

CANADIAN SOUTHERN BAPTIST SEMINARY

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF HOSEA 5:1-15

SUBMITTED AS A PROJECT EXAMPLE

FOR THE CLASS

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

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INTRODUCTION

"They will go with their flocks and herds to seek Yahweh, but **they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them**" (Hos 5:6). "**I will go away and return to My place** until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me" (Hos 5:15). Twice within the same passage God stated that He would "withdraw" or "go away" from His people. They would seek fellowship with Him, but He would not be there anymore. Is it true that there may be times when God would be removed from fellowship from His people? Might there be times when people would expect fellowship with their heavenly Father, but they would not find Him there? Could there be gatherings for worship when the entire congregation is gathered, the music is beautiful, the service is well-ordered, but the one thing missing is the presence of the One being worshiped?

The purpose for this study is to pursue what God means by "withdrawing" or "going away" from His people. The specific passage studied is Hos 5:1-15, and this exegesis will include an historical and technical introduction to the passage; a study of grammatical issues found in the passage; an historical exegesis, placing the passage in Hosea's day and seeking to hear the passage in the way that Hosea's audience heard it; a theological exegesis, highlighting the timeless theological truths found in the passage; and finally a practical application section with suggested application to a modern day setting.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK AND PASSAGE

The purpose of the introduction is to examine the context of the passage's writing. This allows the interpreter to examine this specific passage in relation to the message of the entire book.

Authorship

Hosea 1:1 states that the book is "**the word of Yahweh which was to Hosea the son of Beer, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel**" (1:1).¹ The first phrase thus attributes the following messages to the prophet Hosea. Hosea was an eighth century prophet, who ministered to his own people in Israel around 750-725 BC. At a minimum, his ministry was from 748 (death of Jeroboam II) to 722 (fall of Samaria).² This would make him roughly contemporary with the prophet Isaiah in the south.

The dates given for his ministry cover around forty-five years (755-710 BC) – one of the longest ministries of any OT prophet. However, since Hosea's sermons apparently know nothing of the fall of Samaria (722 BC), his prophetic (speaking) ministry may have ended before that

¹ All Scripture quotations are the writers own personal translation unless otherwise noted.

² Roy Honeycutt, *Hosea*, Broadman Bible Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman, 1972), 1-2.

time.³ If the dates given are the actual dates of his ministry, then he did live to see the fall of Samaria (722 BC) – even though none of his prophetic messages describe the actual event. He probably ended his ministry in Jerusalem under Hezekiah’s reign. That may be how his prophecies were preserved.⁴ He ministered a little after Amos, because the conditions described in the book agree with the last days of Jeroboam II in the north (ca. 755 BC). So his prophetic ministry in Israel dates around **755-722 BC**. His writing/compiling ministry in Judah was from around **722-710 BC**.

Bible students know very little about Hosea the man, for few details are given of his life. All that is given is what is necessary to understand the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The biographical section of the book is found in chapters 1-3. The details are sketchy, and much needs to be read into the story to make it complete (if one has to complete the story). Hosea's father's name is Beerī (1:1), the name of a Hittite in Gen 26:34. Hosea's name means "salvation" (lit. “he has helped,” “he has saved”), the same as Joshua and Jesus. The same name with another spelling “Hoshea” is found elsewhere in the Old Testament.⁵

³ Robert L. Cate, *An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Study* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 310-11, mentions that Gilead was apparently still an Israelite territory during Hosea's ministry (6:8), and since Gilead fell to the Assyrians in 732 BC, Hosea's actual ministry may have come to an end around 735 BC. He explains the superscription by stating that the listing of the later kings may have been given to describe the period when the effects or predictions of Hosea were still being felt.

⁴ Duane Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 22-23.

⁵ Joshua (Num 13:8), the last king of Israel (2 Kgs 15:30), some of the clan chieftains (Neh 10:23; 1 Chr 7:20).

Hosea ministered in the northern kingdom of Israel during the 8th century. Exact locations of his ministry are unknown, but most probably in Samaria and Bethel. Hosea seems to have been a city dweller, since he appears to have been quite familiar with the affairs of both Samaria and Bethel. He was quite aware of what was going on in the national and international scenes of his day.

Hosea was very familiar with the Torah, Joshua, and Judges, so he was probably thoroughly trained in the Scriptures (at least what existed in his day). He became a prophet prior to his marriage to Gomer, because it was God's command to marry Gomer. His marriage may have been the first act of his prophetic ministry (1:2). Combined with the fact that his ministry lasted a long time, it suggests that he became a prophet at a reasonably young age.

Hosea is a prophet of doom like Amos, but he balanced his word of judgment with the promise of restoration and renewal. The political, social, and religious situation had actually gotten worse since Amos' day, but Hosea was consumed with the grace of God. Israel's only hope was Yahweh's constant love for his people. This was made clear to Hosea by his marriage experience which became a "living parable" of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel.

