

Lesson 36

Hosea 10:13

13 You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors,

As we saw last week, verse 12 is one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible. But verse 12 is also one of the saddest – and we see why in verse 13.

In verse 12 we saw how the people **could** have been had they returned to God. Here in verse 13 we see how the people actually were.

- They were not sowing righteousness, but instead they were plowing iniquity.
- They were not reaping steadfast love, but instead they were reaping injustice.
- They were not enjoying a rain of righteousness from God, but instead they were eating the fruit of lies.

And why? Why were the people like this? Verse 13 answers that question: “Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors.”

Rather than trusting in the wisdom of God and in the power of God, they were trusting instead in their own wisdom and in their own power.

And that is always the answer to the question of why people reject God. That was the answer then, that is the answer today, and that was certainly the answer in the first century.

Romans 1:19–23 – For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

“Claiming to be wise, they became fools.” If there is a better indictment of our modern world than that, I don’t know what it is. And that was also an indictment of Hosea’s world and of Paul’s world. It is an indictment that goes all the way back to the Garden! “Claiming to be wise, they became fools.”

And what is the result of such thinking and such living? What awaits those who reject the wisdom of God? What lies ahead for those who rely on the arm of man rather than the arm of God? The next verse tells us what was awaiting this people – destruction and death.

Hosea 10:14

14 therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be

destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle; mothers were dashed in pieces with their children.

The first word in verse 14 (“therefore”) tells us that verse 14 is the result of verse 13. What we see happening in verse 14 is happening because the people were trusting in their own way and in their own power.

And what do we see in verse 14? We see the Assyrians. The Assyrian army was coming, and soon the people would be experiencing the tumult of war. And those fortresses in which they trusted would all be destroyed.

And how can we describe this great battle? To what can we compare it? Hosea tells us that this great battle will be like when **Shalman** destroyed **Beth-arbel**.

Who is Shalman? And where is Beth-arbel? Let’s check our Bible dictionaries.

Shalman: Mentioned by Hosea as the one who destroyed Beth-Arbel (Hosea 10:14).

Beth-Arbel: A city mentioned only in Hosea 10:14 as a place destroyed by an otherwise unknown person named Shalman.

Well, that’s disappointing! The Bible dictionaries are not very helpful here. Verse 14 is the only place in the Bible (or elsewhere) where we find either Shalman or Beth-Arbel.

Apparently someone named Shalman had destroyed some city called Beth-Arbel, and that fact was well-known to everyone listening to Hosea – but

that event has not otherwise been preserved by history. And, as usual, Hosea doesn't explain himself! There are no footnotes in Hosea!

As for the identity of Shalman, the most common suggestions are that either he is the Assyrian king Shalmaneser, or he is a person named Salamanu of Moab who is mentioned in the Assyrian annals of Tiglath-pileser III.

And as for the city of Beth-Arbel, the most common suggestions are that it is either the city of Irbid, which is located about eighteen miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee, or it is the city of Arbela in Galilee.

We don't know for sure what happened in that city or who did it, but I think we can say that whatever happened there it was a horrible atrocity. Why? Because of the final thing we see in verse 14: "mothers were dashed in pieces with their children."

Something terrible had happened in that city, and everyone listening to Hosea knew all about it – and they were now hearing from Hosea that the same thing would soon be happening to them! That is what the next verse tells us.

Hosea 10:15

15 Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel,
because of your great evil. At dawn the king of
Israel shall be utterly cut off.

And why are we now hearing only about the city of **Bethel** rather than about the entirety of the

remaining nation of Israel? They were all going into exile – why the sudden focus on Bethel?

I think one reason is because Bethel sounds a lot like Beth-Arbel! I think that may be why the text is using Bethel to represent the entire nation in verse 15. It is yet another reminder of the terrible fate that awaits them all.

But I think another reason Bethel is mentioned here is because, as we have seen, Bethel was where the people went to worship their golden calf. That idolatry was the “great evil” in verse 15, and it was because of that “great evil” that the Assyrians were coming very soon to do to them all what had earlier been done in Beth-Arbel.

As one commentary describes it:

“Throughout the book Bethel and the other shrines are described as places of apostasy, immorality, false piety, and hostility to God. It was the heart of Israel's darkness.”

“At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.”

The people had trusted in their military power, but Chapter 10 ends by telling us that their king would be utterly cut off at dawn. Their king would not do anything to help them because he would not even be around to help them. He would be cut off at dawn, which means he would be cut off at the beginning of the battle.

And the Bible tells us that is precisely what happened with Israel's final king, Hoshea, after the Assyrians invaded.

2 Kings 17:4-5 – But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea, for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it.

Hoshea was captured and imprisoned **prior** to the invasion and the three year siege of Samaria that followed – just as verse 15 tells us. “At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.”

