

## ***Session 11 The Forerunner Message in Hosea 14***

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Hosea called Israel to repentance with promises of full restoration. At the end of the age, Israel will return to the Lord and enter into the fullness of God’s purpose and blessing for them as a nation (1:10; 2:14-3:5; 5:15-6:3; 10:12; 11:8-11; 12:6; 14:1-8; cf. Lev 26:40-45; Deut. 4:29-31; 30:1-10).
- B. Outline of Hosea 14
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|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>14:1-3</b> | A call to return to the Lord          |
| <b>14:4-7</b> | The Lord promised to restore Israel   |
| <b>14:8</b>   | Israel will never again embrace idols |
| <b>14:9</b>   | Hosea’s final exhortation             |

### **II. A CALL TO RETURN TO THE LORD (HOS. 14:1-3)**

- A. Hosea called Israel to return to the Lord (14:1). Hosea’s generation did not embrace this call.  
*<sup>1</sup>O Israel, return to the LORD your God...because of your iniquity; <sup>2</sup>Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. <sup>3</sup>Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, ‘You are our gods.’ For in You the fatherless finds mercy.” (Hos. 14:1-3)*
- B. *Take words with you:* Hosea gave them six phrases to say to God. When someone appeared before the Lord, they were to bring an offering and not come empty-handed (Ex. 23:15; 34:20). The Lord considered their words—confession of sin and commitments to obey—as their acceptable offering.  
*<sup>20</sup>...All the firstborn...and none shall appear before Me empty-handed. (Ex. 34:20)*
- C. *Phrase #1 Take away all iniquity:* They are to acknowledge their sins and ask Him to forgive them. The Lord’s promises of restoration are connected to His people repenting from compromise.
- D. *Phrase #2 Receive us graciously:* They are to ask the Lord to receive them on the basis of grace. They must not think that their repentance, prayers, offerings or service “earn” them God’s favor. Some stumble over this. Confidence in God’s grace produces humility and gratitude in His people.
- E. *Phrase #3 We will offer the sacrifices of our lips:* They were to cultivate a lifestyle of expressing gratitude to the Lord for being so gracious to them instead of complaining about their life.  
*<sup>15</sup>...let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise [gratitude] to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. (Heb. 13:15)*  
*<sup>14</sup>Do all things without complaining and disputing, <sup>15</sup>that you may become blameless...without fault in the midst of a...perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights... (Phil. 2:14-15)*  
*<sup>8</sup>Nor let us commit sexual immorality...<sup>10</sup>nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. (1 Cor. 10:8-10)*

- F. **Phrase #4 Assyria shall not save us** (14:3): They are to renounce putting their confidence in their alliances with Assyria or any other nations, especially the Antichrist at the end of the age. We should not look to alliances or networking as the source to see God’s promises fulfilled in our life.
- G. **Phrase #5 We will not ride on horses**: They are to renounce putting their confidence in their military. Israel often invested much to obtain war horses to strengthen their military power. They repeatedly trusted in horses and military might for national security instead of trusting the Lord.
- H. **Phrase #6 We will not say to the work of our hands**: They are to renounce looking to idols or any sources of supernatural help outside God’s will to help their agriculture, economy, or security. The “work of our hands” is a reference to their idols which were connected to demons. Paul taught that people who worshiped idols were also worshiping the demons behind the idol (1 Cor. 10:19-21).  
<sup>19</sup>*What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?*  
<sup>20</sup>*Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God...*  
<sup>21</sup>*You cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. (1 Cor. 10:19-21)*
- I. **In You the fatherless finds mercy** (14:3): God is the defender of the orphan (Ex. 22:22; Ps. 68:5). Hosea’s point is that the nation of Israel had become as an “orphan (1:6, 8). When its kings, priests, temple, land, flocks, and economy were destroyed and its leaders deported, the remaining people were left as orphans. Their adulterous mother (her religious institutions) and their father (Baal) could not protect or provide for them. God called them Lo-Ammi, “not My people.” This fatherless nation will turn back to their true Father and live as sons of God (1:10) when Jesus returns.
- J. Hosea promised earlier that Israel will return to the Lord (5:14-6:3). The Lord described Himself as a fierce lion who would judge His people. Israel “was torn” by Lord using the Assyrian armies in 721 BC, and Judah “was torn” by the armies of Babylon in 586 BC and by the Romans in AD 70.  
<sup>14</sup>*I will be like a lion to Ephraim [Israel], and like a young lion to...Judah...I will tear them and go away...and no one shall rescue. <sup>15</sup>I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction [end times] they will earnestly seek Me.*” (Hos. 5:14-15)
1. ***I will return again to My place***: The figure of a lion from 5:14 is continued in 5:15. The lion tears his prey and then retreats to his place—to his den to eat his prey.
  2. ***Jesus’ place***: The Lord, after judging Israel and Judah, returned to “His place” in heaven at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:20). The Lord awaits the time when His people will acknowledge and repent of their sin and seek Him (5:15).  
<sup>20</sup>*...He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places... (Eph. 1:20)*
  3. Israel will return to the Lord, and He will heal them (6:1-3).  
<sup>1</sup>*Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. <sup>2</sup>*After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. <sup>3</sup>Let us...pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain...* (Hos. 6:1-3)*

