Hosea and The Epistles of John: *Hesed*, God's Covenant Love

Lesson 10: Covenant Transgression (Part 1)

Key Verse: "But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me."~Hosea 6.7

"Jailhouse religion" is a form of self-preservation common in the prison systems[1]. Imagine the monotony of tiresome days of sweltering heat, poor sleep, and badly prepared foods served only with disposable plastic. In addition, the constant fear of intimidation from fellow inmates as well as the constant threat of physical, or worse, sexual assault, quickly grows exhausting and tiresome. It is no surprise that inmates will do whatever it takes to get out of prison. These conditions, as well as the total loss of privacy, freedom, and dignity from strip searches, compounded by being identified by an assigned TDCJ[2] number corresponding with their last name, commonly produces "jailhouse religion". Sometimes it achieves the desired result of being released for parole, but such an insincere repentance doesn't change the reality of a future imprisonment on the horizon, often with an additional crime added to their record. Whether incarcerated for crimes or free, every human has been imprisoned by **The Fall**. No human, but Jesus, is exempt from being a sinner. Sin is a crime against God, resulting in His **wrathful** disposition towards sinners. "Jailhouse religion" will never fool God nor achieve eternal self-preservation. But God took on the punishment sinners deserve by sending His Son, Jesus, to die. More than parole (temporary freedom based on good works), *freedom* from sin's imprisonment is God's eternal "sentence" for those who authentically confess Jesus as their Savior.

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Hosea 6.1-7.16 "Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. **2** After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. **3** Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. **5** Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. **6** For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

7 But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me. **8** Gilead is a city of evildoers, tracked with blood. **9** As robbers lie in wait for a man, so the priests band together; they murder on the way to Shechem; they commit villainy. **10** In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim's whoredom is there; Israel is defiled. **11** For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed. When I restore the fortunes of my people, **(CH7)** when I would heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed, and the evil deeds of Samaria, for they deal falsely, the thief breaks in, and the bandits raid outside.

2 But they do not consider that I remember all their evil. Now their deeds surround them; they are before my face.

3 By their evil they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery. **4** They are all adulterers; they are like a heated oven, whose baker ceases to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened. **5** On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with mockers. **6** For with hearts like an oven they approach their intrigue; all night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. **7** All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me. **8** Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned. **9** Strangers devour his strength, and he knows it not; gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not. **10** The pride of Israel testifies to his face; yet they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him, for all this. **11** Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, calling to Egypt, going to Assyria. **12** As they go, I will spread over them my net; I will bring them down like birds of the heavens; I will discipline them according to the report made to their congregation.

13 Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me. **14** They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds; for grain and wine they gash themselves; they rebel against me. **15** Although I trained and strengthened their arms, yet they devise evil against me. **16** They return, but not upward; they are like a treacherous bow; their princes shall fall by the sword because of the insolence of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Diamonds: Hosea 6-7 is unique in several ways. First is the use of emendations. An emendation is the process of making

[1] Blackard, Kirk, "Chapter 9: Repentance", *Restoring Peace: Using Lessons from Prison to Mend Broken Relationships*, Bridges to Life (Houston, Texas: Bridges to Life, 2010) pp. 96-97

[2] TDCJ: Texas Department of Criminal Justice

a revision or correction to a text. There have been several emendations in Hosea prior to these chapters, but these chapters stand out for the number of emendations made by either Hosea, after historical events were interpreted as fulfilled prophecies, or later by historians and/or contemporaries of Hosea's time. In addition, scholars note that these two chapters have several edits discovered through incongruencies in discovered ancient (or original) texts. Finally, Hosea's phrasing is not always easy for our modern understanding, and archaeological discoveries have yet to help modern readers fully understand several of Hosea's simile and metaphor references in chapters 6-7.

This study has been developed under the interpretive guidance of covenant theology. Emendations are noted in this lesson because history drives context for interpretation, as well as scripture's revelation of itself when considered in whole (both the Old Testament and the New Testament). However, should future archeological discoveries confirm or challenge the current interpretation of Hosea's prophecies offered by covenant theologians, there would be no doubt that it would serve to reveal God as *more* Holy, Majestic, and Glorious (Hebrews 6.18). In truth, our knowledge of God and of salvation in Jesus Christ is only made more wonderful with every ancient discovery (Matthew 5.17-18; Titus 1.2). All future discoveries may further correct our interpretation; each future discovery will prove God more Marvelous (John 16.7-15; 17.3; see bonus doctrine, "Inerrancy of Scripture" at the end of the lesson).

1. Review the deities and doctrines studied in the first half of our series. Identify any that didn't match your expected definition of the deity or doctrine. How did your discovery of new information not only increase your knowledge of God, but even more, proved God as more Marvelous?