The Historical Setting of the Book

The death of Jeroboam II (748 BC) brought great catastrophe upon Israel. Around 745, Tiglath Pileser III seized the Assyrian throne and built Assyria into a world power. He had a new military policy: uprooting conquered populations from their homeland and exiling them to remote parts of the Assyrian empire. Their land was resettled with foreign colonists, and became an Assyrian province.

After Jeroboam II's death, there were six different kings of Israel within a twenty-year period (Hos 7:5-7). After the death of Jeroboam II, his son, Zechariah, was murdered after a couple of months. Amos had prophesied that the house of Jeroboam would die by the sword (Amos 7:9). Zechariah's assassin, Shallum, was struck down after one month by Menahem who reigned for ten years by paying tribute to Assyria. Menahem's son, Pekahiah, reigned for two years before he was overthrown by Pekah, the army commander. Pekah ruled for only a few precarious years (Syro-Ephraimitic coalition) until he was knifed by Hoshea, the last king of Israel. Around 726 there was a changeover of kings in Assyria, and Hoshea hoped that the new emperor would be weak enough not to be able to keep all of his territories under control. In 724, he refused to pay tribute to Assyria, and Shalmaneser V attacked Samaria. Shalmaneser died during battle, so his successor Sargon II finished the job, and after a three-year siege, Samaria fell in **722 BC**. According to Sargon's annals, he deported 27,290 Israelites (2 Kgs 17:6) and repopulated Israel with colonists from Babylon, Elam, and Syria.⁶

It is interesting that the superscription to the book (1:1) mentions only “Jeroboam the son of Joash” in the northern kingdom, yet mentions Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah. There is no mention of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, or Hoshea who reigned during that time (753-722 BC). There are several possible reasons for this:

1. It may be because the book was not compiled until well after the fall of the northern kingdom.

⁶ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 3d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 295.

2. Jeroboam II was mentioned because he was king when Hosea's ministry began.⁷
3. Hosea regarded Jeroboam II as the last king of Israel with any shred of legitimacy. Those who reigned after him were a pack of assassins who were merely ambitious climbers and had no right to the title “king.” This seems to be his assessment in 7:1-7. Yahweh accused them, “They have set up kings, but not by Me; they have appointed princes, but I did not know it” (8:4).
4. Hosea saw that the hope for the nation rested in Judah, not in Israel. At times he severely criticized the southern kingdom as strongly as he did the north (5:5, 12), but he also prayed that they would not follow Israel’s lead. He saw hope for salvation and reunification of God’s people under the leadership of a Davidic king (3:5), and that would never take place in Israel as long as the northern kingdom had their own kings.⁸

What all of this means is that Hosea lived in and ministered to a nation that was literally falling apart before him. In a way, he was his nation’s last and only hope for survival.

Unfortunately, they chose to reject Hosea’s message, and they were destroyed. Second Kings 17:5-18 is quite revealing – an epitaph for the nation. Hosea was an eyewitness to his nation’s end.

⁷ Cate, 310.

⁸ Garrett, 42.

Ba'al Worship

One of the main spiritual problems of the Israelites in Hosea's day was the lure of Ba'al worship. The Israelites were slowly drawn into the Ba'al cult, and through the years Yahweh worship and Ba'al worship were intermixed, a phenomenon called **syncretism**. Soon the people no longer saw the difference between the god of fertility and the God of history. When the Israelites first entered the Promised Land, they changed from a nomadic lifestyle to an agricultural one. Some believed that Yahweh was the god of the desert, and Ba'al was the god of the farmlands. Some people even began to call Yahweh "Ba'al" (2:16). Every aspect of Israel's life -- politics, economics, religion -- was permeated with this sinful lifestyle and false loyalties.⁹ These bad habits became ingrained in their very being: "Their deeds do not permit them to turn to their God" (5:4). It was almost useless even to try to appeal to them: "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone" (4:17).

Ba'al means "lord," "master," "owner," or even "husband." He was the Canaanite storm god, the god of rain. Canaanite religion was a nature religion, tied to the seasons of the year. Ba'al was the rising and dying god. Each summer Ba'al was killed by **Mot** the god of drought and death. Ba'al's female consort, **Asherah** (Ashtoreth, Anath), would kill Mot, and the drought would be broken. Ba'al would then rise from the dead, bringing the fall rains for the crops.

⁹ Anderson, 289-90.