- a. **Let us return:** Repentant Israelites in the end times will encourage each other to return to the Lord because they believe He will heal them even though He has torn and wounded them (as a lion, 5:14). At that time they will recognize that their affliction was the result of the Lord’s judgment because of their continual rebellion (Deut. 32:39).  
<sup>39</sup>**“Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.”**  
(Deut. 32:39)
- b. **On the third day He will raise us up:** This may foreshadow Jesus’ resurrection on the third day. Paul taught that He rose on the third day “in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:4); no other text in Scripture speaks of “the third day” in way that reflects 6:2. Jesus’ resurrection is seen by many as a type of the end-time “resurrection” of Israel.
- c. **After two days He will revive us:** Many see these two days through the lens of Peter’s saying that “with the Lord one day is like 1,000 years” (2 Pet. 3:8).  
<sup>8</sup>**...do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Pet. 3:8)**
- d. **As the morning and like the rain:** The going forth of the Lord is compared to the dawn which heralds the day and to the rain which renews the vegetation in the earth.

### III. THE LORD PROMISED TO RESTORE ISRAEL (HOS. 14:4-7)

- A. The Lord promised that He would respond to their repentance with love and mercy (14:4-7).  
<sup>4</sup>**“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him.**  
<sup>5</sup>**I will be like the dew to Israel; He shall grow like the lily and lengthen his roots like Lebanon.**  
<sup>6</sup>**His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree and his fragrance like Lebanon.**  
<sup>7</sup>**Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall be revived like grain and grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon. (Hos. 14:4-7)**
- B. **I will heal their backsliding:** The Lord promised to heal Israel’s backsliding permanently (1:10; 2:14-3:5; 5:15-6:3; 10:12; 11:8-11; 12:6; 14:1-8; cf. Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 4:29-31; 30:1-10).
- C. **My anger has turned away from him:** The Lord promised that His anger or judgment would be turned away from Israel forever (Isa. 51:22; 54:9-10).
- D. **I will love them freely:** The Lord’s promise to love them freely looks back to 2:14-23 and 11:8-11. He gives His love “freely”—by grace, without anyone being able to earn it, and with generosity.
  1. The Lord deeply desires to restore Israel (11:8-11). The Lord asked four rhetorical questions to make known how He feels about giving Israel to an enemy to be judged. They are strong, heartfelt expressions of His affection for His people.  
<sup>8</sup>**“How can I give you up, Ephraim [Israel]? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. <sup>9</sup>I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst... (Hos. 11:8-9)**

- a. **Admah and Zeboiim:** These were two cities totally destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 10:19; 14:2, 8; Deut. 29:23).
  - b. **How can I give you up?:** The Lord cannot “give up” or “hand over” Israel to total, permanent destruction like He did with Admah and Zeboiim.
  - c. **My heart churns within Me:** His heart was stirred with deep compassion and sympathy.
  - d. **I will not execute the fierceness of My anger:** He promised He would not release the full measure of His fierce wrath like He did on Sodom and Gomorrah.
  - e. **I will not again destroy Ephraim:** He will restrain His judgments against Israel.
  - f. **He is the Holy One:** He expresses His love, justice, and holiness in perfect balance.
2. In the end times, the children of Israel will follow the Lord (11:10-11).
- <sup>10</sup>***“They shall walk after the LORD. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west; <sup>11</sup>they shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses,” says the LORD. (Hos. 11:10-11)***
- a. **He will roar like a lion:** The Lord will again act in a way that is compared to a lion (5:14). In the end times, He will not act as a lion who devours His people but a lion who leads its cubs to safety.
  - b. **His sons shall come from the west:** The Israelites in the west will respond to His call.
  - c. **Like a bird and a dove:** Israel will hurry to return to Israel, flying like a bird or a dove.
  - d. **Egypt and Assyria:** Jewish exiles will return from Egypt in the south and from Assyria in the east and north (Zech. 10:10-11).
  - e. **Dwell in their houses:** The Lord promised to settle them in their homes in Israel.
- E. **I will be like the dew to Israel:** The Lord will renew the land and people of Israel with blessing like the dew. He compares Himself to the dew that will cause them to flourish and blossom like a lily. Agriculture in Israel is dependent upon the dew. In nations where rain is sparse, the dew is a very important source for plant life and fruitfulness. God’s grace is the source of Israel’s fruitfulness.
- F. **He shall grow like the lily:** Israel is presented as a source of blessing and strength for the nations using various agricultural metaphors in 14:5-7. Israel’s abundant prosperity is compared to a lily which known for its fast growth. The blossoming of a lily speaks of purity, beauty, and fast growth.
- G. **He shall lengthen his roots like Lebanon:** The stability of Israel is compared to the deep roots of the cedars of Lebanon (14:5). For every ten feet of height, the roots of a cedar from Lebanon may grow a deep as 30 feet underground and thus are not shaken, not even by a strong storm.
- H. **His branches shall spread:** Israel’s future growth is compared to branches spreading out (14:6). This speaks of Israel’s steady, progressive growth in many different aspects of its national life.

