

LOVE THAT IS NOT BLIND (continued from inside)

Israel was bearing *its OWN* "fruit," rather than "fruit" in fellowship with God. I will use various translations to help describe what Hosea wrote: "Israel is an empty/luxuriant/branching/unpruned] vine, he brings forth fruit to [for/like] himself" (10:1). Hosea tells that such selfish "fruit-bearing" came from Israel's sense of self-sufficiency (independence from God) and that it led to a wide range of sin and idolatry. Every person and nation should take this to heart.

God loved Israel, yet it was **Love That Is Not Blind!** He loves us all—the entire world—likewise. In Hosea 11:1, God says "When Israel was a child, I loved him." Due to sin that flooded and polluted the nation, God is then heard saying, as if in a state of frustrated and perplexed love, "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?...My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. (11:8). God had already shared His Divine frustration in 6:4, asking "What shall I do to you?"

This all perfectly pictures how God feels about each one who stays on the road of sin, destruction and damnation. God must feel this way toward nations He had blessed in the past with genuine spiritual revival, like Britain and the USA. Listen to God's heart-cry through the prophet, Ezekiel: "Turn, turn, for why will you die!?" 2 Pet. 3:9 confirms this same attitude of God's loving *un*willingness that *any* should die in sin and go to hell.

For years I have seen news articles about **human trafficking**, whether for prostitution or slave labour. Remember, Hosea's wife had become a prostitute and

a slave—a picture of Israel's condition in God's eyes. Hosea 12:7 says of Israel: "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loves to oppress."

The word "merchant" (above) is also translated "trafficker." The original word could be translated into a one-word exclamation: "Canaan!" One translation has it: "A cunning Canaanite!" In other words, Israel had become as bad as, or worse than, the people God had them to chase out of the land He had promised to them through Abraham. Yes, God loved Israel, but **God's Love Is Not Blind!**

God, in holy love, calls sin by its right name, exposes all of its tricks and hiding places. He makes no treaties with it. That which excuses, approves or promotes sin is an accomplice, and as Abraham said, "The Judge of all the earth will do right!" (Gen.18:25 with Num.32:23).

Yes, God will forgive and cleanse us from sin **IF** we truly repent to turn to Him, whole-heartedly, by faith and obedience (1 Jn.1:7,9). **Otherwise**, God must allow sin to take its natural course, which it will (James 1:15), bringing judgment and eternal damnation.

Hosea's final chapter (14) shows the awakening, repentance and return of Israel to God, with no corner-cutting. Jeremiah 31:18-26 is similar. Israel's name, "Ephraim," means **Fruitful**. Remember, Israel had perverted this into bearing *self*-fruit, rather than fruit in union with God. Ephraim awakened to its sin and stupidity, and proclaimed that it will have nothing more to do with idols. It further confessed that all of its fruit is from God! What a change! This shows the outcome of God's intentions—for Israel and for all others. His love persevered and prevailed. **God's Love Is Not Blind, after all. Hallelujah!**

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT) spiritual renewal to Britain during that period. The book, **England: Before & After Wesley**, tells the prevalent evils of that time, but what God did about it through Wesley & others. That journalist also failed to mention John Bunyan's classic, **The Pilgrim's Progress**, published in Feb. 1678. Most people do not realise that they are either in the "Progress" with the Rake & the Harlot, or with the Pilgrim. There are only two roads (Ps.1; Matt.7:13,14). No one is exempt; no excuses accepted. Don't blame anyone or anything else, including King George. Global promoting of evils doesn't change God's view on sin of ANY kind—"politically correct," or not. (CREDIT: I credit & thank a preacher-author from London's past, G. C. Morgan, for various thoughts on the book of Hosea...but God helped me even more!)

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421 Watford Way, Hendon London NW4 4TR Phone: 020-8202-0806
Website: www.londonchristianstandard.com



LOVE THAT IS NOT BLIND

(A Lesson in Love: The Book of Hosea)

Gabriel L. Mancino

Man knowing what would happen. Yet, *both* knew that their love, though misunderstood and rejected, excels any other method in reaching and rescuing man from sin, self and Satan.