Ba'al worship included the fertility rites of sacred prostitution in order to influence the gods to make the flocks, herds, crops, fields, and orchards fertile. Through this kind of worship, or "whorship," the crops would grow.¹⁰

The Text of the Book

The book of Hosea is a compilation of little oracles delivered at different times and linked together. The same themes are repeated over and over again with variations from situation to situation. It was probably originally written (or delivered) in the Northern Kingdom, but when it fell, the tradition was passed on to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Editorial comments were inserted, and possibly applications to Judah in particular (e.g. 1:7, 11; 4:15; 5:10-15; 6:11; 11:12; 12:2). This made the messages delivered to a specific people more universal in their application. The plight of the Northern Kingdom became the prime example of warning to the Southern Kingdom. The fact that the book is a compilation does not mean that there is no literary coherence to it. In fact, it seems to have been compiled with deliberate design in mind.¹¹

The Hebrew text of Hosea is one of the most confused texts of the Old Testament. With the exception of possibly Job, no other Old Testament book contains as high a proportion of textual problems as Hosea. The LXX is in basic agreement with the Massoretic Text, but it does have some distinctive readings, some of them arising from specific concerns the translators of the LXX had. The grammar is difficult (probably a northern dialect of Hebrew). The book

¹⁰ Dan G. Kent, "Hosea: The Man, Times, and Material," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 36 (Fall 1993): 7.

contains many *hapax legomena* (2:12, 15; 3:2; 5:2, 13; 7:9; 8:6, 13; 9:14; 10:6, 7, 10; 12:5; 13:5, 14, 15), obscure and rare words difficult to recover the meaning. The text has passing allusions to historical incidents and other texts of the Bible that are almost bewildering. The book has paradoxical logic displaying common Hebrew paratactic reasoning. It has arguments that jump from one thing to another with no seeming connection (elliptical reasoning).¹²

At an earlier time, scholars were very quick to rewrite the text to make it make more sense to them. Now scholars are quicker to recognize that the problem is not that of the text, but it is with our own ignorance. Scholars do not understand his northern dialect very well. Few have cued into Hosea's line of reasoning. In most cases, it is not a matter of the text not having been transmitted well.¹³

The book divides into two main sections (chapters 1-3 and 4-14). The story of Hosea's family relationship (chapters 1-3) summarizes the message of the entire book. The rest of the book expounds the main themes of the first section: judgment for sin, yet a hope for the future.

¹¹ See David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 271.

¹² Garrett, 26.

¹³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 2

GRAMMATICAL STUDY OF HOSEA 5:1-14

The grammatical study seeks to determine what the passage meant to the original hearers. Much of the meaning is bound up in the meaning of the terms that the writer used in the original language. Many times points of emphasis and significant meanings are contained in the grammatical constructions and syntactical usage found in the passage.

Word Meanings and Points of Grammar

"The revolvers have gone deep in depravity, but I am discipline for all of them" (v. 2). "The revolvers have gone deep in depravity" is difficult to translate. The Hebrew reads, "And killing revolvers, they have made deep." The term *š h* , found only here in the OT, may be a feminine noun from *šh* and could mean "slaughter." Many times this is emended to *š h t*, "pit." The term *šē î* may be translated as "rebels" or emended to *šš î* "in Shittim," a town on the other side of the Jordan, where Israel camped before crossing it (Josh 2:1). The NIV renders the phrase as "the rebels are in deep slaughter." The NRSV and NEB render it "and a pit they have dug for Shittim," a metaphor continuing the idea of hunting. Achtemeier adds the term "corruption" (cf. 9:9) making the phrase, "killing revolvers, they have made deep corruption."¹⁴ Some persons were opposed the royal house ("revolvers"), they were captured or killed, and the royal house thus corrupted itself. Her view is that at Mizpah and Tabor (on the edge of the

¹⁴ Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), 44.

Jezreel valley), rebels against the royal house were caught and killed, displaying political intrigue and violence.

The phrase “but I will chastise all of them” can be translated as “I am a discipline for all of them” or “I am fetters for all of them.” Either is an emendation of the Hebrew *mūsār*. The term *m^eyassēr* (Piel ptc. from *ysr*) “discipline” (Prov 3:11; Job 5:17; Isa 26:16) means that Yahweh will chastise or reprove in order to correct their ways. *God's judgments are always for the purpose of instruction and discipline to draw his people back to himself.* (5:1-2) The term *môsēr* “fetters” or “shackles” (cf. Job 12:18) implies captivity. The leaders had been capturing others, now they would be captured (cf. Isa 52:2).¹⁵

"I Myself know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me" (v. 3). The pronoun "I Myself" is emphatic in the Hebrew. Yahweh was drawing a distinct contrast between how well He knows His people and how little His people know Him (v. 4). “I know Ephraim” (*yāda*’) implies intimate knowledge of a covenant relationship. In other words nothing about her is hidden.

"They do not know Yahweh" (v. 4). Even though Yahweh knows her intimately (v. 3), she has no covenantal knowledge (*yāda*’) of Yahweh (cf. 4:1).

"He was determined to follow man's command" (v. 11). His problem was that he was determined to follow a term translated numerous ways: “something worthless” or “vanity” (from *šāw*’),¹⁶ “idols” (NIV), “filth,”¹⁷ “enemy” (emended to),¹⁸ “command, policy” (from

¹⁵ Garrett, 143-44.