- I. ***His beauty like an olive tree***: Israel’s future beauty is compared to an olive tree which is attractive and productive—olive oil is used for food, fuel, medicine, hair-dressing, and more.
- J. ***His fragrance like Lebanon***: The cedars of Lebanon fill the air with delightful fragrances (14:6). Jerusalem in the future will be praised as beautiful and pleasing to all the nations on earth (Isa. 62:7).  
*<sup>7</sup>And give Him no rest till He establishes...and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. (Isa. 62:7)*
- K. ***Those who dwell under his shadow shall return***: In 14:5-6, Israel is compared to the cedars of Lebanon, and that metaphor carries on through 14:7. The nations will be sheltered and protected, benefitting from the “shade” of Israel’s abundant prosperity, strength, and blessing. Many will return to the Lord and/or to the land of Israel after being helped by dwelling in the “shade” of Israel.
- L. ***They shall be revived like grain***: Those who dwell under the shade of Israel (14:7a) will be revived or sustained in a way that is compared to grain or bread nourishing life (14:7b). They will also grow progressively and continually like a fruitful vine (14:7c).
- M. ***Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon***: The wine of Lebanon was known and celebrated for its taste, fragrance, and medical benefits. Some translate this as, “*The remembrance or fame of him is like the wine of Lebanon.*” Since the Lord is speaking, “him” refers to Israel.
1. The NIV reads, “His fame will be like the wine from Lebanon,” but “fame” is not the best translation. Hebrew uses different words for “fame,” and the Hebrew word here connotes “remembrance.”  
*<sup>7</sup>...Israel’s fame [remembrance] will be like the wine of Lebanon. (Hos. 14:7, NIV)*  
*<sup>7</sup>...His renown [remembrance] will be like the wine of Lebanon. (Hos. 14:7, NAS)*
  2. Some scholars interpret this as: “*the Lord’s memories of Israel bring Him pleasure like the wine of Lebanon.*”

#### IV. ISRAEL WILL NEVER AGAIN EMBRACE IDOLS (HOS. 14:8)

- A. Ephraim, or Israel, will be done with idols forever (14:8).  
*<sup>8</sup>“Ephraim shall say, ‘What have I to do anymore with idols?’ I have heard and observed him. I am like a green cypress tree; your fruit is found in Me.” (Hos. 14:8)*
- B. ***I have heard and observed him***: The Lord promised to listen to and watch Israel’s commitments to renounce idolatry and honor the Lord. The Lord answered him with favor, which is the opposite of “hiding His face from” (5:15). This is also in contrast to idols who cannot see, hear, or answer.
- C. ***I am like a green cypress tree***: The Lord compared Himself to an evergreen, a cypress pine tree. It is green, thick, and flourishing year around. Thus it is able to provide shelter continually, not only in the summer, but also in winter when other trees lose their leaves. The figure of a cypress tree points to the Lord’s commitment to shelter or protect His people as the *ever-existing God*.
- D. ***Your fruit is found in Me*** (14:8): Though the cypress tree does not bear edible fruit, yet the Lord mentioned that He will be their Source of fruitfulness and supply all of His people’s needs.

## V. HOSEA'S FINAL EXHORTATION (HOS. 14:9)

- A. Hosea exhorted God's people to invest their time and effort to gain understanding of his words (14:9). This exhortation contains two questions and two challenges.
- <sup>9</sup>Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them. (Hos. 14:9)*
- B. *Who is wise?*: At times, Hosea's book is intentionally obscure and hard to understand. He used some unusual metaphors and gave slight, passing references to important Old Testament stories without developing them or the lessons that they highlight. For example, he perplexes us by leaving out important details about Gomer and Hosea's story. Many of his words have a surface meaning, and yet the very same passage has other layers of meaning.
- C. *Let him know them*: Here Hosea calls the reader to go deeper in understanding and to pay attention to all that he wrote, whether for warning, correction, exhortation, or encouragement.
- D. *For the ways of the LORD are right*: The Lord's leadership is perfect (Deut. 32:4).
- <sup>4</sup>He is the Rock. His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He. (Deut. 32:4)*
- E. *The righteous walk in them*: He informs the reader that godly attitudes and actions will equip them to understand more. The key to interpretation is not intelligence but a commit to obey the Lord.
- F. *Transgressors stumble in God's ways*: Some stumble or are offended by His ways (Mt. 11:6).
- <sup>6</sup>“And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me [Jesus].” (Mt. 11:6)*