

Israel's Wife and Sheep Hosea 12:12

To provide a background setting for Hosea the prophet, we can tell you he was a prophet of the Lord, who was sent to the Northern kingdom of Israel, after the kingdom was divided into what is known as the Southern and Northern kingdoms. Hosea was sent to prophesy of the whoredom of Israel in turning away from God to idolatry. God exemplified to Israel their conduct toward him, by the example of Hosea's wife and all the horrendous acts of infidelity she did in their marriage, which is also a picture of man without God in his life. Although, the main thrust of Hosea's prophesy was to the Northern kingdom, he also prophesied to, and of, the Southern kingdom, shown to us in this chapter as he speaks of Judah, which makes him a prophet to all Israel.

Ho 12:1 "Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

We see here; the Northern kingdom has turned from God to idolatry, and they have made league with those nations, from whom God had separated them to be a people to himself. Certainly, this is not 'Keeping the Faith' as we are directed in: **Heb 10:23 "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"**

2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. 3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: 4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us; 5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial.

God declares that he also has a problem with Judah, the Southern kingdom, and with Jacob, all Israel. God further declares; he will punish Jacob, both the Northern and Southern kingdoms. This is a reminder to us; when we are born-again, we may choose to disobey God. Even though our sins are eternally forgiven in Christ's finished work, we will bear the consequence for sin, here in time. How can this be? Did King David get by with his sins of adultery and murder, without suffering a consequence? Did Peter get by with his denial of Christ? Did Saul get by without suffering for all he did before his conversion. The answer to all these questions is, No.

Hosea declares that God is the memorial of Judah and of Israel. Do you realize the implication of this word **"memorial?"** A memorial is something that reminds us of something in the past. God is saying to all Israel; I was once your active and living God who led you about, and protected, and kept you by my own power. Yet, you, Israel, have forgotten who, and what, I am to you. Now, I am to you but some memory from the past. Currently, you have no active relationship with me, wherefore, I have sent this prophet Hosea to remind you of who I am.

I ask all, who claim to be Christians, are you in a present communal relationship with Christ, your Saviour and King? Or is Christ Jesus just a memorial to you? Oh! How easy it is to fall away from Christ, when the abundant blessings of God are poured out upon us. Oh! How necessary are the trials, and tribulations, of life, which keep fresh in our minds our need of Christ.

6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually. 7 ¶ He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. 8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.

Hosea reminds them to leave idolatry and turn to God again. God points out here; Ephraim, the Northern kingdom, has made himself rich by false balances. He has not been made rich by the abundant blessing of God. God says; Ephraim, in self-righteousness, is saying to God, just examine my life. I have conducted my business so secretly that no one knows of my false balances, and none can prove that I have any sin in me.

I have been told stories by, and of, businessmen, who will tell you: the way to get rich in business is to join the biggest church you can find. Let them know what business you are in, and the church will support you and make you rich. I can truthfully declare to you; this method of business is the same as using false balances. You are proclaiming to be a child of God by joining the church body, yet you did not join because of your love for Christ, you joined because of your love of money, wherefore, Jesus is just a memorial to you.

9 And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast. 10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets. 11 Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

Hosea prophesies: God was your visible God when he brought you forth from Egypt. God will again be your visible God, not a memorial, and will yet cause you to worship him and keep his solemn feast. Hosea reminds Israel of their sin, and how in times past they had altars of sacrifice throughout the land of promise. Hosea tells Israel: the altars you have now are vain because you do not sacrifice to God but to your idols. He tells them: your present altars, which are all over the land, are not the one altar of sacrifice I had made for Israel, and they are not in the place I chose to put that one altar.

12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.

We will comment on this verse as the closing subject.

13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved. 14 Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him."

Here we have the prophetic picture of the fulfilling of the ceremonial and sacrificial law service, and the coming of the age of salvation by grace. Hosea declares: God, through Moses, brought Israel out of Egypt. God preserved Israel in the wilderness and finally delivered them into the land of promise, because of God's covenant promise.

Jesus has eternally, and is still in time, bringing sinners out of Egypt, the world of sin, and bringing them into the land of promise in time, the Church of Salvation by Grace, wherefore, Israel, the Church, is preserved.

" Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him." What a sad proclamation. Do you remember what the Jews said when they were trying to get the Romans to crucify Christ? **Mt 27:25 "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children."** Not every person in the world will be saved by the grace of God. Only those for whom Christ died, given to him by God the Father. The ones that are saved by Christ will be held unaccountable of the blood of Christ. Those, who are unsaved by Christ, will bear the guilt of the innocent blood that was shed. There is nothing to take away their sin.

Thankfully, there are people in this world, who have provoked the anger of God because of sins, upon whom God brings forth his judicial wrath, until he is no longer a memorial to them, but a very present help in the time of trouble.

Ho 12:12 "And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep."

