

9303U

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA -1968

THE DOOR OF HOPE

Speaker: Bro. Maurie Stewart

Study #1: Hosea 1 and 2

Reading: Hosea 1&2

Brother chairman, and my dear brethren and sisters and young people.

I'm sure we wholeheartedly concurred with the prayer that was offered by our presiding brother this evening; b&s, as we assemble here tonight, we do so with the assurance that the most certain thing in this world, is the second coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This is one of the reasons why this study in Hosea could be such an important one for each and everyone of us; because the signs that surround us at present are identical with those that surrounded Israel in the days when this prophecy was uttered.

He was a prophet to the northern kingdom, he was a native of that northern land, and he'd grown up with it and he could see from whence it had arisen, and consequently he could judge it more fairly. No other prophet goes to greater length to describe the depravity of this northern kingdom, than does Hosea. As we come to this prophecy, b&s, we find a different prophet, we do not find one that drives his people, we find a prophet that **pleads** and he **begs** with Israel; he pleads with them to turn back to that glorious hope that's been given to them. The great lesson of old age is emphasized, that lesson of old age that's given to us in Ecclesiastes 12, 'to remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth', for Hosea as he progresses through this prophecy, he illustrates that when our life is spent, that we bemoan the fact of what it might have been! By the time that Hosea comes upon the scene, the energies of the individual had been wasted; his youthful powers had been exhausted, and b&s, as we go through this prophecy now, we are going to be constantly referring to the admonition of Romans 15 verse 4, 'that these things which were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope'. This study of Hosea, b&s, as well as every other study in the scriptures, will do us absolutely no good, unless we can take these mighty lessons that come out of this prophecy and lift them out and put them into our own hearts and our own lives. We must constantly remember that the depraved conditions that we find Israel in, at this period, comes entirely, b&s, from the fact that Israel had forgotten that first commandment that came from Sinai, 'that thou shalt have these things **in thine heart, Israel**. Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart; it was not to be an outward manifestation, and the

only way that these things could come into our heart, b&s, is through prayer and mediation. A constant surveying of the words of truth and making them a living, breathing part of our lives.

Now then, let's note carefully as we enter this prophecy, what Israel had done; note their downward progression:

Firstly, Israel **sought** that easy pleasant life. Do we find ourselves in these conditions today, b&s?

Secondly, Israel **moved into isolation**. They went into Samaria, they went 30 miles north of Jerusalem, they went away from the ecclesia of God.

Thirdly, Israel **became contaminated with her surroundings**

Fourthly, Her worship (note this b&s) her worship **became liberal** and that worship embraced idolatry and this idolatry lead to murder, and we'll note as we go through this chapter, that as Hosea addresses his countrymen, his voice is choked with emotion. His speech is little less than a succession of sobs; he behaves before his doomed countrymen as a distracted mourner in the congregation of the dead, and it's not a message of anger such as Amos, but this is a message of love; it is a message of grief, and it comes to us from the prophet Hosea.

Now as we said, our knowledge of this prophet is derived exclusively from the book which bears his name. He prophesied to the northern kingdom at the time when Isaiah was prophesying to Judah; and Amos was another contemporary of the prophet Hosea, and Hosea speaks to his people of Israel with a broken heart, and he warns them of their impending exile. Now as we begin this prophecy we find that they were first uttered during the chaotic period of Jeroboam II; from a period of approximately 750 to 725 BC. It was at a time when Israel was enjoying great external prosperity, but they suffered from inner corruption. The shrines were thronged with worshippers, yes, they were attending the morning meeting, they were attending the evening lectures, they were attending the weeknight bible classes; to all outward appearances they certainly were the children of Almighty God. But note what we're told in Amos 4 verses 4 and 5, 'Come to Beth-el and transgress'; what an indictment! 'At Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God'. But what does Amos say? 'the poor were oppressed by a people whose religion was external, Amos 4 verse 1, 'Hear this word, ye who oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring and let us drink'.

