to cut off the knots, and to hew off the roughness which make unfit for use. But all to no purpose, the desired effect hath not been attained.

"By the prophets": Some that was before Hosea. Jeroboam I was by a prophet reprov'd and threaten'd for this idolatry, in which Israel persisted, and to which Judah did too often fall. And through the space of two hundred years, from Jeroboam I to Hosea's time, many other prophets were sent, whose names, and some memoirs of them, we have. Such as Ahijah, Jehu, Hanani, Elijah, and Elisha, these and such like were the prophets that did hew crooked and knotty Israel.

"I have slain them": Some say the false prophets are the persons meant here, whom God did slay for their sin, seducing Israel to, and confirming them in, idolatry. Indeed, Elijah's sincere zeal did cut off so many (1 Kings 18:22, 40), and Jehu's counterfeit zeal cut off so many (2 Kings 10:21, 25), that it could never be forgotten among that people. So the thing is true, many false prophets were slain for this sin; yet the persons in our text were not these false prophets, but they were the people of Israel and Judah, the idolatrous, refractory hypocrites among them, whom God threaten'd with death and that by the sword of enemies.

"Thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth": Meaning the punishments threaten'd, the miseries foretold, which fell upon this people, did so fully answer the prediction, that everyone might see them clear as the light, and as constantly executed as the morning (See Zeph. 3:5).

These arrogant people of God had tried to stand against the God that made them. The prophets cut them down with warnings from God, if they did not repent. God spoke judgment against them, and they were punished for their sins. The Light does away with darkness. The Light of God was applied to get rid of sin in their lives.

Hosea 6:6 "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

"I desired mercy, and not sacrifice" (compare Matt. 9:13; 12:7).

"The knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings": Hearty, affectionate knowledge of God, which fills the mind with reverence of his majesty, fear of his goodness, love of his holiness,

trust in his promise, and submission to his will; knowledge of God's law, the rule of our obedience, of his favor, the reward of our obedience.

And knowledge of his omniscience, discerning and judging it, with those excellent effects, proper fruits hereof; are more than all sacrifice, as though they were burnt-sacrifices, which of all other were entirely given to God. But truth is, who knows God correctly, and doth keep his heart for God, gives God more than he that brings whole burnt-offerings; for these are but ceremonies and signs, empty and insipid to God, without the heart.

In short, these people acted all so contrary to this temper of their God, gave him so much of that he valued not, and so little of that he did most value, that he could not be too severe against them, nor is it any wonder he was so displeased with their sacrifices.

God desired to be merciful to them. He saw their inability to live their way into heaven. He provided the perfect sacrifice in Jesus Christ, to take away the sin of the world. Jesus became each individual's substitute on the cross. He paid the price in full for our sins. The sacrifice that God wants from the believers in Christ is praise.

Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name."

Hosea 6:7 "But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me."

The people had "transgressed the covenant": A reference to the Mosaic Covenant (compare 8:1; Exodus 19:5-6), they made with God at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 and 20). According to this covenant, God would punish them for their disobedience (Deut. Chapter 28), which was a personal affront to Him ("they dealt treacherously with Me").

These Israelites thought they were better than the rest of the people of the world. Every person who ever lived, whether Jew or Gentile, has sinned.

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

1 John 1:10 "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

Hosea 6:8 "Gilead [is] a city of them that work iniquity, [and is] polluted with blood."

If we regard "Gilead" (as it elsewhere is), as the country beyond Jordan, where the two tribes and a half dwelt, this will mean that the whole land was banded in one, as one city of evil-doers. It had a unity, but one of evil. As the whole world has been pictured as divided between "the city of God" and the city of the devil, consisting respectively of the children of God and the children of the devil; so the whole of Gilead may be represented as one city, whose inhabitants had one occupation in common, to work evil.

“And is polluted with blood”: Murders committed there have polluted it, or murderers protected there against the law of God, who provided these cities a relief for such. as unawares, without malice, by chance slew his neighbor, not for willful murderers. Yet some for money or interest got in and were secured there; and probably many were kept out or delivered up to the avenger of blood contrary to the law. Thus, Gilead by name and all the rest of the cities of refuge intended too, were polluted with blood.