In this verse, we have a prophetic picture of the coming of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ who will usher in the age of salvation by grace. God made a covenant with Jacob that he would bring his seed into a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey. God kept that promise in the physical world when he brought Israel into the land of promise. Because Israel failed to do as God commanded, when they were in the land of promise, by their turning to idolatry; God removed them from the land of promise by carrying them away into captivity, or by keeping them captive in the land of promise. Not only that; God also declared he will bring about the dissolution of Israel as a nation, seen in: **Ho 1:4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel."**

Jacob fled to Syria to keep from being murdered by his brother, and there he obtained a wife. Actually, through the deceit of Laban, Jacob ended up with two wives; the true wife he bargained for was given, only after agreeing to labor seven more years. Jesus left heaven, his home, and came to earth to accomplish the will of God the Father. Unlike Jacob fleeing to save his life, Jesus came to die at the hands of men, to procure to himself a wife. Do you see? Man's inherent natural nature is the opposite of God's pure and holy nature.

Jesus came to earth and procured, and betrothed, himself a wife by the works of his own hand. Jesus established a land of promise, here on earth, by setting up the Church of Salvation by Grace. That land of

promise is still being populated each time a child of God is born-again. The nation Israel, which had defined borders, and was claimed by God to be a nation of people to bear his name on earth, was caused to cease on earth by the removal of Israel from the land of promise.

Remember, God's covenant with Jacob was an eternal covenant, so God, before the world was, had a plan to bring his eternal promised covenant to fruition. Consider this picture: Jacob fleeing to Syria, procuring his wife, having his children and gaining his earthly wealth; then Jacob, who is now called Israel, returns to his homeland. This prophetic picture was accomplished when Christ came into the world in incarnation. The land of promise, established by Christ, is not a nation with borders but encompasses the whole earth. Every place where there is a child of God. This church will continue, on earth, as long as there is time. Also, as Israel was removed from the land of promise, all of God's children will be removed from the land of promise on earth, the church of Salvation by Grace, and will be carried away to the eternal land of promise, which will fulfill the eternal aspect of God's covenant with Israel.

In Syria, Jacob met his wife and he served for her seven years, plus seven more years, because he had no dowry to offer. The dowry he agreed to pay was to keep the sheep of his father-in-law, Laban, for seven years.

Here is the prophetic scene: Christ Jesus came into this world of sin, pictured as Syria, and served his time to procure to himself his betrothed wife, the church of salvation by grace. Jacob was given two wives. The first wife was given in deceit, and then his true wife, for which he labored seven years twice. Does this remind you of any scripture reference? ***Isa 40:2 "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins."*** Jesus fulfilled the covenant promise with God the Father, to procure this wife for himself, by giving his life for her upon the cross. You see, Jesus had to do his work on earth, for salvation to come to both the Jews and the Gentiles. Israel, the true church, receives double in that she gets a land of promise here on earth in time, and she gets an eternal land of promise when time is no more. Included in this numerous host of people is a double blessing, which includes both Jew and Gentile.

Numerous times, God spoke of Israel as his sheep. Numerous times, Jesus spoke of the children of grace as his sheep. Jesus spoke of himself as the ***"Shepherd of the sheep."*** Do you remember how Jacob got his own flocks of sheep. He bargained with his father-in-law that his pay would be certain ones of the flocks that he kept. Laban required of Jacob: that if any of his flocks that Jacob kept had any losses, were torn of beast, Jacob had to bear the cost and make good the losses. Each time a child of God is born-again; one of Laban's, a picture of the devil, sheep is lost to Laban. The cost of that loss to Laban, is paid for by the finished work of Jesus Christ, who procures that sheep out of the ownership of Laban, Satan, to himself.

Think of the great cost that Jesus suffered to keep every sheep. The gift of his life on the cross, as well as the pain and suffering he endured, were the eternal payment made for each child of God, who is lost to this world of sin and accounted one to occupy God's eternal kingdom.

Jacob put a three day's distance between his own flocks and the flocks of Laban, so none could accuse him of stealing. When you are born-again, you are a separated people. A people, whose lives are dedicated to the service of God and Christ. This three-day separation is the prophetic picture, of the resurrection of Christ from the tomb, ***"on the third day."*** Each time a child of God is born again there is a resurrection of the dead. The end of time resurrection will be, that which gives God's sheep eternal separation, from the rest of the world.

Ho 12:12 "Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep." We declare unto you today: The Church of Salvation by Grace, is the flock of sheep for which God the Son gave his life. These sheep, collected into one body, will become the bride of Christ, and will be wedded to Christ, as seen in Revelation.

Further, we declare: Since God's covenant with Jacob was an eternal covenant to his seed, it is still being accomplished today in time. Each time a person, of the lineage of Jacob, and of the Gentiles that are grafted in, is brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, whether it be Jew or Gentile, we see the fulfillment of Hosea's prophesy in: ***Ho 12:9 And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast."*** Do you see? When a child of God is born-again, the Lord and Jesus Christ are no longer just a memorial to them. Christ is, as seen in: ***Ps 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*** a very present help, because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Christ in you.

What a glorious hope, to look forward to the wedding supper of the Lamb, and to be received into the place that our Husbandman has gone to prepare for us. Hallelujah! Praise ye the LORD!