Now, b&s, let us remember that during this prosperous reign of Jeroboam II, judgment seemed a thing very remote to the Israelites and yet, the Assyrian power was soon to be found in western Asia; what a counterpart to the day in which we live! A day in which

the world apparently is very prosperous, a world in which the economy is high, a world that indeed is eating and drinking and caring not for the morrow! they are completely oblivious to the fact that judgment is coming upon the earth. Tiglath-pileser came to the throne of Assyria in 745 BC and by 732 BC Damascus had fallen to the Assyrians, and a decade later, Samaria the capital of Israel fell, and its people were deported. The judgment of God works quickly, b&s, and as we look upon the eastern horizon tonight, and as we look to the Middle East, and as we see everything in position for the great day of the battle of the LORD God Almighty, what a thundering exhortation comes to us, as we begin this prophecy, as we begin the counterpart in our lives, of Shalmaneser king of Assyria, coming into the Land and taking Israel into captivity. The Assyrian stands at the gate, he is about to invade the Land; the Euphrates is being dried up, the cares and anxiety, the allurements, the entertainment, the luxuries and other things too numerous to mention, if we permit them, b&s, they too, threaten our spiritual existence! So the warning message of Hosea reads out like a clarion call, and I warn you, my dear brethren and sisters, as we progress through this prophecy, these are not easy words; this prophecy is not wrapped in kid gloves, for Hosea is coming to Israel at a time when it is a matter of life and death! The God of Israel comes to us in these closing days of Gentile darkness, in a time when it's a matter of life and death; it's better that we face it now, and we profit from its message now, no matter how severe, so that we may gain eternal life when our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ returns in power and great glory. So b&s, if we are ready for such a study, let us turn then to Hosea chapter 1.

CHAPTER 1

Now in the first division, this division that actually goes from chapter 1 to 3, we might have a title of **the prophet's unhappy marriage**, They are children of adultery and there's punishment here for this; this is a principle that's given to us in Galatians 6 verse 7, 'be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, will of the flesh reap corruption'. Then in verses 1 to 9, we read of his marriage to Gomer. Now the prophecy actually begins at verse 2, and we read these words, 'The beginning of the word of Yahweh by Hosea'. Then he says, 'And Yahweh said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms; for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from Yahweh'. What an indictment, b&s, what an indictment!

I want you to turn back with me for just a moment to Deuteronomy 6, a picture where God had just brought Israel out of the land of Egypt; out of the land of bondage. What did He say to them? and this becomes the greatest commandment in all scripture, b&s, and as we go through the prophecy of Hosea, we're going to find that every bit of Israel's trouble stems from the fact that they did not listen to God on this occasion. What's more, as we point the accusing finger at Israel, we're pointing a finger back at spiritual Israel, and this is the greatest commandment in the scriptures of truth and the Lord Jesus Christ says that it is! But note what it says! Israel had been delivered from certain death; they now come before their Deliverer and in the 4th verse, He says,

'Hear, O Israel, Yahweh thy Elohim is one Yahweh; and thou shalt love Yahweh thy Elohim with all thine (and note this word, b&s) with all thine **heart**'. Now time after time, we'll be coming back into this prophecy, and we're going to see that all of Israel's worship was external, it was not internal; every time they make a decree that they'd turn back to Yahweh, it is external, it has no meaning, it has no driving force. It is coming from the outward appearance, it is not coming from the heart, and God had told them that they must love Him with all their **heart**, with all their **soul**, with all their **might**'. Then verse 6, 'and these words which I command thee this day, shall be where? **in thine heart**'. The seat of affection, b&s! there is the reason, there is the key to Israel's failure, and so the indictment comes now, 'take you a wife of whoredoms'.

That's what He's telling Hosea; go to the Israelites, they are remarkable, Hosea, for their spiritual fornication, for their idolatry! Note if you will, that we said spiritual fornication, b&s. As we progress through this prophecy of Hosea we're going to come to something that's quite startling really; God is not condoning physical adultery through Hosea, but He's reaching forward to emphasize something far greater. Remember as we go through this prophecy we're going to come face to face, time after time with the fact, that Israel was married to God. He speaks to them as their Husband and they had forsaken Him; they had gone to idols and in doing this they were committing **spiritual adultery**! In going to these idols, part of these rites were physical adultery, but the theme of their denunciation of God to Israel is that they had departed from Him! that they were committing spiritual adultery, that they were being unfaithful to the God of Israel.

Now then as we come to the New Testament and to spiritual Israel, we find that this is very possible with us. We are married to Christ! and if we walk with one foot in the world and the other in the truth, b&s, we are building up the same accusation! How many times have we looked at those works of the flesh in the 5th chapter of Galatians verse 19, and we have shuddered at the list when we've just looked at the first one! 'It's a horrible word', you say, 'it's a terrible word, I never want to be guilty of a thing such as this!' **Don't be too sure**! we are married to Christ, our allegiance is to Him; morning, noon and night, we're to love Him with all of our heart and all of our mind, and all of our strength. Our love is not to be in the world, we're not to participate in the world, and if we do, b&s, we are unfaithful to our Master. This is the great message that comes to us! Now God calls Himself the Husband of Israel, Jeremiah 3 and 14 He says, 'turn O backsliding children, saith Yahweh, for I am married unto you. I will take you, one of a city and two of a family and I will bring you to Zion'. Here, look at the exalted position of this kingdom and now here is the indictment!