¹⁶ Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 104; also the LXX.

, KJV, NKJV, NASV),¹⁹ and “blah.”²⁰ The main idea seems to be something that is empty or worthless.

"Then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb" (v. 13). “King Jareb” (cf. LXX) is unknown, so many versions emend the text *yārēb* to the adjective *rab* “great,” i.e. “the great king” (cf. NIV). Regardless of the grammar, the parallel in this verse obviously refers to the king of Assyria.

"For I will be like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver" (v. 14). In the Hebrew, the personal pronoun “I” is heavily emphasized, demonstrating that Yahweh is sinful Israel's worst enemy and the One whom they should fear the most.

Personal Translation of Hosea 5:1-15

Based upon the above grammatical study, here is the writer's personal translation of the passage.

¹Hear this, you priests!
Listen up, you house of Israel!
Give ear, you house of the king!
For the judgment is for you
because you have been a snare for Mizpah and a net spread upon Tabor.
²The slaughtering revolvers have gone deep,
But I am discipline for all of them.

¹⁷ Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 410.

¹⁸ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984), 997, note ^b.

¹⁹ Garrett, 152.

²⁰ Stuart, 99.

³I Myself know Ephraim well, and Israel is not hidden from Me.
Because now, O Ephraim, you have played the harlot, and Israel has defiled herself.

⁴Their deeds do not allow them to return to their God,
Because a spirit of harlotry in their midst,
And they do not know Yahweh intimately,

⁵And the pride of Israel will testify against him.
So Israel and Ephraim will stumble in their iniquity,
And Judah also stumbles with them.

⁶They will go with their flocks and their herds to seek Yahweh,
but they will not find Him.
He has withdrawn from them.

⁷They have acted deceitfully against Yahweh,
For they have borne strange sons.

⁸Blow a horn in Gibeah, a trumpet in Ramah!
Cry out, Beth-Aven! Look behind you, Benjamin!

⁹Ephraim will become a wasteland in the day of rebuke;
Among the tribes of Israel I have made known what is sure.

¹⁰The rulers of Judah have become like those who move boundary markers;
I will pour out My wrath like water.

¹¹Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment,
Because he was pleased to follow *another's* command.

¹²Therefore, I Myself am like a moth to Ephraim,
and like rottenness to the house of Judah.

¹³When Ephraim saw his own sickness and Judah, his wound,
Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb.
But he is not able to heal you or to cure you of your wound.

¹⁴For I am like a lion to Ephraim, and like the young lion to the house of Judah;
I, yes I, will tear them and will go away.
I will take away *from them* and no one can rescue them.

¹⁵I will go away and surely return to My place
until the time that they confess their guilt and seek My face.
In their distress they will diligently seek Me.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL STUDY OF HOSEA 5:1-14

The purpose of the historical study is to determine the meaning of the passage as it applied to the original audience. In order to understand this original meaning rightly, factors such as geography, society, historical framework, material culture, and religious and intellectual ideas are necessary considerations.

The Historical Setting of the Passage

Two historical scenarios for this passage are possible:

1. Syro-Ephraimitic War (735-733 BC) – After Assyria attacked Israel, much of its landholdings were reduced to the central hill country of Ephraim and Benjamin. Judah counterattacked and reclaimed Gibeah and Ramah as part of its northern defense, and the rest of Israel's land was incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system.²¹ However, there is no reference to any such attack in Kings or Chronicles.
2. General political events in the late 8th century – not especially the events of the Syro-Ephraimitic War.²²

²¹ Achtemeier, 47.

²² Garrett, 149.

The main problem is that in verse 13 it states that Israel appealed to Assyria for help, but in the Syro-Ephraimitic war it was Judah that appealed to Assyria for help. This would indicate that the general period of the late 8th century is the better option.

Verse-by-Verse Commentary

Leaders are Responsible for Israel's Promiscuity (5:1-7)

"Hear this, O priests! Give heed, O house of Israel! Listen, O house of the king! For the judgment belongs to you, for you have been a snare at Mizpah and a net spread out on Tabor" (v. 1). *Those in leadership are directly responsible for the well-being of a people.*

Hosea condemned all three leading segments of Israelite society: religious leadership ("O priests!"), the leaders of the common people ("O house of Israel"),²³ and governmental authorities ("O house of the king"). "For you have been a snare at **Mizpah**." Some kind of failure happened at Mizpah (probably the Mizpah in Benjamin; 1 Samuel 7) that is described as a fowler's snare. Hosea referred to some incident known to his audience but is not specific here. It may refer a pagan cultic site there. It may simply be a random site demonstrating problems throughout the land.²⁴ "A net spread out on **Tabor**" refers to a mountain in the north of Israel, probably the location of a high place.