Things certainly look bleak at the end of Chapter 10. What do we expect to see in Chapter 11? More death? More destruction? More punishment? More bleakness? We might expect that – but what we find instead in the next verse is a wonderful prophecy about Jesus!

Hosea 11:1

1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

That verse is a prophecy about Jesus. How do we know that? We know that because Matthew, by inspiration, tells us that.

Matthew 2:13-15 – Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search

for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

We know why Mary and Joseph were told to flee, but why were they told to flee to Egypt? Matthew tells us. It “was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’”

There is an important preliminary point we need to consider about this prophecy before we move on.

We need to consider a very common charge that is made by some against the New Testament – that the New Testament sometimes twists the evidence to make a point.

Some say that the New Testament sometimes lifts verses out of their context in the Old Testament and applies them instead to Jesus. And if you ever meet such a person, I suspect they may point you first to Hosea 11:1.

Here is how one modern critic describes their position:

It is impossible to establish that any passage in its original literary and historical context must or even should be understood as portending a future messianic figure.

We talked about this viewpoint back in Lesson 24 when we looked at the prophecy of the resurrection in Hosea 6:2, but, unlike that verse, which is only alluded to in the New

Testament, Hosea 11:1 is explicitly quoted in the New Testament.

Did Matthew twist the evidence? The short answer is no, of course he didn't. The same Holy Spirit who inspired Hosea 11:1 also inspired Matthew 2:15, and if the inspired word of God tells us that Hosea 11:1 is a prophecy about Jesus then Hosea 11:1 is a prophecy about Jesus.

For a more detailed response, I will point us back to the class notes from Lesson 24. To summarize what we said there:

- When David wrote the Psalms, was David thinking about a coming Messiah, or was David thinking only about himself and the events of his own time? **Acts 2:29–31** answers that question – David foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ!
- Likewise with Isaiah, **John 12:41** tells us that he saw Christ's glory and spoke of him.
- **1 Peter 1:12** tells us that the prophets knew that they were not speaking only about their own times but were instead also speaking about the coming day of the Messiah.
- And in **John 11:47–53** we have a prophecy about Jesus given by someone who had no idea that it was a prophecy about Jesus. We have a prophecy about Jesus that was delivered to an audience who likewise had no idea that it was a prophecy about Jesus. And yet we know with absolute certainty that it was in fact a prophecy about Jesus.

The Handout for Lesson 36 includes an excerpt from an introduction to a commentary on Joel that gives us an excellent overview of these points.

What can we learn from this, and especially from John 11? What we can learn is that God, and God alone, determines whether something is a prophecy about Jesus. Not the speaker, not the hearer, not the context, and not the liberal commentator – but only God and God alone.

And sometimes God gives us those prophecies about his Son in unexpected contexts and from unexpected sources. And sometimes God lets the speaker know that he is prophesying about Jesus, but sometimes he does not.

That prophecy in John 11 tells us that it makes no sense to argue that a verse in the Old Testament cannot be a prophecy about Jesus because it comes from an unexpected source or in an unexpected context. If God tells us that it is a prophecy about Jesus, then that is what it is.

But that does not mean the prophecy is necessarily only about Jesus.

There are different ways that the Old Testament presentation of Christ shows itself. The Old Testament includes direct predictive prophecy referring only to Christ, often called rectilinear prophecy. There also are prophecies that have one or more intermediate fulfillments, with Christ as the final, ultimate fulfillment. Finally, there are people, institutions, places, and events that are types or foreshadows of Christ.

I think Hosea 11:1 falls more into that third category – the exodus of Israel from Egypt foreshadowed the return of Christ as a child from Egypt. I think that is what Mathew is telling us

- and I think we can see that from the verb tense that is used.

This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called [past tense] my son."

The statement in Hosea 11:1 was describing a past event (as the past tense tells us) - but Hosea 11:1 was also describing a future event (as Matthew tells us). We know that is true because God tells us it is true.

Absent that revelation from God about its meaning, it would have been very difficult for us to see that past tense statement in Hosea 11:1 as a prophecy. But that past tense statement was a prophecy, and it was fulfilled by Jesus.

Now, with that background, let's look more closely at the text of verse 1, and let's consider the two events that it describes.

Hosea 11:1 - When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Let's first consider the past event described by verse 1.

As we have seen before in Hosea, God in verse 1 is looked back with fondness to the beginning of his relationship with the people of Israel. Verse 1 is describing Israel in its youth - "when Israel was child" - and God says that he "loved him."

Yes, things had now gone very badly off the rails, but that was not always true. God's

relationship with Israel had started off very well – God had called them out of Egypt, he had given them his Law, and he had settled them down in their promised land flowing with milk and honey.