'A wife of whoredoms', that is, a wife from among the Israelites! how far had they gone backwards; God saw this coming apostacy and in the 31st chapter of Deuteronomy verse 16 He says, 'And Yahweh said unto Moses, behold thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake Me, and break My covenant which I have made with them'. Now note the warning, b&s, in Exodus 34

verses 10 to 16, note this warning! and let us never separate ourselves from this warning. He says, 'Behold, I make a covenant; before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of Yahweh: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee. Observe thou that which I command thee, this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Cannannite and the Hittite and the Perizzite, and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and ye shall cut down their groves. For thou shalt worship no other god: for Yahweh whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. Lest thou made a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call unto thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice.

This is the 6th chapter of Romans, b&s, coming back to spiritual Israel. 'Destroy the Canaanite! have nothing to do with him; crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. That's how Christ crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts; if we listen to Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit; let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another and envying one another.' The counterpart in our life is absolutely exact; Peter tells us in his 2nd epistle, 3rd chapter verses 1 to 4, 'This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. Knowing this first that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation'. Now he says in 2 Peter 2 verses 1 to 3, 'But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. Many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through **covetousness** shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not'. B&S, never has the force of temptation been as severe as it is today! and let us remember, as we go through this prophecy that Israel committed **spiritual adultery first**, then it was physical by participating in the illicit rites of Baal-peor.

Then in verse 3 we read, 'He went and took Gomer', now this was a real transaction. This is not a parable, **it was a real transaction**, even though it had a very typical meaning. Now to take an Israelite was to take an adulteress, one who had worshipped the calves of Jeroboam at Dan or at Beth-el. What is God telling Hosea? He's saying, 'Hosea, I want you to have a first hand knowledge of what I am putting up with! I am married to Israel, now I want you to be married to an adulteress; I want you to see through your own eyes, My position'. Now this is God talking! So he went and took Gomer (1586) and then he says in verse 4, 'Yahweh 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.' This first child born to Hosea was **Jezeel**; this was a legitimate child, this was Hosea's child, and this name 'Jezeel' (3157) means that '**God will sow**', Now what are we saying? well, we're talking about a prophet, b&s, but to sow, one scatters the seed first, but also in that sowing is implied a harvest, and it seems to intimate that this person or the sowing of Israel is about to take place. Of course, we know it was fulfilled literally under Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, and we have this record in 2 Kings 17 verses 5 and 6; now the word also refers to **a city**, for as Jehu slew Jezebel and all the children of Ahab, and this is just one of the prophetic names that we so often meet in scripture, just as Japheth means 'let him enlarge or either 'persuade', so also this word 'Jezeel' means 'God will sow' and it is speaking of the completed picture of God sowing, gathering and eventually regathering them. '**The blood of Jezeel**', now this is not Jehu's vengeance on Ahab's family, but it's his acts of cruelty which while he resided in Jezeel, which was a city in the tribe of Issachar; where the kings of Israel had a palace. We remember, don't we? that it was at Jezeel that the house of Jehu had been established upon the throne of Israel by bloodshed; Elijah had apparently commended the deed as a just punishment of the house of Ahab for the blood shed by Jezeel. But in verse 5, we read these words, 'It shall come to pass in that day, that I will break the bow of Israel, in the valley of Jezeel'. Now the valley of Jezeel separates Galilee and Samaria; Jezeel is at one end of the valley and Meggido at the other. The word 'Armageddon' (2022+4023) is derived from the Hebrew word 'Armageddo', that is, 'a hill of Meggido'(717). Israel suffered defeat in this valley by the Assyrians. It was here that Shalmaneser king of Assyria took them captive; but also, b&s, this carries a future significance, because it is here **that Israel's stubbornness is going to be broken!** It is here at Armageddon that they will be forced to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

Verse 6, 'And she conceived again and bare a daughter. God said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah' (note if you will this is **not** Hosea's daughter, this is born of adultery), 'for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away.' Hosea is now beginning to realize what it means to have an unfaithful wife! Hosea is beginning to realize what rebellion means in his own household. Now he's beginning to see the **mercy** of Almighty God, that He's even spared them this long. Call her '**Lo-ruhamah**' (3819) Hosea's second child, (not having obtained mercy). The explanation is given immediately as we see in this verse; and in Amos 8 verses 2 and 3 we read, 'Amos, what seest thou? and he said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, the end has come upon My people of Israel, I will not again pass by them anymore. And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith Adonai Yahweh: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence'.

