

Major Lessons from Minor Prophets

Love and Judgment: God's Dilemma (Hosea)

Lesson #2 for April 13, 2013

Scriptures: 2 Kings 17:5-23; Hosea 4:11-16; 7:11,12; 10:11-13; 14; Judges 2:11-23; 3:1-11; Matthew 11:28-30; Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24.

1. In this lesson we will focus on one of the most important teachings about God in the entire Bible. In Hosea 1-3, God used a lived-out parable to try to illustrate the truth about Himself and what He does to those of us who insist on leaving Him. In Hosea 4:11-16, there is a brief discussion of the circumstances. And what was God's response? Read Hosea 4:17.
2. The children of Israel had settled in Palestine. They were supposed to be at the crossroads of the civilized world of their day to represent the truth about their wonderful heavenly Father. Instead, they were doing everything wrong. To the north of them was the Assyrian Empire, rapidly growing in strength and ambitious to become a world leader. To the south of them was Egypt with some of the same aspirations. Under those circumstances, Palestine became a battlefield when the children of Israel lost their protection from God.
3. If you have not done so recently, read again 2 Kings 17:5-23 (the *Good News Bible* is especially good on this passage) to get the overall context. What was God supposed to do with those rebellious, obstinate, disobedient children? In Hosea, God likened Himself to a loving Husband, married to a profligate, prostitute wife. He also likened Himself to a Parent with a rebellious child. These are common pictures throughout Scripture.
4. God repeatedly tells us that a loving, caring parent will discipline his children for their own good. (Deuteronomy 8:5; Proverbs 13:24; Hosea 11:1-4; Hebrews 12:6; Revelation 3:19) But, what is God supposed to do if the discipline is not working? Read Hosea 11:5-9.
5. In the days of Abraham and Lot, there were five cities in the Jordan River Valley southeast of the Dead Sea. (Genesis 14:8) These cities were Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. Only Zoar survived briefly but later was destroyed also. (*PP* 167.3) The other four cities became proverbially known for what happens to rebellious people when God gives up on them.
6. The Christian church has traditionally taught that God hates sin and is very angry at sin and sinners. That idea is contradicted by verses like Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24; and Galatians 3:13. If Jesus died experiencing the wrath of God against sin—the same death that sinners will experience in the end—how was God involved in that death?
7. Down through the ages, the Christian church has repeatedly tried to threaten people with the wrath of God—even the threat of an eternally-burning hell—to get them to do what the church wanted them to do, often to give more money. So, what is the truth about how God finally, irrevocably pours out His wrath on those who are determined to rebel against Him?
8. **Do you clearly understand what God's wrath is? What does God do when He "pours out His wrath and anger"? (Compare Revelation 14:9-11) What happens to people upon whom it is poured? Where would you look in the Bible to get a clear definition of God's wrath?** As a suggestion, read Romans 1 carefully; try to notice how Paul discussed God's wrath. What does God's wrath (Romans 1:18) have to do with the "good news" of which Paul was so proud? (Romans 1:16) What does God actually do when "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven"? (Romans 1:18) What is implied by Romans 1:24-28? (Compare Hosea 4:16-17; Hosea 11:1-12) Then you must ask yourself, "Has God ever fully and finally given anyone up?" What would that mean? How would God "do" such a thing? What about the story of Adam and Eve and the original sin? God said, "If you eat of the tree [sin] you will die." (Genesis 2:17) Does this suggest that if God gives someone up, he will die? (Compare Romans 6:23) **If God is the source of life and someone is "separated" from that source, what is the result? (Isaiah 59:2) Is there any**

verse in the Bible that specifically states what happens when someone is given up by God? Hasn't God stated what would happen? But, in His usual consummate way, hasn't He also fully demonstrated it? See Romans 4:25. Compare Matthew 27:46. How was God involved in the death of His Son? What was the actual cause of Jesus' death?

9. Understanding God's anger or wrath and how it is very different than human anger/wrath is one of the major lessons we need to learn from Scripture. God never "loses His temper." The key is to understand what God **does** when He pours out His wrath. (Revelation 14:9-11) What do the following passages teach us about God's anger and its results?
10. Look first at God's prediction of what would happen if His people left Him.

Deuteronomy 31:16-18: ¹⁶ The LORD said to Moses, "You will soon die, and after your death the people will become unfaithful to me and break the covenant that I made with them. **They will abandon me** and worship the pagan gods of the land they are about to enter. ¹⁷When that happens, **I will become angry with them; I will abandon them, and they will be destroyed.** Many terrible disasters will come upon them, and then **they will realize that these things are happening to them because I, their God, am no longer with them.** ¹⁸And I will refuse to help them then, because they have done evil and worshiped other gods." (GNB)

Deuteronomy 31:17: (quoting the key words)

"... I will become angry with them. I will abandon them and turn away from them."
(*God's Word*)

"When that happens, I will become angry with them; I will abandon them, and they will be destroyed." (GNB)

"... My anger will flare up against them, and I will abandon them and hide My countenance from them." (*Tanakh*)

"... I will have to withdraw my protection from them and leave them at the mercy of their enemies." (*Clear Word*)

Numbers 32:13-15: [Moses said:] "**The LORD was angry** with the people and made them wander in the wilderness for forty years until that whole generation that had displeased him was dead. ¹⁴And now you have taken your fathers' place, a new generation of sinful men ready to bring down the **fierce anger of the LORD** on Israel again. ¹⁵If you people of Reuben and Gad refuse to follow him now, **he will once again abandon all these people** in the wilderness, and you will be responsible for their destruction." (GNB)