Gilead is spoken of, in the New Testament, as beyond Jordan. This really is speaking of the Israelites in their darker times, when there was much killing taking place. It could also be speaking of their connection with the crucifixion of Jesus.

Hosea 6:9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, [so] the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.

As a gang of highwaymen lie in wait in a ditch, or under a hedge, or in a cave of a rock or mountain, for a man they know will come by that way, who is full of money, in order to rob him. Or, as fishermen stand upon the banks of a river, and cast in their hooks to draw out the fish.

“So the company of priests murder in the way by consent”: Not only encourage murderers, and commit murders within the city, but go out in a body together upon the highway, and there commit murders and robberies, and divide the spoil among them. All which they did unanimously, and were well agreed, being brethren in iniquity, as well as in office.

Or, "in the way of Shechem"; as good people passed by Gilead to Shechem, and so to Jerusalem, to worship there at the solemn feasts, they lay in wait for them, and murdered them. Because they did not give into the idolatrous worship of the calves at Dan and Bethel: or, "in the manner of Shechem". That is, they murdered men in a deceitful treacherous manner, as the Shechemites were murdered by Simeon and Levi.

“For they commit lewdness”: Literally, "For they have done deliberate sin". The word literally means "a thing thought of," especially an evil, and so, deliberate, contrived, bethought-of, wickedness. They did deliberate wickedness, but gave themselves to do it, and did nothing else.

"Troops of robbers" lie in wait hidden from view. Then it seems, these priests appear to be godly men, when in fact they are very ungodly men. Jesus spoke the greatest indictment against priests, such as these, that was ever spoken against a priest (read the 23rd chapter of Matthew).

Hosea 6:10 "I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel: there [is] the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled."

This phrase means Ephraim and Judah subsequently discriminated. The “horrible thing” refers to polluting idolatry. This peculiar word occurs again in Jeremiah. According to the punctuation of the Hebrew the reciter hesitates before pronouncing the “horrible thing” which grated through his teeth.

“There is the whoredom of Ephraim”: In the house of Israel is the whoredom of Jeroboam, who was of the tribe of Ephraim, and caused Israel to sin, to go a whoring after idols. Or the whoredom of the tribe of Ephraim, which belonged to the house of Israel, and even of all the ten tribes. Both corporeal and spiritual whoredom, or idolatry, are here meant.

Israel is defiled; with whoredom of both kinds; it had spread itself all over the ten tribes. They were all infected with it, and polluted by it (see Hosea 5:3).

The horrible thing they had done was the worship of false gods. The whoredom they had committed was spiritual adultery. As we will see in the next verse, these are all 12 tribes of Israel, which got caught up in idolatry, not just Ephraim. Ephraim is mentioned separately, because he received the right hand (spiritual), blessing from Jacob.

Hosea 6:11 "Also, O Judah, he hath set a harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people."

“O Judah, he hath set a harvest for thee:” Lest Judah feel smug at her neighbor’s demise, the prophet reminds them that they have a day of reckoning awaiting them (Jer. 51:13; Joel 2:10-3).

Judah, the southern kingdom, will fare no better than Ephraim, the northern kingdom; for it committed the same sins. God’s judgment will come to them some 136 years later and by a different agent, Babylon.

Judah had sinned like Israel, and they too, would reap what they had sown. There is a great harvest at the end of the earth when all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will be carried to heaven to live for God. Those who reject Jesus will be the tares which are gathered and burned.

Hosea Chapter 6 Questions

1. Verse 1 is speaking as if their captivity _____.
2. God chastises His people as a _____.
3. God is our Judge, but He is also, our _____.
4. What is verse 3 a call to do?
5. How can we know the LORD?
6. What is this rain speaking of?
7. _____, _____, and in fact, all of mankind have no _____ of their own.
8. Why do we all deserve to die?

9. What saves us?
10. Who makes us right in the sight of God?
11. How had the prophets cut down these arrogant people?
12. The Light of God was applied to get rid of what?
13. God provided the perfect sacrifice, _____ .
14. What is the sacrifice God wants from believers?
15. Who have sinned?
16. Gilead is spoken of, in the New Testament, as _____ .
17. What do we learn about these priests as "troops of robbers"?
18. Where do we find the indictment Jesus spoke against priests, such as these?
19. What was the horrible thing they had done?
20. What happens at the great harvest at the end?