Then in verse 7, God says, 'But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by Yahweh their Elohim, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen'. What's God saying? He says that He's going to spare them as a kingdom after Israel has been carried away into captivity by the Assyrians. We know that this was fulfilled for 125 years, don't we, b&s? He says, 'He

will save them by **Yahweh their Elohim**, and it was remarkably fulfilled in the supernatural defeat of the army of the Assyrians, and we can read it in 2 Kings 19 verse 35 where it says, 'That it came to pass that night, that the angel of Yahweh went out and smote in the temple the Assyrians, 185,000, trust not in carnal weapons, Judges 5 verses 7 and 8, we read that the inhabitants of the villages ceased; they ceased in Israel until that Deborah arose, that Deborah arose a mother in Israel. They chose new gods; then there was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among 40,000 in Israel?' Of course, the answer is 'no!' God is their salvation!

Then in verse 8, 'When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bare a son'. Another child born in adultery (**not** to Hosea). 'Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi (3818) for you are not My people; and I will not be your God'. Hosea immediately explains, 'you are not my people, and I will not be your God'. These words do not mean that God was fed up with Israel, it means that Israel had so paganized their life, as to create a condition in which the spiritual affinity between herself and God was completely broken. The possibility of restoration, as we see now as we proceed in this chapter, **was not up to God, He was there, He was steadfast, He was firm**, the possibility of restoration was open to her! and it was predicated completely on her actions of coming back to Him! Just as it is to us, b&s, we read in Isaiah 55 verse 7, don't we? 'that the wicked forsake His ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and **let him return unto the LORD**. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as wool'.

Then in verse 10, he says, 'Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living El'. We never cease to marvel, do we? b&s, at the unlimited mercy of our heavenly Father! Here we have a people that had made His name a very stench in the nostrils of the heathen nations roundabout; here we have a people that had provoked Him in every sense of the word, they had dishonoured His name among the nations of the world, they had worked in direct opposition to that which they had been committed to! 'You shall love the LORD thy God with all your heart, with all your strength and with all your mind', and look at the condition of Israel! They had turned in rebellion against their God, and yet God now remembers that covenant of promise that He's made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and David. He **cannot** and He **will not lie**, and so He reaches over the top of this depravity; He reaches over the top of this sin, and what does He say? Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, where's He pointing back to? He's pointing back to those covenants of promise when He told Abraham that his seed should be as the sand of the seashore for multitude; as the stars of heaven for multitude.

He **hasn't forgotten**, has He? b&s, and He says 'you're not My people, but it shall be said unto them, ye are the sons of the living El', and we think of Revelation 7 verses 4 and 9, 'I heard the number of them which were sealed, and there were sealed an 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel. And after this I beheld, and lo, a great

multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes and palms in their hands'. He's speaking, b&s, of spiritual Israel; He's speaking of the faithful ones in natural Israel, but He's pointing forward to the fulfilment of the memorial name! that time when He will give immortality, 'when this mortal shall put on immortality and this corruptible shall put on incorruption'. Galatians 4 verse 27 we read, 'For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband'.

Then in verse 11 we read, 'Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel'. We're speaking of Jezreel again, we're speaking of that word, that first child, **God will sow**; God scattered in the days of Shalmanezzer king of Assyria, He's carried them into the four corners of the earth, but now comes the harvest, b&s, and He's bringing them back and we've seen the beginning of this, haven't we? We have seen that which represents Judah brought into the mountains of Israel, they're not cleansed yet, they're not purged but they're in position. We see the purging elements in the land today, gathering, don't we? b&s, we see the 10 tribes locked up in Russia tonight, waiting that time when Elijah will go into the north to bring them back, in complete fulfilment of this 11th verse of chapter 1 of Hosea.

Then we read that they shall come up **out of the land**, from Assyria and Babylon in particular, but also from the uttermost parts of the earth were they have been scattered. Then we read 'great shall be the day of Jezreel', it refers to the seed of God, even as God has dispersed them, Jezreel, or sowed them into many lands in His wrath, He shall reap them and gather them in His bounty and in His mercy. We read this in Jeremiah 31 verse 10, we read the many prophecies in Jeremiah and Isaiah which speaks to the fact that God will **not forget His people**.