²³ The context seems to indicate the leadership of the people, not merely the populace themselves.

²⁴ Wolff, 98-99.

"The revolvers have gone deep in depravity, but I am discipline for all of them" (v. 2).²⁵

"I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me; for now, O Ephraim, you have played the harlot, Israel has defiled itself" (v. 3). *Sin is never hidden from the all-seeing God.* The people were also being judged for their religious prostitution the priests had encouraged. "I know Ephraim" describes intimate knowledge of a covenant relationship – nothing about her is hidden. Being defiled, Israel cannot worship or come into fellowship with a holy God (Lev 10:10).

"Their deeds will not allow them to return to their God. For a spirit of harlotry is within them, and they do not know Yahweh" (v. 4). *Sinful habits and attitudes soon ensnare and enslave someone so that he cannot respond rightly.* Long years of training in paganism had its effect, and now the nation was unable to return to Yahweh even if she had a desire to. Her corruption had so enslaved her that repentance becomes a virtual impossibility²⁶ – unless God crashed in with His grace. This phrase can also mean that a holy God cannot have someone in this defiled spiritual state enter into His presence (cf. Lev 15:31; Isa 6:2-5; Zech 13:1; 1 Thess 4:7).²⁷

²⁵ See previous discussion on pages 9-10.

²⁶ Garrett, 145.

²⁷ Achtemeier, 45.

“They do not know Yahweh.” Even though Yahweh knows her intimately (v. 3), Israel has no covenantal knowledge of Yahweh (cf. 4:1).

"Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him, and Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah has also stumbled with them" (v. 5). The people were being judged for their intense arrogance for they selfishly refuse to admit anything was wrong. This demonstrates a hardened rebellion that refused to change or admit its guilt. They were blind to their own depravity, and they did not want to face reality. They did not want to admit that they had made mistakes and that the nation was in serious trouble.²⁸ This pride was found both in Israel and in Judah, and it would lead to both of their downfalls. *“Pride goes before a fall, and a haughty spirit before destruction”* (Prov 16:18).

"They will go with their flocks and herds to seek Yahweh, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them" (v. 6). *Only true repentance will restore a broken relationship with God* (cf. v. 15). This is probably not referring to genuine heartfelt seeking of Yahweh, but rather to pilgrimages to the shrines, much like they worshiped Baal, another deity that they could placate with their offerings and sacrifices.²⁹ “He has withdrawn from them” is a fulfillment of the covenant injunction, “He will hide His face from them” if they reject Him (Deut 31:17; 32:20). God will not hear or answer their prayers with such sin in their lives (cf. Isa 59:1-2).

²⁸ Gary V. Smith, *Hosea, Amos, Micah*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 102.

²⁹ Garrett, 146.

"They have dealt treacherously against Yahweh, for they have borne illegitimate children. Now the new moon will devour them with their land" (v. 7). Their prostitution at the Baal shrines had produced children conceived out of wedlock. The Baalistic sex rites were probably practiced at the time of the new moon, and God would allow the deadly consequences of such treachery overtake them. He was "giving them over" to the consequences of their sin (Amos 8:11-12; Rom 1:24-32; Rev 6:8; cf. Isa 1:15; Jer 14:12; Ezk 20:3, 31).³⁰ The "new moon" could also be a reference to their Yahwistic religious festivals. Isaiah accused them, "New moon, Sabbaths, and convocations – I cannot bear your evil assemblies" (Isa 1:13). Their worship had become so corrupt, that their wicked worship practices would become their downfall.³¹

Warnings about Impending War (5:8-11)

"Blow the horn in Gibeah, the trumpet in Ramah. Sound an alarm at Beth-aven: Behind you, Benjamin!" (v. 8). God brought the terrorizing announcement of war proclaimed by trumpet blasts around the countryside. An unnamed enemy was about to attack Benjamin. The "trumpet" is a ram's horn, a *shofar*. A "horn" is a metal trumpet of some kind. Both were used as warning devices to prepare for war against an approaching enemy (cf. Jer 4:5; 6:1).

"Ephraim will become a desolation in the day of rebuke; among the tribes of Israel I declare what is sure" (v. 9). The prophecy was certain and sure, for it would certainly come to pass.

³⁰ Achtemeier, 46.

"The princes of Judah have become like those who move a boundary; on them I will pour out My wrath like water" (v. 10). This is a condemnation against Judah because she moved boundary stones marking the border between Israel and Judah, stealing Israelite land. Moving boundary stones was specifically prohibited in the Torah (Deut 19:14; 27:17; Prov 22:28; 23:10). The allotment of land came from Yahweh at the time of the conquest (Josh 13-20) and was seen as God's gift to His people. Moving the boundary stones was a sin against His lordship (cf. Deut 19:14; Job 24:2) and brought with it a covenant curse (Deut 27:17). Yahweh would pour out His wrath like a flood on people who betray His lordship (cf. Isa 8:5-10). He would bring about the justice for Israel's sins, and Israel should not take vengeance into her own hands.³²

"Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, because he was determined to follow man's command" (v. 11).³³

³¹ Garrett, 146-47.