Deuteronomy 29:19: [Moses said:] "Make sure that there is no one here today who hears these solemn demands and yet convinces himself that all will be well with him, even if he stubbornly goes his own way. That would destroy all of you, good and evil alike." (GNB)

Judges 2:12-14: (Read the whole passage from Judges 2:6-23 - early Baal worship)

12They **stopped worshiping the LORD**,...14And so **the LORD became furious with Israel and let raiders attack and rob them. He let enemies all around overpower them**, and the Israelites could no longer protect themselves. (GNB)

Judges 2:19-23: But whenever the judge died, **they turned back and behaved worse than their fathers, going after other gods**,... **the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel**.... [The LORD said:] "**I will not henceforth drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died**, ²² that by

them I may test Israel, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not.” 23 **So the LORD left those nations**, not driving them out at once, and he did not give them into the power of Joshua. (RSV)

Judges 3:7-9: 7 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, forgetting the LORD their God.... **Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel**, and he sold them into the hand of **Cu’shan-rishatha’im king of Mesopota’mia**. (RSV)

Judges 10:6-12: 6 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.... **The anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel**, and he sold them into the hand of the **Philistines and into the hand of the Ammonites**. (RSV)

It should be very clear from all of these passages that God’s “anger” is not like our anger. **“The Bible repeatedly describes God’s anger as His turning away in loving disappointment from those who don’t want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choices.”** (A. Graham Maxwell)

Romans 1:18-28: ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth.... ²⁴ **Therefore God gave them up** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.... ²⁶ **For this reason God gave them up** to dishonorable passions.... ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, **God gave them up** to a base mind and to improper conduct. (GNB)

How does God feel about leaving His children to the terrible consequences of their own choices?

Hosea 11:1,2,7-9: The LORD says,

“When Israel was a child, I loved him
and called him out of Egypt as my son.
²But the more I called to him,
the more he turned away from me....
⁷“They insist on turning away from me.
They will cry out because of the yoke that is on them,
but no one will lift it from them.
⁸“How can I give you up, Israel?
How can I abandon you?
Could I ever destroy you as I did Admah,
or treat you as I did Zeboiim?
My heart will not let me do it!
My love for you is too strong.
⁹I will not punish you in my anger;
I will not destroy Israel again.
For I am God and not a human being.
I, the Holy One, am with you.
I will not come to you in anger.” (GNB)

Phillips’ translation of Hosea 11:1-8 is particularly good on this passage. When God allows us to exercise our freedom, we may even seek to kill Him! Putting together Romans 1, Hosea 11,

Romans 4:25, and Matthew 27:46 should make it clear that God is not demanding His pound of flesh because of sin! God does not get carried away with His “emotions”! But, when—in recognition of our rights and freedom—God finally admits that we have lived rebellious lives for so long that we are “bent” on rebellion and nothing He can do will bring us back, then God weeps as He allows us to go our own way. (Hosea 4:17)

11. **Some think that if God just gives us up, that cannot be too serious. Jesus was given up on Calvary! Did He think it was serious? (DA 753.1) When Jesus was “given up” by the Father, it was the most incredible thing that ever happened to Them. Jesus died a human death.** It is what the Bible describes as the death of sinners, (Isaiah 53:4-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21) also known as the second death. (Revelation 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8) It was the death of separation. (Isaiah 59:2)
12. **Is it true that God does not torture or persecute the wicked in the end? Does He simply leave them to reap the consequences of their own sins? (Galatians 6:7) God never “gives up” on His children until there is literally nothing more that He can do for them. Even at that point, as demonstrated in Hosea 11, He weeps over them as they leave Him.**
13. It is absolutely essential to understand God’s “wrath” in scriptural terms and not in modern human terms and understanding. Once we have clearly understood this truth about God, we need to turn, for example, to the three angels’ messages especially the third angel’s message and apply it to our understanding of that passage. Seventh-day Adventists have claimed that our message for the world is the three angels’ messages. Are we correctly teaching this truth about God’s wrath as it is poured out on the wicked at the end?
14. The very important and essential element that we learn from the book of Hosea—especially Hosea 11—needs to be emphasized. How will God feel as He must allow the wicked in the end to reap the very natural consequences of their rebellious choices? He weeps. He wept over Satan and his angels. (1SP 29.2; SR 26.1)
15. Review again the miserable spiritual situation of God’s people. (2 Kings 17:5-23; Hosea 4; 6:4,7-11; 7:1-16; 8:1,14; 9:1,10,17; 10:13; 12:8) What would you have done with such a group of children?
16. In the midst of all this rebellion and rejection of God, He remained faithful to anyone who would return to Him. But, most of the people were running away as fast as they could go. God wept over them and cried as they left. (Hosea 6:1-3; 11:1-9; 13:4,5,14; 14:4,5)
17. Through all of this, God repeatedly called for them to come back to Him and abandon their wickedness. (Hosea 5:15; 6:1,3,6; 12:6; 14:1,2)
18. The children of Israel loved God’s blessings and the privileges He offered them; but, they totally abandoned any concern for the responsibilities that went with those privileges. Could we do the same? Are we ready to tell the world the truth about God’s wrath/anger/fury? Think about it? Are we telling the world the truth about God?

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