One of the greatest Love Stories in the Bible is the book of the prophet, Hosea. It takes about 7 to 10 pages in the average Bible. **Hosea has been called "the prophet of outraged, but persevering love."** His "book" is a perfect mirror of God's own experience with Israel, yet *the whole world* has been gladly going along for the ride! All mankind is in the same boat, though Israel has a specific and special purpose in God's Plan of the Ages.

I have had people criticise the fact that God told His prophet, Hosea, to marry a prostitute and have children by

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The age-old claim, "Love Is Blind," is often true. Love is also often mingled with tragedy and heartache. Yet, "Love Triumphant," at the end of suffering or even amid the pain, is one of the most beautiful things a person could ever see or experience.

Love's Supreme Model is God's love for sin-fallen, sin-loving mankind. Jesus knew that He would be "*despised and rejected of men*," as the prophet, Isaiah, foretold (53:3). He knew He would be brutally killed, yet He came and loved "*to the end*" ["*to the uttermost*"] (Jn. 13:1). **It was an uttermost love for a gutter-most world.** That love still applies today.

Was God blind? Was Jesus blind? Couldn't they see ahead? Jesus came, knowing what would happen. God made

DON'T BLAME KING GEORGE! A two-page article in one of our national newspapers claimed that the Georgian period (1714-1837) laid much ground-work for today's binge-drinking and obsession with sex and celebrities. A large picture of 18th century painter (etc!), Hogarth, called **The Rake's Progress**, topped the article. A "Rake" is a very immoral man; usually rich & of high social standing. Truly, Hogarth's Rake's Progress series of paintings, & those he called **The Harlot's Progress** send a clear & frightful warning to all. However, the article was silent about John Wesley (1703-91), through whom God brought (CONTINUED ON BACK)

LOVE THAT IS NOT BLIND (continued from front page)

her. God's command was most likely worded to inform Hosea of what his wife would do *after* they married, not what she was at that time.

No other book of the Bible portrays God's own heart-breaking experience with Israel; the nation that was like a "wife" to Him. God had the prophet, Jeremiah, to express the same idea (3:14; 31:32). In this context, no man knew the pain of God like Hosea. God wanted it that way, for *our* benefit. Are we getting the picture and the point?

Hosea's wife, Gomer, had not committed a one-off act of adultery, which would have been bad enough. She became a prostitute, and finally a slave. And who ends up purchasing her, but Hosea himself...by God's order! He willingly...*though, surely with agony...* went, found her and bought her to return home with him. **This is no fairy tale.** By the way, God didn't actually tell Hosea to go and *buy* her. He only told him to go and *love* her, but Hosea knew what that meant. Godly love needs no "fine print" explanations.

Hosea learned **1)** the nature of Israel's sin **2)** the rightness of God's judgment on and rejection of Israel, and **3)** God's rescuing, redeeming love. Hosea's painful experience brought him into closer union with God, fitting him to minister "through God's eyes" to a prostituted nation.

In the book of Romans (11:15), St. Paul wrote about the rejection of Israel and then the staggering impact of its reclamation by the loving Plan of God. **Mark it down:** God's plan for Israel is intended to benefit the entire world. So, every "spectator" in this arena is *permitted, welcomed*, but also *personally responsible* to run down on the playing field to become a willing "participant!"

Throughout the Old Testament we see the idolatry and perversity of Israel. God said so, and He wasn't Anti-Semitic. He is anti-SIN, wherever it is found; including among His chosen

people. Using Hosea, God warned the southern kingdom of Judah not to join in with the idolatry of the northern kingdom of Israel, also called "Ephraim" (after the name of the largest tribe).

This same warning against joining in with others in sin is repeatedly stated in the New Testament. St. Paul gives it, for example, in 2 Cor. 6: 14 to 7:3.

Hosea faithfully gave God's command: **"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone"** (4:17). St. John lovingly warned the Church in nearly the same words: **"Little children, keep yourselves from idols"**. (1 Jn. 5:21). That word, "keep" is a very strong one in the meaning of the original language. There can be no compromise with anything that puts our fellowship with God at risk. John added *this* for clarification—"If we SAY we have fellowship with God, BUT WALK in darkness, we are lying!" (1 Jn. 1:6; 2:4).

The book of Hosea ends gloriously with Israel returning in repentance to God and declaring, as if with sudden clearness of mind: **"What have I to do anymore with idols?"** (14:8).