CHAPTER 2

Then as we come to chapter 2, b&s, we read in verse 1, 'Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi: and to your sisters, Ruhamah. Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts'. We hear Daniel crying out, don't we? b&s, as the one man in scripture against whom there is no recorded sin! He says in that 10th chapter of Daniel, as he comes before the God of Israel, '**we have sinned!**' and we hear Hosea pleading in the same way for his people; he's pleading in the same way and he cries out to those faithful Jews, 'plead with your mother, plead; he's continuing the parable of unfaithful wives, the wayward wives are Israel, the grieved husband is Yahweh, the children are the ungodly among the Israelites who are urged to plead with their mother; plead with the 10 tribe kingdom as a whole, plead before it's too late, bring her back! It is the language of a wrathful and exasperated Husband; Hosea

says that Israel will experience the punishment and humiliation that is reserved for the unfaithful wife under the Law of Moses.

We know what that was, it was to be left naked, it was to be stoned to death; Israel is to be charged with a violation of the marriage covenant between her and God. Israel is now to be told, that God does not look on her as a wife, nor upon Himself as the Husband. Do we think of the Teacher, b&s, do we think of Sinai? do we see ourselves before the judgment seat of Christ? and do these things deliver home a powerful lesson in our heart and mind tonight? Do we see this vividly, b&s, that **soon** we are going to be called to give account of our stewardship? do we realize that we've been given the same command that Israel was given at mount Sinai when God said, 'thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and all thy strength and all thy mind? Do we realize, b&s, that we have been told that we shall have no graven images before us? that we shall have absolutely nothing in our hearts and our minds that detours us from a concentrated study of this precious word of truth? We face the same Judge and we face it under the same circumstances, and no consideration could be more powerful to awaken us, than to know that we have committed a sin so great as to be disowned by God.

Now he begins to develop this theme, for in verse 3 he says, 'Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst'. **Set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst!** Our minds go back to Deuteronomy 28, doesn't it? b&s, He means exactly what He says, and this was one of the curses that was to come upon Israel literally. They were to be a dry land, that land that once flowed with milk and honey, because of their idolatry and adultery before God it was to become a dry land. God says in Deuteronomy 28 verses 26 and 27, when He warns them that if they disobey Him, these are the things that are going to happen; He says, 'thy carcass shall be meat unto all fowls of the air and to the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away. Yahweh will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and the scab, and with the itch whereof thou canst not be healed'. Now what about the land? verse 23, 'Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. Yahweh shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed'. Now Hosea is picking up this same thought, that if Israel is going to be unfaithful then she's going to be set like this dry land! she's going to be slain with thirst.

Then in verse 4 it says, 'I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms'. Israel were to put idols out of their sight, lest they should be tempted to worship them; God has said, 'thou shalt have no graven images before thee'. The exhortation is to avoid temptation! a man that is an alcoholic has no business going in front of a bar; any man who has a weakness has no business, b&s, exposing himself to this temptation. This is the principle that we have here; they're all idolaters, they have been before consecrated idols, whose marks they bear! The God of Israel set before them His statutes and His judgments. He said in Deuteronomy 4 verse 8, 'More to be

deserved than gold, Psalm 19 and Psalm 4 verse 7, He emphasizes this same thought, but we're told in Matthew 3 verse 10, 'that the ax must be laid to the roots of the tree, so that the desires of flesh will be cut off'.

Then he says in verse 5, 'For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me (now note this, b&s, this is a very interesting verse - she had gone to her lovers, she had gone to Assyria and Egypt and she thought these lovers were responsible for her sustenance; but note, in those lovers she received 6 things, and 6 of course, is the number of flesh-she received) 'my **bread** and my **water**, my **wool** and my **flax**, mine **oil** and my **drink**'. Now I want you to go down quickly to verse 8 and God said, 'For she did not know that I gave her **corn**, and **wine**, and **oil**, and multiplied her **silver** and **gold**, which they prepared for Baal'. Then in verse 9, '**wool**, and **flax**' a total of 7 which is the number of spiritual possession; God had given her 7 things! that which speaks of spiritual possession; her lovers had given her 6 things, that which speaks of flesh. Israel made Ceres the god of their corn, they made Bacchus the god of their wine, and then they foolishly fancied that they'd receive these things from the heathen gods. Many today, b&s, do the very same thing! Many times we're apt to think that because we're blessed with temporal things, it is because we're deserving, that we have been overly righteous, that this is the reason that these things are poured upon us, that it is by our own hands that we have acquired these things. Nothing is further from the truth, the God of Israel still provides.