And what should Israel have done in response? Israel should have loved God, Israel should have thanked God for the blessings he rained down upon them, Israel should have been loyal to God, Israel should have worshiped God in spirit and in truth, and Israel should have obeyed God.

And perhaps Israel did all of those things early in its history – but now Israel was not doing any of those things. Israel loved Baal, Israel thanked Baal, Israel was loyal to Baal, Israel worshipped Baal, and Israel obeyed Baal. In short, Israel had left God for someone else.

Now, in saying that, we have mixed our metaphors.

Here in verse 1 we see Israel as the child of God – but throughout most of Hosea, and especially when it comes to the central theme of Hosea, we see Israel as the wife of God.

Should that concern us? Not at all.

Whether mixed or not, the metaphors are just that – metaphors. The point of our central metaphor describing Israel as a faithless and thankless wife could be made just as easily by instead describing Israel with the metaphor of a faithless and thankless son.

Here Israel is described, not as the wife of God, but as the son of God. And God had loved his son and called his son out of Egypt.

And, although Israel is not often referred to as God's son, we do find such a description elsewhere in the Bible – and in the context of the exodus!

Exodus 4:22–23 – Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.'

That description of "firstborn son" speaks to Israel's position, Israel's privilege, Israel's family identity, and Israel's inheritance. In short, Israel was the firstborn son of the King, and accordingly Israel had been given every advantage and every privilege. Paul listed their advantages:

Romans 9:4 – They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

But, as we will see, and as we already know, Israel turned its back on all of that. God's son was disobedient and faithless.

Let's now consider the future event described by verse 1.

Yes, Israel was God's son – but Israel was not the **begotten** son of God. There is only one begotten son of God, and that is Jesus.

John 1:14 – And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

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

And Jesus and Israel had something in common – they were both loved by God and called out of Egypt while still a child.

But that is where the comparison ends.

Israel proved to be faithless. But Jesus? He was the just the opposite.

Hebrews 3:5–6 – Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 – But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

Israel proved to be disobedient. But Jesus? He was the just the opposite.

Philippians 2:8 – And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

John 6:38 – For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Israel proved to be **thankless**. But Jesus? He was the just the opposite.

Luke 10:21 – In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “**I thank you, Father**, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”

So what can we say? What we can say is that Jesus succeeded in everything in which Israel had failed.

Hebrews 4:15 – For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, **yet without sin**.

1 Peter 2:22 – **Who did no sin**, neither was guile found in his mouth.

God the Father had called Israel, his son, out of Egypt – but Israel had proved to be sinful, faithless, disobedient, and thankless.

God the Father also called Jesus, his son, out of Egypt – but (unlike Israel) Jesus was sinless, faithful, obedient, and thankful.

Now, here is a question: was that comparison between Israel and the Messiah a message that was intended for Hosea’s listeners? I don’t think so.

I don’t see how they could have possibly picked up on that message about the **future** from the simple statement of **past** history in verse 1.

So for whom then was that message intended? Us!
It was a message for us!

It was a message for the **future** readers of Hosea rather than for the **current** listeners or readers in Hosea's day. Neither we nor anyone else could have known that verse 1 was talking about Jesus until Matthew by inspiration told us that it was.

Yes, those prophets had a message for the people of their own day – but they also had a message for the people of our day. And that should not surprise us because that is precisely how Peter described the Old Testament prophets.

1 Peter 1:10-12 – Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that **they were serving not themselves but you**, in the things **that have now been announced to you** through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

We see such a message right here in Hosea 11:1. Verse 1 is a perfect example of what Peter was describing in 1 Peter 1:10-12.

Hosea 11:2

2 The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.

Here in verse 2 we see, not Jesus, but Israel. Both Jesus and Israel were called out of Egypt,

but with Israel, “the more they were called, the more they went away.”

And notice the language here – not that they **started** sacrificing to their false gods, but rather that they **kept** doing that.

Yes, God had looked back with fondness to Israel’s youth – but even in their youth – even while they were waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain with God’s law – even then, they were already sacrificing to their false gods. And they kept doing just that.

And the more God called for them to return, the more they went away from God. Israel was truly a thankless and rebellious child!

And, as with most thankless and rebellious children, it eventually caught up with them. And that was what was happening now. Assyria was coming to carry off that thankless and rebellious child, never to return.

And was God happy about that? Do we see any happiness from God here? Or do we instead see great sadness.

I think we see great sadness, and that I think is how any parent would feel – or at least should feel – when the consequences finally catch up to their rebellious children. If only they had listened!

Verse 2 in the ESV reads: “The more they were called, the more they went away.” And, although not explicit in that translation, I think the intended meaning is that “the more they were

called [by me], the more they went away [from me].”