³² Smith, 103.

³³ See previous discussion on page 11.

Images of God the Judge (5:12-15)

"Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim and like rottenness to the house of Judah"

(v. 12). This section ends with several similes, word pictures that describe God's judgment on Israel and Judah. "I am like a **moth** to Ephraim" the meaning is uncertain. This can refer to a moth, a maggot in an open wound, or pus from a wound. "Like **rottenness** to the house of Judah" the meaning is uncertain. It is something that causes decay – dry rot that destroys wood, or gangrene that destroys flesh. Yahweh would cause these things and make them get progressively worse. God would fight against them rather than for them. *Nations are not conquered from the outside; they decay from the inside.* The destruction may be silent and the onset may be gradual, but the end result is the same as a sudden and violent demise.

"When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb. But he is unable to heal you, or to cure you of your wound" (v. 13). Israel sought relief from Assyria rather than from God. They realized that they were grievously ill, and they sent to Assyria for help. *In not seeking Yahweh, they committed apostasy.*³⁴ "King Jareb" (cf. LXX) is unknown, so many versions emend the text *yārēb* to the adjective *rab* "great," i.e. "the great king" (cf. NIV). Regardless of the grammar, the parallel in this verse obviously refers to the king of Assyria. This instance may refer to Hoshea's desperate move to preserve his kingdom by sending tribute to Shalmanezar (2 Kgs 17:3-4), or to Menahem's tribute payment to Assyria several years before the Syro-Ephraimitic War (2 Kgs

³⁴ Garrett, 153.

15:19-20). Regardless, these human attempts to save themselves only made matters worse for themselves.

"For I will be like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver" (v. 14). God is now pictured as a destructive lion that would tear his prey to pieces and carry off what remains (cf. 13:7; Amos 1:2; 3:4, 8). *Yahweh is to be feared far more than any man or any other power.* Even though Assyria may be God's means of carrying out His judgment, Yahweh would be the real power behind the events. God would "carry away," a veiled reference to the people's exile. In the Hebrew, the personal pronoun "I" is heavily emphasized.

"I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me" (v. 15). Verse 15 may be a transitional device into 6:1-3, introducing the people's litany of repentance. The key issue is, What is "My place" that Yahweh is referring to? There is no indication that God would drag His people off to His lair. However, in its context, the lion imagery may simply be continued. It is either a statement of: (1) God's judgment (in the form of exile) on His people that would bring about their eventual repentance,³⁵ or (2) God's abandonment of them until they repent (cf. 5:6).³⁶ He will no longer come to His people's aid to rescue them. He will cause them to accept responsibility for their sins and realize that their only hope is to seek God in repentance. In its context, since the people are bound by their sinful state and cannot turn to Yahweh (5:4-5), if

³⁵ Smith, 110.

³⁶ Garrett, 155.

they return to Yahweh in the future in the midst of their punishment, it must be the work of Yahweh in their hearts. Only Yahweh could make their return possible.³⁷

³⁷ Achtemeier, 49.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOSEA 5:1-15

The purpose of the theological study is to understand the timeless message found in the passage. In other words, the intent is to find out what the passage means.

Timeless Truths Found in the Passage

God

- God is willing to judge His people for their sin (v. 1).
- Although people may suffer punishment through earthly means, it is still God who brings the judgment (v. 2).
- God knows His people intimately (v. 3).
- God remains God of His people, even when they are sinful ("their God", v. 4).
- God may withdraw from His people when they are sinful (v. 6).
- God's withdrawal is a sign of His displeasure (v. 6).
- God speaks only the truth to His people (v. 7).
- God is concerned by how people treat others (v. 10).
- God's judgment comes from His hand, and no one can escape it (v. 10).
- God may be the cause of people's pain – especially when they are sinful (v. 12).
- Yahweh is the One to be feared, not any earthly power (v. 14).
- God will come back to His people only on His terms (v. 15).

Humanity

- Those who make others fall will be held responsible to God (vv. 1, 10).
- Sinners will face God's judgment (v. 2).
- God knows people well (v. 3).
- People have the ability to defile themselves (v. 3).
- People can become slaves to their own sin (v. 4).
- People cannot stand in the time of God's judgment upon them (vv. 8-9).
- People tend to follow human wisdom and advice rather than God's – to their own peril (v. 10).
- Human power is unable to stand against God's (v. 13).
- People's only hope for salvation is to acknowledge their sin and seek God's face (v. 15).