2. What effect, if any, has this had on your spiritual maturity?

The turnabout discovered in Hosea 5.14-6.3 indicates repentance. While this is "a model of repentance, entreaty, and trust", it is difficult to understand if Hosea's words are prophetic to God's work in His people's hearts in the future, or Hosea's gut-felt cry to his fellow Israelites, or a "jailhouse religion" of insincere repentance.[3] Hosea's reference to a resurrection on the third day (Hosea 6.2) provides modern day intrigue to his prophecies. Covenant theologians conclude that this is a Messianic reference, even as they acknowledge that this is one of the places where there are several solid conclusions about the reason for Hosea's reference. Hosea's writing style is poetic, using similes and metaphors throughout (Hosea 5.12, 14 are quick examples)[4]. Scholars point out that in the Old Testament, poetry (or "poetic parallelism" for the English majors) is used to communicate "proverbial wisdom" (Proverbs 30.15-31; Amos 1.3-2.8).

The historical context must consider syncretism rampant within God's people. As such, there are historical records that "parallel the motif of a 'dying and rising' deity and to the language of recovery from illness…Sickness could be the intrusion of the powers of death, and recovery could be understood as a new gift of life."[5] Hosea's message is corporate, or inclusive of God's people as a whole, thus deriving a corporate message likewise found in Ezekiel 37.1-14 where the exiles are restored (or resurrected).[6]

If this idea of a restoration to life is as the voice of God's people, "Israel may well have known a seasonal pattern in Canaan in which a deity dies in the fall and then in the spring rises again. Such a divinely engendered 'turnaround' could be the basis for the language of the people expressing hope of being made alive and raised by YHWH".[7] Paul made the connection between Hosea 6.2 and Christ's resurrection (1 Corinthians 15.4). However, the first Christian to make this connection is from extra-biblical text written by Tertullian.[8] There is no controversy around Paul being influenced by a brother-in-Christ! Rather, it helps us understand how Paul's thoughts about these verses were developed.

As always, the best conclusions focus on what this text reveals about God. In that spirit, "the language represents a fundamental conviction that YHWH is the living God who is able to heal and restore the people, including life from the

[3] Kidner, p. 52

[4] Dearman, p. 191-192

[5] Dearman, p. 192

[6] Dearman, p. 194

[7] Dearman, p. 194

[8] Dearman, p. 195

dead…The point finally at issue is Israel's ruptured relationship with YHWH and how the recovery/resurrection language was understood."[9]

3. God's rhetorical reply in Hosea 6.4 follows a simile that indicates a fleeting and insincere repentance. In addition, God announces His judgment in Hosea 6.5. What does God tell His people that He wants in Hosea 6.6?

4. Where else in Hosea 1-5 has God expressed His desire for His people's *hesed* (steadfast love) and His desire to be known?

5. Why do you think God is repeating Himself? What doctrines or deities from Lessons 1-10 reveal God repeating a call, command, or comfort in your growth in spiritual maturity? In other words, where is God repeating Himself in your life?

Hosea 6.7 is a key verse in covenant theology. Covenant theologians hold that the reference to "Adam" is a personal name, as suggested in the ESV Bible.[10] This is an important interpretation for covenant theology because this is used as evidence of God's covenant relationship with Adam and Eve. "Although it isn't stated, except perhaps in a single reference in Hosea 6.7, it seems clear that God's original relationship with Adam and Eve was covenantal – that is, it involved a bond made by God with them, in which He promised the rich blessings of life and fellowship with Him as they lived in harmony with Him but, inevitably, profound loss and alienation and death if they turned against His purposes. And what Hosea 6.7 says about God's people is that, like Adam, they transgressed the covenant."[11]

More ancient original texts, alongside archeological and historical documents suggest "Adam" as a city geographically located between Ephraim and Gilead (Joshua 3.16).[12] "The settlement was located along a route between Ephraim and Gilead, which would make geographical sense, given the reference to the city of Gilead in Hosea 6.8. There are, furthermore, indications elsewhere in the broader historical context for political intrigue in Gilead that this obscure reference may reflect, such as the murder in Samaria of Pekahiah, king of Israel, by Pekah, who was accompanied by fifty men from Gilead (2 Kings 15.25). This event took place ca. 738, during the public activity of Hosea."[13] In addition, there are inconsistencies between ancient texts that influence the interpretations. Ancient texts vary on the use of a particular prefix before identifying "Adam" which influences the interpretation of the word "there" in verse 9.[14]