So in verse 6 God says, 'I will hedge up thy way with thorns'; **if ye turn not**, He will whet His sword; to hedge one's way with thorns is to hedge the way with the products of sin. Even if Israel conquers the thorns, God will place a wall to completely obliterate their path. Sin invariably leads to a blind alley, a dead end street. The broad road and the wide gate of which Jesus speaks, lures, and that is why so many go in thereat. That is where the world is going today, b&s, but what sin had sheltered, soon turns into a hindrance; 'the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps'. You know, Christ came to help relieve thorns, to give power, says Paul, to live with them! Christ can help us because He knew the way of the thorns first hand; we have this comforting assurance, b&s, as He sits tonight at the right hand of God, pleading our case. He wore those thorns, His road was blocked by a cross but the very thorns that He wore, and the very cross that He bore, they became the gateway to eternal life! Those who share the fellowship of His sufferings, will come to know the power of His resurrection. He says in Philippians 3 verse 10, 'behold, I have set before thee an open door; no man can **shut** it; I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me', the apostle Paul cries out in Philippians 4 verse 13, and in Romans 8 verse 37 he says, 'we're more than conquerors through Him that loved us and bought us with His blood'. Israel was to learn that their idols could not give them bread, water, wool, flax, oil or drink. Israel was to be lead **so deeply** into captivity that they would never find their way back. Those who were carried into Assyria have been lost among the nations. Few of them ever returned to Judea; what is the exhortation? **Crosses and hedges can protect us, b&s!** crosses and hedges can be our protection!

Then in verse 7 he says, 'she shall pursue her lovers, and she shall seek them'; it clearly indicates the power of Israel's wayward position. It tells us of the stubbornness of her unbelief. How appropriate was Isaiah's commission, in Isaiah 6 verses 9 to 11 (we won't look at it now but put it down, b&s, our time is getting away from us). In Eden, Adam and Eve sought beauty, but they obtained ugliness so that they wanted to hide; they sought wisdom, what did they obtain? they obtained disillusionment. So Israel pursued but she misses, she seeks but she does not find, and it's the futility of sin! So she says, 'in desperation' and this goes back to our original statement, b&s, because this statement is not coming from the **heart**, this is coming in the hour of desperation! this is coming because Israel can do nothing else, and she says in verse 7, 'I will go and return to my first husband'. But it's not through love, she's not returning to God because she loves Him, but because it's the only avenue of escape from the bafflement and the frustration that's about her on every side. There's **no words of penance** in this verse, there is absolutely no evidence of a chastised mood, there's no sorrow for her evil doings! When Moab is weary of the high places, we're told, he shall go to the sanctuary!

Verse 8, God says, 'She did not know that I gave her corn', how often do we attribute our earthly gains to our own hands. We act as the owner instead of the steward, we act, b&s, like the landlord rather than the tenant. We are to live by James 1 verse 17, we're to be under the constant assurance 'that every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above, comes down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning'.

He says in verse 9, 'Therefore will I return, says God, and take away; He says I will withhold My blessings from Israel; He says, 'I will withhold those blessings which they have prostituted by their idolatrous services. I will neither give the land rain nor fruitful seasons, I will withdraw the corn, the wine, the wool, and the flax; I will bring suffering, I will bring poverty, I will bring captivity, and Israel will be brought to know the side of her lover's that it speaks of in verse 10, that her idols and her faithless activities will bring her nothing but grief. Her secret wickedness, He says, I'm going to make public and the nations of the world are going to know that it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Then in verse 11, He says He's going to withdraw her feast days (they worshipped not at Jerusalem but probably at Dan and Beth-el where the calves were). They observed the world, b&s, and so He says that I'm going to withdraw these things because they are no longer to the honour of God; they're instituted so that they can enjoy the times of mirth, the feasting, music and dancing. (Notice if you will, He calls it **their feasts**, He calls it 'their feasts' not 'God's feasts) it had become their feasts because they have made it a feast of idolatry and it reminds us, doesn't it? of the contrast which Christ found when He came to the temple. He says first of all, 'you have made my Father's house a house of merchandise; and then just before Christ leaves He says, '**your** house, Israel, is left onto you desolate', it's no longer My Father's house!

Verse 14, b&s, we must move on. 'I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her'. Note again, how this chapter begins to conclude now. A **message of mercy** after all these things that Israel has done. God says that I'm going to bring her into the wilderness, I'll speak comfortably unto her; I'm going to restore her again.