Sin

- Sin is adultery against God (v. 3).
- Sin makes people defiled (v. 3).
- Sin makes people unable to repent on their own (v. 4).
- Sin places people out of fellowship with God (vv. 4, 6).
- Sin demonstrates a lack of intimate knowledge and fellowship with God (v. 4).
- A person's sin is their own witness against them (v. 5).
- Sin makes people stumble (v. 5).
- People can be arrogant in their sin while relying upon their special relationship with God (v. 5).
- Sin is "dealing treacherously against the Lord" (v. 7).
- Sin makes people liable to God's judgment (vv. 8-9).
- It is sin to follow human wisdom and advice rather than God's (v. 11).
- What many people consider "spiritual warfare" against the enemy may actually be suffering God's judgment for unconfessed sin (vv. 12-13).
- God's judgment for sin may be subtle (e.g. "moth," "rottenness") or glaringly obvious (e.g. "lion," "young lion") (vv. 12, 14).
- The first remedy for sin is to acknowledge personal guilt (v. 15).
- Remorse over sin can cause people to seek God earnestly (v. 15).

Salvation

- People who simply seek God do not find salvation, unless they first deal with their sin (vv. 6, 15).
- The One who judges sin is also the One who offers salvation when people turn from their sin (vv. 13-15).
- God invites and waits for people to have His salvation (v. 15).
- Salvation is found only on His terms – not on the terms people may set (v. 15).

God's People

- The leaders of God's people are held to a measure of responsibility above that of others (v. 1).
- God knows His own people intimately (v. 3).
- God's people can be so overcome by sin, they can display no intimate knowledge of God (v. 4).
- God's people can go through the motions of worship yet not find intimate fellowship with God (v. 6).
- God's people can "deal treacherously against the Lord" (v. 7).
- God's people have no future without a relationship with Him (vv. 12-14).
- God's people have a tendency to look to earthly wisdom and power rather than to God (vv. 11, 13).

- God holds out hope for His sinful people, but their only hope is that they acknowledge their sin and turn to Him (v. 15).

Worship

- Leaders in worship may actually be the ones leading God's people astray (v. 1).
- The outward activity of worship means nothing to God if the heart is not first turned toward Him (v. 6).
- Acknowledging personal guilt and seeking God's face need to be the first actions in worship – otherwise God will not even be interested (v. 15).

Key Truths to be Emphasized

- *Those in leadership are directly responsible for the well-being of a people* (v. 1).
- *Sin is never hidden from the all-seeing God* (v. 3).
- *Sinful habits and attitudes soon ensnare and enslave someone so that he cannot respond rightly* (v. 4).
- *“Pride goes before a fall, and a haughty spirit before destruction”* (v. 5).
- *Only true repentance will restore a broken relationship with God* (v. 6, cf. v. 15).
- *Nations aren't conquered from the outside; they decay from the inside* (v. 12).
- *In not seeking Yahweh, God's people commit apostasy* (v. 13).
- *Yahweh is to be feared far more than any man or any other power* (v. 14).
- *God will remain with His people only on His terms* (v. 15).

Theological Outline of the Passage

- I. Sin places people out of fellowship with God (vv. 1-7).
- II. Sin makes people liable to God's judgment (vv. 8-14).
- III. Sin will be remedied only by repentance (v. 15).

CHAPTER 5

PRACTICAL STUDY OF HOSEA 5:1-15

The purpose of the practical study is to relate the passage to people today. The ministry of the preacher and teacher is to meet the needs of people with the word of God. This study will analyze a local congregation in light of the message from God's word.

Character Sketch of a Congregation

The congregation envisioned for the application section of this project is an older congregation in a suburban area of a large city. Most of the church members have been Christians for quite a while, in fact, they have been members of that church for years. The church buildings show the wear and tear of decades of faithful use. The majority of the members are middle-aged to elderly, and most of the younger members of the church were raised in that congregation. Most of the congregation is educated with a university degree, and the socio-economic level is middle class for those who are still employed, or a middle class retirement income for the elderly. Simply getting by is not an issue for most of the group.

This congregation is steeped in tradition. Since there are very few newcomers in the congregation, most of these traditions are not even written down, only assumed. These traditions involve things such as: the weekly schedule of activities, annual observances and fellowships (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, etc.), the kinds of worship music sung, the kinds of worship instruments that are "appropriate" and which are "not appropriate," who is eligible to serve in various leadership capacities, appropriate and inappropriate uses for the

church building, and the such. The result is that very few "new" things happen here. No new Bible study units have been formed in years, no new ministries have been created recently, and most of the baptisms have been of the children born to families in the congregations. The congregation has more memories of past glories than visions of God's future plans for them.

The level of scripture and theological knowledge is quite high. Decades of Sunday School and faithful worship have contributed to a solid knowledge of the basic stories and truths found in the Bible. In fact, this pool of knowledge is a contributing factor to one of the major problems in the general attitude of the congregation – there are very few truths presented to them that they have not already heard before. They are no longer excited about the "good news" of the gospel, and seldom does the average church member receive a direct word from God. In many ways they have become "sermon-proofed." Worship has become a routine exercise with not much expectation of a life-changing encounter with God during the experience.