Again, we see that regardless of the theological decision of how to best understand "Adam", God's character is unchanged (John 17.17; James 1.17). "In context, the critique of Hosea 6.7-11a is that of Israel's rebelliousness against YHWH; so that whatever particularities are to be associated with place and precipitating event(s) there, it is YHWH's covenant that has been transgressed."[15]

Hosea 6.10 makes a heart-breaking conclusion: Israel is "both ritually unclean and morally impure."[16] Levitical law taught that "…there is a spectrum regarding the *condition* of "persons, places, or objects" being clean or unclean. Leviticus 15.31 teaches us that the consequence of approaching our Holy God in an unclean condition is death (see Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10.1-3). In addition, intentionally remaining in an unclean condition ensures a second consequence: "...the loss of [Israel's] highest blessing and reason for existence: YHWH God would abandon His dwelling among them."[17] But God

[9] Dearman, p. 195 quoting T.N.D. Mettinger

[10] Phillips, p.105-106

[11] Ferguson, Sinclair B., *Things Unseen: The Promised Covenant of Grace*, October 26, 2026, Ligonier Ministries

[12] Dearman, pp. 197-198

[13] Dearman, p. 198

[14] Dearman, p. 197

[15] Dearman, p. 198, Phillips, p.105

[16] Dearman, p. 199

[17] Morales, p. 155

mercifully provided the sacrificial system to reverse the *condition* of things so that what is unclean may once again be clean. And once clean, it may then be made holy! "*Thus to be clean means to be fit for the Presence of God, while to be holy means that one belongs to God.* Something that is holy must remain exclusively in God's realm (sacred space), living for His will alone, or else be destroyed so as to prevent common or profane usage."[18]

In the event Judah (southern kingdom) believes it is getting a break because Israel (northern kingdom) is taking all of God's bandwidth with its whoredom, evil, bloodshed, and insincere syncretistic religiosity, God corrects them in V 11: "For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed." Like a child who believes their mother has been too focused on their sibling's disobedience and bad behavior to notice their own guilt, God whips His (metaphorical) head around, turning His attention to Judah, to say, "You too, Judah!"[19]

6. Where in the first 10 lessons have you been convicted by the Holy Spirit in a way that surprised or shocked you that you too commit sin or disobey God? What was your response to His conviction, and how has God pruned you to be more like His Son, bearing His fruit (John 15.1-10; 1 John 2.27)?

It is foolish for God's people to forget that God remembers![20] Now they are subject to the consequences of their sins. As Dr. Dearman stated, "In essence, what surrounds Israel is homegrown judgment" (Hosea 7.2).

7. According to 1 John 2.1-2, what does God remember when our sins are before Him? What role does Jesus play in helping God to remember?

At the end of a robust use of similes and metaphors[21], Hosea lands a most damning prophecy from God in Hosea 7.16: Egypt will be God's tool for judgment against His people.😨 "The mixing of Israel among the nations would lead to a defeat (falling to the sword) and derision for Israel in Egypt, once the land of its enslavement and also the place where YHWH previously declared Himself Israel's God"[22] (Exodus 14.31).💔😫

Deity: Wrathful[23]~ (Romans 1.18; Leviticus 26.14-39) In simplest terms, God's wrath is "His displeasure with evil; it is expressed in judgment and punishment" (Romans 1.18; Ephesians 5.6; Colossians 3.5-6). God is opposed to and hates evil. As such, He will punish all evil.

"God's wrath hangs over all in rebellion against Him and will be manifested in the future day of the Lord and the final judgment in the lake of fire (Revelation 20.11-15; Romans 2.5). Because God is holy and righteous, God must punish sin." Sin invites God's punishment (Ephesians 4.18; Romans 5.10, 8.7).

Man's sin negatively affected his relationship to creation. Man's mandate to rule and subdue the earth and its creatures is not revoked, but creation now works against man and frustrates his efforts (Genesis 3.17-19; Psalm 8.4-8).

"When man sinned against God, his sin erected a legal and relational barrier between him and God. The divine law was broken; man thus incurred guilt and is required to pay the penalty of spiritual death. The holiness of God was offended, and thus God's wrath was aroused against sin. This leaves man alienated from God; broken fellowship and even hostility marks the relationship between God and man, who is in bondage to sin and death (Luke 21.22-24; Romans 1.18-20, 2.5-6; Revelation 6.16)."

"If there is to be any redemption from sin and reconciliation to God, man's sin must be atoned (paid) for. And yet man's spiritual death and depravity leave him unable to pay the penalty for his sin" (Romans 2.12, 3.23).

God's anger is not "a malignant and malicious retaliation, inflicting injury for the sake of it, or in return for injury received.

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18 Morales, p. 155

19 This is suspected to be an emendation by Hosea. Dearman, p. 199

20 Dearman, p. 200

21 The similes and metaphors in Hosea 7 are difficult to interpret for modern theologians and carry several grammatical inconsistencies between historical texts. However, the prophecies of God's judgment have not changed.