It brings a picture, doesn't it? of Elijah bringing her out of captivity, bringing her back, regardless of these things that she has done. He says, 'I will forgive all, if she will mend her ways!' Here the mood of Hosea changes from severity to tenderness, from judgment to mercy. Israel's deepest experiences came out of the wilderness of Sinai; and in your eyes and mine, b&s, the stars shine the brightest when the night is darkest. So many times it is out of the darkest experiences that God speaks to your heart and to mine. This is true, isn't it? we have been through these times, it is not in the blazing sunlight of day that we appreciate the glorious things of truth, it's when the darkness of night crowds around us and we see the instability of man. In Amos 6 verse 1, Israel is given the warning, and we're given the warning, b&s, 'woe to them that are at ease in Zion'. Remember the sermon on the Mount preached in the shadow of Nero's throne? but it was out of the darkness of the pagan empire, it was out of the darkness of the pagan empire that came the light of the world. God did not take Israel directly to Cannan, as we read in our readings today, but through the way of the wilderness. A forty year journey of heartbreak and desolate experiences; and it is in that wilderness that we come close to our God. It was in the wilderness that Christ prayed, the fool that does not know solitude, can hardly know God. This is why God tells us 'to enter into **thy closet** and shut **thy door** about thee; speak to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly'. God spoke to Moses in the lonely recesses of mount Horeb, Moses became the founder of a great nation; He spoke to Elijah in a cave and Elijah became a towering statesman and prophet; He spoke to John the Baptist in the desert and John started a reform movement in Judea; God spoke to each of these alone! alone, b&s, but what He said to them was personal and private, but it's only in solitude that God speaks to the heart, He speaks to your heart and to mine, and this is the reason that Christ told us, 'to enter into our closet, shut our doors about us and speak to our Father which is in secret; and our Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly'.

Now b&s, our time is about gone! But I want to conclude with verse 15. where the prophet reminds Israel of this glorious truth, what a message of hope, what a message of comfort. He says, 'I will give her her vineyards from thence, (and note these words) and the valley of Achor for a **door of hope**; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt'. What is he talking about? He says there is a day coming, Israel, when you're going to see just as you did when you came through the waters of the Red Sea. When you came through and said the rider and his horse had been cast into the sea; when you saw your enemies completely destroyed before you. But what did he mean by the valley of Achor, b&s? We're all very familiar, aren't we? but let's turn back for a moment to Joshua 7 verses 29 to 36; this is a tremendous study and it's one in which God gives us a very principle by which we'll gain eternal life and a place in His kingdom.

Let's go back to Joshua 6 verses 18 and 19, God had made a command and He had given Joshua definite orders as they came into the land of Canaan. First of all, He told them to destroy the Canaanite as we read earlier; this was the first thing that Israel failed to do. If Israel had obeyed this command and had destroyed the Canaanite as they came into the Land, they would never have turned to idolatry, for it was a Canaanite and the intermarrying and intermingling with that Canaanite, that placed them in such an abominable condition. But in verses 18 and 19 God says, 'And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it'. Now this is what Israel had done, this is our condition in the days of Hosea, they were an accursed thing, as we will find as we go through this prophecy, that the priests were actually encouraging the people to sin, because the more sinning, the more sacrifices and the more money in the treasury. They were charging interest fees in the cities of refuge, this was the beginning of that hideous doctrine of catholicism, Judaism, b&s! But God had warned against it; and He says 'all silver and gold and the vessels of brass and iron are consecrated unto Yahweh; they shall come into the treasury of Yahweh'.

Verse 1 of chapter 7, 'But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing; for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah took of the accursed thing, and the anger of Yahweh was kindled against the children of Israel'. Last part of verse 13, 'He said, there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel; thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from you'. Israel had been very successful as they came to Jericho. That city was overthrown, but now they've come to the city of Ai and they're defeated; why? because they had forgotten that first commandment that had been given that we read out of Deuteronomy 6. They did not have God in their heart, they had let the accursed thing come into their lives; and what was that accursed thing? we read the details of this beginning at verse 20 of Joshua 7, 'And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against Yahweh Elohim of Israel, and thus and thus have I done'. Now b&s, note carefully verse 21, because here we have a principle, here we have a succession of events, the very thing that Israel followed in detail only as a multitude later on, as we come to the time of Hosea. First of all, Achan says, 'I **saw** (note that word) I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight', (then what did he do?) 'I **coveted** them (then what did he do?) and **took** them, and behold, they are **hid** in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it'.

