

## Hosea – Visions of the Kingdom

It is written in Scripture that “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18). And as the Apostle put it: “we look not at that the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). There is a need therefore, to have good spiritual sight, in beholding the fulfilment of the promises in our minds. This is a characteristic of the faithful: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but **having seen them afar off**, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). It is in this spirit of visualising the promises, that we turn to the prophecy of Hosea, which we have been reading over recent days. Although it is perhaps not a prophecy we would ordinarily turn to for such a vision, it nevertheless is profitable (2 Tim. 3:16) for us to consider and learn.

Hosea chapter 1 describes the troubles that would come upon Israel as a consequence of their waywardness – but at the same time it also offers hope:

“... I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and **will save them** by Yahweh their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen” (Hos. 1:6-7).

Though there remains a time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:9), God will not cast away his people whom he foreknew (Rom. 11:2), but will fight against their adversaries: “then shall Yahweh go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:3). He “will have mercy” upon them, and “will save them,” not with the military might of men, but by his Spirit: “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith Yahweh of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). “when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Yahweh shall lift up a standard against him” (Isa. 59:19), and the One who is “full of power by the spirit of Yahweh, and of judgment and of might” (Mic. 3:8), shall turn away ungodliness out of Jacob (Rom. 11:26). He will fight, as in the days of old, and deliver His People from the hand of he that is stronger than they.

The promise through Hosea continues:

“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea ... and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the Living God” (Hos. 1:10).

This comparison by which the number of the people is described – as the sand upon the sea shore – brings us back to consider the promises made to Abraham (see Gen. 22:17). But their cast-off state forms a basis for the bringing in of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:12). If Israel who were cast off, are able to be grafted back into their own olive tree, how much more shall Gentiles, who are in a similar cast-off position, also be brought in (see Rom. 11). Abraham is not the father of his natural descendants only, he is to Gentiles also, who emulate his faith, and embrace the promises. This is the application of Paul to these words of Hosea:

“... even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but **also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee**, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people: there shall they be called the children of the living God” (Rom. 9:26).

Here is the point: if Israel who were in the state of being “not my people” could be reconciled to their God, then surely Gentiles who are naturally not the people of God can similarly be brought in, upon the same basis of faith. Hence these words of Hosea have a very direct bearing upon our own salvation, as well as that of Israel!

Hosea 1 continues: “Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land ...” (Hos. 1:11). In ancient times, Israel appointed themselves, and were given a king: “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath” (Hos. 13:11). But in the future, the Lord Jesus Christ will be their head. But the description is: “they shall come up out of the land” – which is most interesting! Whilst it is true that the nation shall return out of the land of the North (Jer. 3:17-19), their regathering is likened to a national resurrection, when they shall come up out of the earth of their graves:

“behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves ...” (Eze. 37:12-13).

In this way, Israel in dispersion shall return to their land and their God, and be elevated out of their political graves. But the prophets also describe how that on their journey to the land they shall pass through a spiritual wilderness:

“And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into **the wilderness of the people**, and there will I plead with you face to face” (Eze. 20:34-35).

There would appear to be only a few references in the Prophetic word to this “wilderness” of the latter days. Jeremiah 31:2 speaks of how there, the people will find grace, and be drawn back to their God, and Revelation 17 speaks of the European spiritual wilderness, inhabited by the Roman political animal. This latter chapter is of great interest: “... he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy” (Rev. 17:3). The European system at present is not a dry and barren place, literally speaking. But spiritually it is such, it is dry, barren and desolate. On their journey through the European wilderness, God will “plead” with his people, which perhaps implies a time of persecution, as Ezekiel also describes how then “I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Yahweh” (Eze. 20:38).

Hosea chapter 2 also describes this wilderness:

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt” (Hes. 2:14-15).

Notice the reference here to the valley of Achor – in Joshua chapters 6 & 7, we find that when Israel left Egypt, they passed through the wilderness, and began to take up their inheritance. However, Achan stole from Yahweh. All the spoils were to be devoted to Divine service: “All the silver and the gold, and vessels of brass and iron are consecrated unto Yahweh: they shall come into the treasury of Yahweh (Josh. 6:19). But Achor was brought to confess that he had stolen: “Indeed I have sinned against Yahweh God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done” (Josh. 7:20-21). He stole from the silver, gold, and took a Babylonish garment, and was thus condemned to death. He was stoned to death: all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So Yahweh turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day” (vs 25-26).

The name “Achor” means “trouble” and expresses how that Achan troubled Israel by his deeds (vs. 25). It was a place of cursing, where the troubler of Israel was destroyed. But Hosea describes how that place will become “a door of hope”. Israel as a nation were under a curse because of their rebellion against their God, but in that day, the curse will become a blessing, and the place of cursing a door of hope. Then, the Name of Yahweh will be made known, and the names of the Baal gods will be no more remembered (Hos. 2:16-17).

Hosea chapter 6 describes the healing of that day:

“Come, and let us return unto Yahweh: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight” (Hos. 6:1-2).

Notice that again, we have the language a national resurrection: “he will raise us up, and we shall live ...”. Israel had been smitten by their God, as described by Isaiah:

“Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (Isa. 1:5-6).

The reference to “wounds and bruises” indicates a trauma caused by smiting. Yet though they were smitten, they refused to repent, hence the words: “Why should ye be stricken any more”. But in the future, the nation will revive, and be healed by their God. The reference to being raised on the third day is interesting, and reminds us of Messiah’s resurrection on the third day. The application is also made sometimes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennial day, when Christ will come again for the healing of his people.

Then, as a national bride, Israel shall be betrothed to her husband, even Yahweh Himself: "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know Yahweh" (Hos. 2:20).

This reference, "thou shalt know Yahweh" reminds us of the first marriage in Scripture, that of Adam and Eve: "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived, and bare Cain ..." (Gen. 4:1). Knowing the Lord also equates with having eternal life: "this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Jno. 17:3). And these two ideas are brought together by Paul: "... for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit ..." (1 Cor.6:16-17). This is the hope of believers: to know and become joined to the Lord as one living spirit (cp. Eph. 5:30-32).

Hosea chapter 6 proceeds to describe the favour of the Lord as rain:

"he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (Hos. 6:3).

This aspect is also described in Psalm 72: "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth" (Psa. 72:6). The nations having been mown down by the judgments of Yahweh, the blessings of the Lord shall descend in abundance. Following His wrath, his favour will be extended to the nations, even as it is written: "The king's wrath is as the roaring of the lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass" (Prov. 19:12).

Hosea chapter 14 describes the spiritual blessings of that day:

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon" (Hos. 14:1-6).

Being grafted back into the rootstock of the promises made to the fathers of old (Rom. 11:24), cut off Israel shall be restored, and will prosper. The Lord himself used the same comparison with a tree, speaking of the coming kingdom:

"It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it" (Lu. 13:19).

This the day so longed for by all the saints of old: the kingdom being restored to Israel. "there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch will not cease" (Job. 14:7). And the Israelitish tree will indeed regrow! Being the rod out of the stem of Jesse, the Lord Jesus Christ himself will be the pre-eminent "branch" (Isa. 11:1), and his kingdom will grow as a tree, and provide shelter for the fowls of the air, or the nations that will seek refuge in her shadow. This is the Hope of Israel, embraced by all those who have a vision of the glories of the Age to Come.

*Christopher Maddocks*