22 Dearman, p. 215, Phillips pp. 90-91, 118

23 MacArthur, J. & Mayhue, R., *Biblical Doctrine*, A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017) pp. 303, 458-459, 522-523

No; while God will vindicate His dominion as Governor of the universe, He will not be vindictive."[24]

8. Hosea 7.13 is sobering: "Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me." Where do you see God's pattern of providing hope and salvation even in His prophecy of His wrath in this verse?

"However, God in His Love has appointed the Lord Jesus Christ to stand in the place of sinners to bear their sin, guilt, and punishment and thereby satisfy God's wrath on their behalf (Isaiah 53.4-11; John 1.29)...Christ had to bear the outpouring of God's unmitigated wrath against sin in order to satisfy justice completely" (2 Corinthians 5.21; Galatians 3.13; 1 Peter 2.24).

"Both the Levitical sacrifices (Leviticus 1.3-4), as epitomized in the Day of Atonement and the rite of Passover, portray the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Exodus 12.24-27)...Just as the blood of the slain lamb protected Israel from the execution of God's judgment, so also the blood of the slain Lamb, Jesus, protects His people from the Father's wrath against their sin" (Romans 5.9, 8.1; Ephesians 2.3-5; 1 Corinthians 5.7; 1 Thessalonians 1.10).

Doctrine: The Fall~ (Judges 21.25) "The Fall" is the event in which Adam and Eve, the first humans God created, rebelled and disobeyed God's command (Genesis 3). The corruption of the human race, or "original sin", began as a result of their rebellious disobedience. Now, we live with sin as our natural state, or within our "sin nature" (Psalm 51.5).

9. Read Hosea 7 using an additional Bible translation such as The Message, Amplified Bible or New Living Translation. What does God get in return for the work He has done for His people? How does this reveal our sin nature?

Sin's consequences falling on both His Kingdom people and the world does not prove God as incapacitated, cruel, distanced, or silent. Instead, God's covenant faithfulness in the Old Testament reveals Him as a compassionate, intimate, loving, redeeming God (Hosea 2.19; Psalm 18.1-2, 34.18, 147.3) In the New Testament, God's faithfulness is revealed in the security of His Son, Jesus, the Messiah, whose life proves God's compassion, intimacy, and tender-hearted care for His people (Matthew 9.36, 14.14, 15.32; John 3.16-17). Even more, His crucifixion and resurrection reveal God's faithful salvation and redemption of His people who are secured eternally in His presence (Romans 5.8; Colossians 1.13-14; Hebrews 6.19-20).

10. Read 1 John 3.1-10 using several different Bible translations. What difference does Jesus make in the life of God's people?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: True repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action.

I. Faithless Words (Hosea 6.1-7.2) **T1:** There is no forgiveness of sin without personal repentance.

[24] AW Pink

a. What does God see in your heart? Is it true love for Him? Or simply a transaction for you to get what you want?
b. Have you repented of your sin and come to Christ in faith?
c. What sin still feels more like a treat than like vomit to you? What makes it difficult to turn away from it?

II. Faithless Actions (Hosea 7.3-16) **T2:** True repentance will always be accompanied by a changed life.
a. How are you living a distinctly Christian life while still being part of your community?
b. In what ways has God redirected your appetites, choices and will since you turned to Jesus for salvation?
c. Is your love for God like a morning mist? An over-heated oven? A half-baked loaf? A deluded old man? A senseless bird? A self-occupied prayer? Or a faulty bow? What will you ask God to help you change?

Dearman, J. Andrew, *The Book of Hosea* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 2010) pp. 188-215
Kidner, Derek, *The Message of Hosea: The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2024 revised) pp. 53-61
Morales, L. Michael, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?,* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015)
Phillips, Richard D., *Hosea: Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2021) pp. 88-119

Bonus Doctrine: Inerrancy of Scripture

"Inerrancy refers to the belief that Scripture is completely truthful, without any mixture of error, in all its teachings, no matter what subject it addresses. Believing the Scriptures are inerrant does not preclude the biblical author's inclusion of observations from a human observer, the use of round numbers, unusual grammatical constructions, or varying perspectives on a particular event. It does mean, however, that Scripture is an infallible guide to salvation and that it is truthful in all that it affirms." (Matthew 5.17-18; John 10.35; Titus 1.2; Hebrews 6.18) The Gospel Project, *The 99 Essential Doctrines: #4, Inerrancy of Scripture* Lifeway Christian Resources (2018)

Extra Reading (GotQuestions.org): How does the translation process impact the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of the Bible?