

# Like the Dew that Goes Away Early

We read of Hosea only in his book. His name means "deliverance" or "salvation." Hosea served as one of the prophets to Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. His was a time of great prosperity – under Jeroboam II (793-753 BC) Israel reached its greatest peak in worldly wealth, power, and position. Many Israelites grew accustomed to the *easy life* and were either unaware or uncaring about the moral and spiritual bankruptcy their nation experienced. Idol worship was common in the land – and those who served the Lord did so out of mere tradition. Their hearts were far from the Lord. It is in this environment that Hosea was directed to marry a wife of *harlotry*. (1:2) It is through Gomer's disloyalty to Hosea that we get an intimate detail of the hurt God experienced because of Israel's spiritual adultery.

In chapter 6 God uses Hosea to express His displeasure with Israel. *What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud and like the dew which goes away early.* (Hos. 6:4) Time and time again Israel repented, turned away from its idols, and served God only to fall away a generation or two later. Perhaps the greatest problem leading to their continual backsliding was the absence of a genuine relationship with God. *For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.* (Hos. 6:6) Hosea's message is clear in stating that the patience of God had run its course. In what must have seemed like a message *out of touch* with his society – Hosea says *for they sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind.* (8:7) Imagine how this message must have sounded to a society of people at ease - living in luxurious homes with plenty of money to go around - trusting in the massive numbers of their army to protect them. *Though I wrote for him ten thousand precepts of My law, they are regarded as a strange thing.* (8:12) Hosea warned of how *compassion (would) be hidden from (God's) sight.* (13:4) And, how quickly Israel did fall – within thirty years of Jeroboam II's death – Assyria would take the northern ten tribes into captivity.

Nothing has changed. God desires a real, meaningful relationship with people today! He wants our undivided loyalty! He still requires us to *do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with (our) God.* (Micah 6:8). Jesus explained that we should love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind! (Mt. 22:36-37) Can we say with Paul, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."* (Gal. 2:20)? How often is our loyalty "like the dew which goes away early?" True loyalty will require us to give our heart to Him! God wants us to love Him! It is only then that our actions will mean something to Him. Many never get anything out of their Christianity because of their unwillingness to have nothing more than a shallow, superficial relationship offering only the minimums. Some will realize only too late that one cannot go to heaven with only the least amount of service. This is the lesson the Israelites of Hosea's day failed to learn.

There is little doubt that God desired a special relationship with Israel. God says through Hosea, *When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. It is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, and I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; and I bent down and fed them.* (Hosea 11:1, 3-4) Yet, Israel was bent on turning from God and it caused Him to say, *my heart is turned over within Me.* (11:8) Just as God desired a special relationship with Israel – he desires a relationship with mankind today. Through Jesus' death it is possible for us to bridge the gap and serve God with confidence! This is why He has granted to us *everything pertaining to life and godliness.* This is why He has *granted to us His precious and magnificent promises.* He wants us to be *partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world by lust.* (2 Pet. 1:3-4) Everyone has an opportunity to take advantage of God's free gift. Develop the kind of relationship God while you have opportunity. One day God's patience will expire and all outside of Christ will be lost. *Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them, for the ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.* (Hosea 14:9)

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