

HOSEA

Chapters Four through Ten

Introduction

You are taught simple memory devices to protect you from danger:

1. In my day, “Duck and Cover” was supposed to protect us from a nuclear blast.
2. Today’s devices are more practical. “Stop, Drop, and Roll” if you’re on fire; “Look, Listen and Live” at railroad crossings.

In chapters four through ten of Hosea the Lord tells **you** to “Listen, Look, and Live:”

1. He tells you to **listen** in verse one of chapter four when you read “Hear the Word of the Lord... for the Lord brings a [summons]...”
2. He then presents a series of at least eighteen symbols and says **look**.
3. In verse two of chapter six He encourages you to “**live** in His sight.”

The Lord wants you to *listen* to His *summons*... *Look* at His *symbols*... and *live* in His *sight*.

#1 Listen To The Lord’s Summons (Chapters Four & Five)

Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, for the LORD *brings* a charge against the inhabitants of the land: “There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.”

The word for “charge” is a legal *summons*. Chapters four and five are God’s summons to “the inhabitants of the land.” The inhabitants you encounter in these chapters are the *people*, the *priests* and *prophets*, and the *princes*.

The summons to the people:

Hosea 4:2 *By* swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed.

Hosea 4:3 Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away.

The people were violating God's commandments. "Swearing" means *pronouncing curses*. They were telling lies, committing murder, and committing adultery. God had promised to *prosper* their land if they obeyed, but He also promised to *punish* the land if they disobeyed (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28).

If you are false-hearted toward God, you will become hard-hearted toward men. When you try to rule yourself without God, self begins to rule.

The summons to the priests and prophets:

Hosea 4:4 "Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; for your people *are* like those who contend with the priest.

Hosea 4:5 Therefore you shall stumble in the day; the prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; and I will destroy your mother.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."

When the Jews split into two separate kingdoms, many of the true priests that were in the northern kingdom of Israel fled south to Judah so they could minister in the temple. King Jeroboam of Israel set up his own religious system in Israel and ordained his own priests (2Chronicles 11:13-15). These were corrupt priests who consorted with the prostitutes of the pagan shrines. God saw them as *stumbling* and as *stumbling blocks* to others. God held them accountable for destroying His people through their lack of knowledge of His Word.

Hosea 4:7 "The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.

Hosea 4:8 They eat up the sin of My people; they set their heart on their iniquity.

Hosea 4:9 And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their deeds.

Hosea 4:10 For they shall eat, but not have enough; they shall commit harlotry, but not increase; because they have ceased obeying the LORD."

The more the people sinned, the more food and offerings the priest enjoyed. The more shrines the people built, the more the priests could indulge in the lustful pleasures of the pagan prostitutes. These practices were considered fertility rites and were justified as

necessary to increase the prosperity and population of Israel. God would cause a decrease.

Hosea 4:11 “Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.

Hosea 4:12 My people ask counsel from their wooden *idols*, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused *them* to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God.

Hosea 4:13 They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, and burn incense on the hills, under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, because their shade *is* good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, and your brides commit adultery.

Hosea 4:14 “I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for *the men* themselves go apart with harlots, and offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot. Therefore people *who* do not understand will be trampled.

The priests were drunken adulterers. The prophets used “wooden idols” and objects like “staffs” to practice divination. Their own daughters and daughters-in-law would become shrine prostitutes!

Spiritual leaders have a serious responsibility and an even more serious accountability.

The summons to the **princes**:

If you skim the rest of chapter four and chapter five you see the Lord mention the “rulers” and “princes” of Israel. By the way, the northern kingdom of Israel was also called Ephraim.

Hosea 4:18 “Their drink is rebellion, they commit harlotry continually. Her **rulers** dearly love dishonor.

Hosea 5:1 “Hear this, O priests! Take heed, O house of Israel! Give ear, O **house of the king!**”

Hosea 5:10 “The **princes** of Judah are like those who remove a landmark; I will pour out My wrath on them like water.”

The problem with the princes is presented in verses thirteen through fifteen of chapter five:

Hosea 5:13 “When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb; yet he cannot cure you, nor heal you of your wound.