Applicable Truths

The main application this congregation needs to hear from this passage is that there are times when God no longer wants to be with His people. God is not impressed with mere rote service and perfunctory religion. Unless the people's hearts are involved, God Himself says that He will withdraw from them.

1. **Even God's people must be concerned about sin in their lives.** Sin is never unnoticed to God. The Israelites felt that because they were God's chosen people, God would conveniently "overlook" their sin. The people and leadership had become corrupt, and their worship of idols had watered down their whole-hearted devotion to God. All of this took place

while the worship system went on without a hitch. In the same way, it makes no difference how long someone has been a Christian, how many Sunday School classes one has taught, how many sermons one has preached, or how many solos one has sung on Sunday morning – unconfessed sin is a serious matter. God "knows" His people very well and how far they have strayed from Him (v. 3) – far better than His people "know" Him (v. 4). Pride, lust, materialism, gossip, lack of concern for others, it makes no difference the sin for God calls it "a spirit of harlotry," or prostituting ourselves on the things of this world. It demonstrates a heart that is unfaithful to Him.

2. **Sin always breaks our fellowship with God.** God's people may assume that He will always be with them and claim the promises from scripture that "I will never desert you nor forsake you" (Heb 13:5) or "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). These promises from our Lord, however, are conditioned upon our obedience to His commands. Sin breaks our fellowship with God, and God's people should never assume His divine presence if we have unconfessed sin in our lives.

God's "judgment" on our sin takes various forms, but it is judgment all the same. Sometimes His judgment looks like "moth" or "rottenness" (v. 12), a spiritual decay that takes place over time where substance and vitality in our spiritual lives is eaten away over time. What is left is a mere shell or veneer of religiosity that continues through the motions of worship or religious activity with no spiritual substance left. Years may go by without God's people receiving a fresh word from God or without any genuine divine activity displayed in the congregation. Why does this happen? Because God's glory has long departed and His people have simply refused to turn off the lights.

Sometimes God's judgment on His people looks like a "lion" or "a young lion" (v. 14), where disastrous things happen to them and they are attacked from the outside. The building may fall in, the congregation may be sued, blatant sin may be exposed by notable members of the congregation that brings an awful reputation from the community. Some people naïvely may call this "spiritual warfare," or that Satan himself is attacking God's people. In fact, this may be God's judgment and not at all the work of the devil. He is calling His people to repent and change their ways.

3. Our fellowship with God can be restored only through genuine repentance.

There are times when God deliberately removes Himself from His people while they are consumed with their sin so that His people will confess their sin, repent, and earnestly seek Him (v. 15). The key here is the heart-felt response, "acknowledge their guilt" and "earnestly seek Me." Many of God's people are more enamoured with "God's hand" than with "God's face." This displays itself in the quality of their prayer and devotional life. Prayers many times take the form of a shopping list or Christmas wish list that asks the heavenly Father for certain material blessings. When God's people take their sin as seriously as God does, then their hearts will be drawn to Him and they will "seek His face." They will desire a dynamic fellowship with the living God rather than simply being grateful for the material blessings He has given them.

Preaching/Teaching Outline

The sermon taken from this passage that is appropriate for this congregation is derived from the double statement in this text that God would "withdraw" or "go away" from His people. The main point that I would emphasize is that there are times when God Himself will refuse to meet with His people, and simply because God's people may have a "worship service" does not mean that God Himself will attend. I have entitled the sermon "When God Quits Coming to Church."

"When God Quits Coming to Church" (Hos 5:1-15)

- *"They will go with their flocks and herds to seek Yahweh, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them."* (v. 6)
- *"I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."* (v. 15)

I. God quits coming to church when the people's hearts are no longer involved (vv. 1-6).

1. Unconfessed wickedness in their lives. (v. 4)
2. No true knowledge of God. (v. 4b)
 - "They do not know the Lord"
3. Arrogance in their sin - being God's people. (v. 5)
4. Perfunctory religion. (v. 6)

II. When God quits going to church, the church starts falling apart (vv. 7-12).

1. Oppressed from the outside. (vv. 7-11)
 - Victims of God's wrath (v. 10)
 - God's discipline (v. 2)
 - God's judgment (v. 11, 14)
2. Eaten away from the inside (v. 12)
 - Moth, rot.

III. When God stops going to church, it is no longer a church (vv. 13-15).

1. Desperate (v. 13)
2. Torn to pieces (v. 14)
3. Carried off (v. 14)
4. God is gone until they change (v. 15)

IV. God will return to church when the Church returns to Him. (v. 15)

- A church remains a church only on God's terms.
 1. When they admit their guilt. (v. 15)
 2. When they seek His face. (v. 15)

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