

Hosea, Gomer, and Modern Idolatry

Our Wednesday evening Adult Bible Class is studying God's pronouncement of judgment against the northern ten tribes of Israel through His prophet Hosea. Though the date of the prophecy apparently can't be specifically identified, it was probably written somewhere between a few years and a couple of decades before Assyria's destruction of them in 722 B.C. (perhaps around 750 B.C. according to some). Most serious bible students are already familiar with the basic "story" of Hosea- that the prophet was charged to *marry* and *bear children with a harlot*. Then, when she (*Gomer*) became unfaithful and left him for her *lover(s)*, he was commanded to go and *buy her back*- thus *redeeming* her. This, of course, was done to demonstrate to both Hosea (representing God) and the nation not only how God felt about Israel (represented by Gomer), but what He was going to do regarding her unfaithfulness and idolatry, cf. Hos.1:6,9; 10:7. However, there was something else that "jumped out at me" from this story that I hadn't particularly noticed in my previous studies of it...

Hos.2:5 says of *Gomer* (again, idolatrous *Israel*) and her *children*, ***"For their mother has played the harlot; for she has said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'***" Here Gomer, after being taken from harlotry and becoming the *wife* of Hosea- and *mother* to at least *some* of his children (cf. Hos.1:3-9), contemplates a return to her former idolatrous immoralities with her *"lovers."* But the thing that really stood out to me was that she attributed her *blessings* of *food, clothing, and luxuries* to her ***"lovers"- i.e. her idols.*** Think of how that must have made God feel! It wasn't enough that the nation of Israel had abandoned Him despite His *goodness* to and *faithful provision* for her, she also attributed all that He had provided **to her idols**- which were no gods at all, cf. Hos.2:8; 14:8 and 1Cor.8:4; Gal.4:8. Talk about a "slap in the face"! And to God Himself, no less! It was He that *"did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness"* (Acts 14:17) but she/Israel credited these *blessings* to her *lovers/idols*! Then it dawned on me....

Is modern man really any different than ancient Israel? Haven't we, both *nationally* and throughout the *world*, done precisely the same thing? We have taken the *blessings* of God's provision of *food, clothing, and even luxuries* that He provides as a *"witness"* (cf. Acts 14:17) of His *goodness* and *faithfulness* to us and attributed them to our own *idolatrous lovers*! We ascribe His gracious provisions to "Mother Nature" or "Plant Earth" as products of "Evolution," or even assume they are yields of our own industry and presumed power. We are no better than *Gomer* and *Israel* in these regards. And I fear we will suffer the same fate for our *arrogant idolatry*. Note Hos.2:8-13 to see Israel's, and perhaps our own, fate. *"For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil, and lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax given to cover her nakedness. And then I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one will rescue her out of My hand. I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths and all her festal assemblies. I will destroy her vines and fig trees, of which she said, 'These are my wages which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field will devour them. I will punish her for the days of the*

Baals when she used to offer sacrifices to them and adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, and follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me, declares the LORD.”

Friends, we had better heed the warning of 1Cor.10:6,11-12 regarding ancient Israel, *“Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were... Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”* (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)