Hosea 5:14 For I *will be* like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, *even I*, will tear *them* and go away; I will take *them* away, and no one shall rescue.

Hosea 5:15 I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”

Instead of turning to the Lord, they turned to the king of Assyria for help. Instead of prayer, they turned to politics. Instead of truth, they sought treaties.

“Listen to My summons,” God says. Then,

#2 Look At The Lord’s Symbols (Chapter 6:4-10:15)

Words can be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Symbols are given to clarify. There are a series of at least eighteen symbols. We’ll go through them rather quickly.

The first two are actually in chapter four, verse sixteen:

Hosea 4:16 “For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf; now the LORD will let them forage like a lamb in open country.”

Israel was like a stubborn heifer that would not be led. They were like lambs in open country, unprotected by their Shepherd and subject to attack from vicious predators.

The next symbol is in verse four of chapter six:

Hosea 6:4 “O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away.”

Israel’s faithfulness was like the mist and dew of the morning. It was only on the surface and quickly disappeared.

The next symbol is in chapter seven, verse one:

Hosea 7:1 “When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they have committed fraud; a thief comes in; a band of robbers takes spoil outside.”

They were embezzlers, thieves, and robbers.

The next symbol is in verse four of chapter seven:

Hosea 7:4 “They *are* all adulterers. Like an oven heated by a baker - he ceases stirring *the fire* after kneading the dough, until it is leavened.”

“Leaven” is a picture of sin. Just as leaven, or yeast, corrupts the dough, so sin corrupts your life if not removed. The baker had his oven stoked and ready for when the dough had fully risen. The idea

here is that Israel's adultery was a leaven of lust always ready to be satisfied.

The next symbol is in verse eight of chapter seven:

Hosea 7:8 "Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned."

An "unturned cake" looks good on one side, but is raw on the other. The Jews looked as though they worshipped God; but they mixed themselves with the pagan religious practices.

The next symbol is in verse nine of chapter seven:

Hosea 7:9 "Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know *it*; yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know *it*."

They were like a man getting old and gray without realizing it. By allying with the other nations instead of relying on the Lord, they were losing their true strength.

The next symbol is in verse eleven of chapter seven:

Hosea 7:11 "Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense - they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria."

They "cooed" for Egypt and Assyria; but those nations would hunt and kill them.

The next symbol is in verse sixteen of chapter seven:

Hosea 7:16 "They return, *but* not to the Most High; they are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword for the cursings of their tongue. This *shall be* their derision in the land of Egypt."

A "treacherous bow" was a bow that would not hit its mark in battle. Without the Lord's help they could not hope to win any military victories.

The next symbol is in verse one of chapter eight:

Hosea 8:1 "Set the trumpet to your mouth! *He shall come* like an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law."

The Assyrians would swoop down upon Israel and carry her away like an eagle seizing its prey in the open field.

The next symbol is in verse seven of chapter eight:

Hosea 8:7 “They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; it shall never produce meal. If it should produce, aliens would swallow it up.”

They thought that their worship of Baal and their foreign alliances would produce a harvest of peace and plenty. It would produce a blighted harvest that would be devoured by their enemies.

The next symbol is in verse eight of chapter eight:

Hosea 8:8 “Israel is swallowed up; now they are among the Gentiles like a vessel in which is no pleasure.”

They were like a worthless pottery vessel. Their compromises had made them expendable among the nations they sought to form alliances with.

The next symbol is in verse nine of chapter eight:

Hosea 8:9 “For they have gone up to Assyria, *like* a wild donkey alone by itself...”

They were like a wild donkey that was vulnerable to predators.

The next symbol is in verses nine and ten of chapter eight:

Hosea 8:9 “... Ephraim has hired lovers.

Hosea 8:10 Yes, though they have hired among the nations, now I will gather them; and they shall sorrow a little, because of the burden of the king of princes.”

They were like men who sought the services of a prostitute. There was no lasting commitment. They would discover their error as the “king of princes,” the king of Assyria, came upon them to destroy them.