And that may be what is meant here, but the original Hebrew literally reads: “they called to them, that is how they went from them.” If that is the correct translation, then what is verse 2 saying?

I think that verse 2 would then be saying, “they [Israel] called to them [Egypt], that is how they [Israel] went from them [Egypt].”

And that statement would then be telling us what we already know – that even during the exodus, Israel was already looking back with fondness toward Egypt. Israel called to Egypt even while Israel went from Egypt.

Numbers 11:4-6 – Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

And that view of verse 2 fits the context very well. Why? Because King Hoshea had or was just about to turn to Egypt for help against Assyria! He was also calling to Egypt!

Israel had started off its history by looking to Egypt for its salvation, and now Israel was ending its history by doing exactly the same thing!

Hosea 11:3

3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them.

We haven't said much about Hosea's own family in quite a while, but I think Hosea's family has been in the background of much of what we have been reading. And, I suspect, for Hosea himself, his family was in the foreground.

Here in verse 3 for example, we might wonder whether Hosea is perhaps remembering something about his own life as he recounts this word from God about Ephraim?

We know from Hosea 1:4 that Hosea's first son, Jezreel, was born just a little while before King Zechariah died in 753 BC.

And it seems likely that the events described in these final chapters of Hosea are occurring during the reign of Hoshea, the final king of Israel. And we know that Hoshea began to reign in 732 BC.

So what does that tell us about Hosea's three kids? It means that the oldest child was about 21, and the others were likely still teenagers!

And how had those three kids turned out? What was going on now for Jezreel, Not Loved, and Not Mine? We aren't told, but perhaps – and sadly so – some or all of them had lived up to their strange names.

Is Hosea himself also having some fond remembrances of his own in these verses? Is Hosea remembering what it was like to teach Jezreel how to walk? To lift Not Loved up by her arms to let her know that, in fact, she was loved? We can only speculate.

But what we know for certain is that God felt this way about Ephraim. God remembered when he taught Ephraim how to walk. God remembered when he took Ephraim up by his arms – not “in his (God’s) arms” but “by his (Ephraim’s) arms” as one would do when teaching a child to walk.

And God remembered healing him – just like a parent might do with a young child who, after learning to walk, has fallen down and skinned his knees.

I retired recently, and one of my projects was to convert about 100 spools of 8mm film from the 1960’s to a digital format. As I read these verses, do you know what I picture? I picture God watching old 8mm home videos! There is no sound – just images. And I picture an old grainy soundless video of God teaching Ephraim how to walk! Yes, Ephraim was rebellious, but that had not always been the case. Ephraim had once been a toddler holding his arms up to God.

Can there be any doubt it now? **Isn’t Hosea the saddest book in the Bible?**

What about that final phrase in verse 3 – “but they did not know that I healed them.” What does that mean?

I think what we see there is a reference back to a specific promise that God made to the people during the exodus.

Exodus 15:26 – “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, **your healer.**”

We know that much of the Law was intended to keep the people healthy, which, of course, was an important concern for a people who had a vital role to play much later in their history as part of God’s plan to bless the world.

We could give many examples, but here is a particularly famous example, from an article on the *Apologetics Press* website:

In 1847, an obstetrician named Ignaz Semmelweis was the director of a hospital ward in Vienna, Austria. Many pregnant women checked into his ward, but 18% of them never checked out. One out of every six that received treatment in Semmelweis’ ward died of labor fever. ... If a woman delivered a baby using a midwife, then the death fell to only about 3%. Yet if she chose to use the most advanced medical knowledge and facilities of the day, her chance of dying skyrocketed immensely!

Semmelweis tried everything to curb the carnage. He turned all the women on their sides in hopes that the death rate would drop, but with no results. He thought maybe the bell that the priest rang late in the evenings scared the women, so he made the priest enter silently, yet without any drop in death rates.

As he contemplated his dilemma, he watched young medical students perform their routine tasks. Each day the students would perform autopsies on the dead mothers. Then they would rinse their hands in a bowl of bloody water, wipe them off on a common, shared towel, and immediately begin internal examinations of the still-living women.

Semmelweis ordered everyone in his ward to wash his or her hands thoroughly in a chlorine solution after every examination. In three months, the death rate fell from 18% to 1%.

That was certainly an amazing discovery for 1847, but God had told the Israelites about it nearly four millennia earlier!

Numbers 19:11-13 – Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days. He shall cleanse himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, and so be clean. But if he does not cleanse himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not become clean. Whoever touches a dead person, the body of anyone who has died, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from Israel; because the water for impurity was not thrown on him, he shall be unclean. His uncleanness is still on him.

So, yes, Ephraim owed its health to God and to the Law of God – but Ephraim did not remember that. And neither did we – at least not in 1847! “They did not know that I healed them.”