Now let's go back! First he **saw**, then he **coveted**, and he **took**, and then he **hid**; where did he hide it? he hid it in the earth, **in the earth**, the place where the serpent dwells, that which is a symbol of sin! That which is represented by Egypt, he hid it in his tent and he hid it in the earth. Remember what we read in Jeremiah 17 about those who do not pay attention to the LORD God of Israel, whose lives are dedicated to flesh, God says their names are written in the earth; and that's where Achan hid them, in the earth.

Now after this accursed thing is purged out of Israel, b&s, that which is working in direct opposition to God, what has happened? We read in verse 1 of chapter 8, 'And Yahweh said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed', in other words, (Joshua, the accursed thing is cleansed, it is taken away, all opposition to Me has gone, it's been destroyed, it has been purged out, therefore,) 'fear not, neither be thou dismay; take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai; see I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land'.

Now back to Hosea and we find the exact counterpart, b&s, it is a beautiful picture! We find Israel, first of all, following in the exact pattern of Achan. They went into the land, they saw Babylonish garments, they saw those idols of Assyria, they saw the idols of the heathen nations, they saw them and what did they do? they coveted them, they took them, and then they hid them in their habitations or in their tents in the earth. And what figurative language that is, 'in a tent' because hiding it in the earth, they were transitory, it had none of the lasting qualifications of the temple of God, it was something that would be obliterated, blotted out, and this is exactly what they had done! But what is God saying here in this 15th verse? He says there's a day coming, Israel, when I'm going to cleanse the accursed thing out of you! We read in Zechariah, don't we? that only a 1/3 of the ones in Israel are going to come through the purging fire; and then as we read through Micah and Jeremiah and Isaiah, the returning Jews come back from all corners of the earth; that they're going to be brought through the wilderness of the people, they're going to be purged, they're going to be cleansed! In other words, b&s, the accursed thing is going to be cleansed out, and then when it is cleansed out and they are settled in the Land, in the 12 divisions of that Land, when the 19th chapter of Matthew is completely fulfilled when Christ says, 'in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. What will happen to the valley of Achor then? The valley of Achor with the accursed thing purged out, it becomes **a door of hope**, and becoming a door of hope, with Israel as the nucleus of God's kingdom, settled in the Land, They shall **sing**, Hosea says, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. She has come out of the land of Egypt, just as we're later to read in Hosea 12 verse 1, 'Out of Egypt have I called My son'. God has called her out of Egypt once before, but the second time He calls her out of Egypt which is the nations of the world, b&s, the accursed thing is going to be purged out, and Israel will be the nucleus of that glorious kingdom. As the nations of the world go up to the temple from Yahweh Shammah, they go up through the valley of Achor; that valley of Achor which was once a place of desolation, the place that once spelled 'defeat' because Israel had not only entertained their accursed thing, they had hid it and put it in their tents, and they had suffered defeat. They had brought this to reality in the days of Hosea under Jeroboam, but God says there is a day coming when it shall be purged out! and that which is desolation shall become a '**door of hope**'.

As these nations of the world go up through the valley of Achor, what are they going to see? They're going to see Ezekiel's temple in all of its glory, 23 miles to the north. They're going to hear the immortal voices, they're going to see the glory of God

hovering over that, in the daytime it will be a replica of the pillar of cloud by day and at night it will be a beautiful pillar of fire by night; it will reflect the glorious Yahweh, and we, b&s, as immortals will be there! It is in that day, 'as in the days of her youth, as the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt, she shall see there, not only natural Israel will be singing, b&s, but spiritual Israel will be there too! Spiritual Israel will be in that inner court, spiritual Israel will be in that glorious circular building on the inside of Ezekiel's temple where the immortals dwell, and that can be the habitation of you and me, b&s, when with our immortal voices we raise to the God of Israel, the song of praise. Why will we be there? The 7th chapter of Revelation we read, 'these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes of what? of the accursed thing; have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! and what is that accursed thing? it's **sin against Almighty God**, but it's been purged out! it has been cleansed, and we are going to be the recipients of that door of hope.

The title of our subject and the study for these two weeks, b&s, is **1968- The door of hope!** And may 1968 reveal to us in its beauty and splendour, that glorious picture of Achor; not as a valley of desolation, but because we have purged out the accursed things, because we have followed this exhortation that is given to us in the prophecy of Hosea, that it now becomes a door of hope, and that we'll experience a mercy of Almighty God! For you see, b&s, there is no greater example of mercy than in these two chapters, the prophet has gone into detail at the beginning of each of these chapters, and he has shown us how far Israel had fallen, how far they had drifted away from the things of God and yet each chapter concludes with that glorious hope of mercy that's extended. What is the requirements? **return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon us!** B&S, may this be your privilege and may it be mine.