The next symbol is in verses thirteen of chapter eight, and verses three and six of chapter nine. There you read that “they shall return to Egypt.” This is a symbol of the coming bondage to Assyria. Like their ancestors in the past in Egypt, they would be slaves in a foreign land.

The next symbol is in verse ten of chapter nine:

Hosea 9:10 "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. *But* they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves *to that* shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved."

You don't find grapes in the wilderness. If you did, it would thrill you. God had called Israel to be His special people; He had made them grapes in the wilderness. As you read further you find that they, by rejecting God, became "a dried-up root" (9:16) and a poisonous "hemlock" weed (10:4).

The final symbol is in verse eleven of chapter ten:

Hosea 10:11 "Ephraim *is* a trained heifer that loves to thresh *grain*; but I harnessed her fair neck, I will make Ephraim pull *a plow*. Judah shall plow; Jacob shall break his clods."

Israel was like a young heifer which loved to thresh grain because she could work and eat at the same time. God would yoke her to another beast – the Assyrians – and she would instead perform hard labor.

These symbols were God's way of being crystal clear. There could be no misunderstanding, no misinterpretation.

Listen... Look... And you will,

#3 Live In The Lord's Sight
(Chapter 10:12 & Chapter 6:1-3)

There are two great appeals in these chapters. The first is chapter ten, verse twelve:

Hosea 10:12 "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you."

It's yet another symbol. The human heart is described as a field. In this case, it's a field that has lain fallow – unplanted, unused, and therefore hardened. The plow of conviction must first break-up hard hearts before the seed of the Word can be planted and the gracious rain sent from heaven. It is a genuine call to *turn* and *return* to Him.

Turn back to chapter six:

Hosea 6:1 "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.

Hosea 6:2 After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.

Hosea 6:3 Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter *and* former rain to the earth."

As morning follows evening follows morning, God exists and remains faithful to His promises. He "tears," but He "heals"; He "strikes," but He "binds." It is His heart's desire that His people "live in His sight." Living in God's sight means under His watchful care.

This may be yet another symbol: The Shepherd and His sheep. The sheep who wanders off, away from the Shepherd, will be torn and stricken by vicious beasts. The Shepherd, though, seeks out the wandering sheep and, when He finds it, heals it and binds it.

God is your Great Shepherd. You can live in His sight... Or you can wander off and be torn apart. *Stay in the pasture He has brought you into.*

What does it mean to "live in His sight?" In the context of these chapters it means you are willing to listen and look!

1. Listen: What is God saying to you, especially through His Word?
2. Look: What is God showing you in the circumstances of your life?

The mention of "two days" and the "third day" is intriguing and has several levels of application:

1. Regarding Israel, it first applies in context to the people it was written to as a promise that God will not permanently cast them away. His judgment had a definite limit.
2. It applies to Israel in the future. The "third day" always reminds you of the resurrection of Jesus. Here, though, it is a prediction of the future "resurrection" of Israel in the Last Days – made possible by the resurrection of Jesus. You read about this in Ezekiel chapter thirty-seven in the famous passage where God breathes life into the dead bones of Israel – raising them from the dead.
3. The mention of these three days has given some commentators reason to speculate that it might be a prophecy of God's

disciplinary time period for the Jews. They would be disciplined for “two days” – for two thousand years. They would be revived on the “third day” – *after* two thousand years – and then enter a one thousand year era of living in God’s presence. If – and I emphasize **if** – that is the case, then we are nearing the end of Israel’s two thousand years of discipline and are on the verge of the return of their Messiah to rule and reign on the earth for one thousand years!

4. The application to you and I is simple. The third day speaks of the resurrection of Jesus. You and I live in God’s sight by the power of the resurrection.

Conclusion

Listen... Look...and Live.

It’s a simple memory device that will protect you from spiritual danger.

1. **Listen** to God through your reading of His Word.
2. **Look** at your life for symbols of His love and grace.
3. **Live** in His sight as a sheep protected and pastured by the Great Shepherd of your soul.