In the meantime, Israel was to face the judgment of God for their vast, varied, outrageous, provocative, and relentless sinning, just like Britain, America, and the rest of the world today. God never pours out judgment for the fun of it. It is always intended to be corrective; to turn people away from sin, away from that which harms them and away from that which will finally land them forever in Hell. Sin always blocks people from God. To "repent" means to turn away from sin...but keep going!!

Judgment on Israel was to be poured out in various ways and in the long term. **Yet, God uses the word "until"!** (5:15). The prophet, Ezekiel, saw the same rejection of Israel and later return of God's glory to them. As Jesus' earthly ministry came to a close, He cried out to a once-again rejecting, rebellious nation: **"Behold, your house is left to you desolate. For I say to you, you shall see Me no more, UNTIL you shall say, Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"**. (Matt. 23: 38, 39; Lk. 13:35).

Note two things in this context about that word, "until" 1) God intends it to be a door of hope and a proof of His ultimate, yet correcting, love. **He cannot turn a blind eye to sin.** 2) God's **"Until,"** that is, His extending of mercy and time, will be wasted on people if they allow it! Many people refuse to wake up, admit and repent. The book of Revelation shows this vividly, both *outside* and *inside* the Church. To one group Jesus says *"as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent"* (Rev. 3:19). To another He *"gave her space to repent...but she did not repent!"* (2:21).

This refusal to repent is seen again; perhaps referring to our times! *"And the rest of the men...yet did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither did they repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts"* (9: 20, 21). See more in Rev. 16:9, 11.

People often refuse to repent whether God is blessing or "blistering" them. Jesus described such people as being like children playing in the marketplace, who can't be satisfied, no matter what you do (Lk.7:31-35). People must shake off this spiritual stupor and get to God—*"repent...or else,"* as Jesus warned, faithfully, yet frankly, in love (Rev.2:5). Satan and sin may *cause* the stupor, but only *"Self"* allows the stupor to continue, once God's light shines into the heart and mind. It is easy to fall back to sleep; excusing self and accusing God.

Many believe in the basic goodness of man. What God said to ancient Israel, He says to all people today: **"Your goodness is like the morning cloud, and as the dew that goes away early"** (Hos. 6:4). The book of Judges shows Israel's habitual unfaithfulness to God that plagues the entire Old Testament, then blights the time of Christ and the early church. Yet, is the **"goodness"** of today's world any better?

The nations around Israel could see

Israel's sin, its idolatry and its hypocrisy, but *Israel* could not see it: **"He does not know it...He does not know it"** (Hos. 7:9). Jesus likewise said to the church of the Laodiceans: **"But you do not know!"** (Rev. 3:17). This kind of self-deception is the worst, and its consequences, eternal.

What *Jesus* did for the people of the self-blinded church, above (Rev. 3:17), *God* did for Israel—He pointed out their error...*as He must...*but then offered a solution...a corrective. Faithful love!

Yes, individuals can *and do* deceive themselves. But self-deception also occurs with nations and governments. A variety of *perceived* or *pretended* "strengths" are boasted in an attempt to fool the general public. Oh, deception!

Hosea 8 gives reasons why God was sending judgment upon Israel. Nations that turn from a true walk with God set themselves up for judgment. It is time...*past time...*for nations and their citizens to repent and get thoroughly right with God.

In chapter 9, God describes His rejected people as wanderers/fugitives. Jesus' story of **the Prodigal Son** gives quite the same picture (Lk. 15:11ff). The runaway son had brief pleasure, but lost everything and ended up feeding pigs. **A pig pen can be anywhere!** Thank God, the Prodigal came to his senses and returned to his father's house and was welcomed with loving arms. Hosea portrays Israel (Ephraim) getting back to God, like the Prodigal, as well! Oh that Britain would do likewise; from east to west; from north to south!

In chapter 10, Hosea uses **the Vine**, a commonly known symbol of the nation of Israel. Isaiah and Jeremiah used it, too. Later, Jesus brought the symbol to its supreme use, saying in Jn. 15, **"I am The True Vine. You are the branches...Abide [remain/continue] in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me"** THIS was Israel's national tragedy, perversity, prostitution and sin, which God reveals through Hosea.

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We meet at Christ Church on the corner of Brent Street and Heriot Road in Hendon (NW4) at 5:45 pm Sundays. Nearest Tube: Hendon Central.