

Hosea 11:1-11

Chapter 11 echoes the story of the prophet's tragic marriage but this time using the picture of a faithful father and his prodigal son. The infidelity of both Gomer and unfaithful Israel led to hard times but when sin had brought a crisis and they were about to be lost completely, God's grace miraculously intervened.

Summary

Hosea 11:1-11 clearly depicts the message of the gospel that was fully manifest in the coming of Jesus Christ.

1. Prodigal Son vv. 1-5

Hosea begins by looking back to the founding of Israel following the exodus from Egypt. God declares His love at that time for an adopted son (**11:1**). He was a devoted parent, delighting in Israel's care and training (**11:3a**). Hosea then sounds a note of concern (**Hos 11:3b**). The Lord had been a caring parent administering needed medicine but all the child noticed was the bitter taste of the medication. As the exodus continued, Israel revealed a corrupt nature that rebelled repeatedly against the Lord's rule (**11:2**). Hosea looks back on these events as the beginning of Ephraim's long rebellion and the start of the idolatry that must eventually lead to the nation's expulsion from the promised land. Ephraim/Israel was a prototype prodigal son, squandering covenant riches in the far country of idol-worship and depravity (**Luke 15:13**). Consequently, God relates through Hosea, events that would soon come to pass. Though in former days they had been delivered from bondage in Egypt, they would now go off to Assyria (**Hos. 11:5**).

2. Averted Death vv. 6-11

In Jesus' parable, the prodigal son's sinful ways led to a life of misery far away (**Luke 15:14-16**). Similarly, Gomer's adultery brought her into poverty and shame (**Hos 1:6-7**). The nation of Israel would likewise suffer bondage in the Assyrian exile. In the conquest that preceded the exile, the prophet describes the devastation that would fall on their cities (**Hos 11:6**). According to God's law, the punishment that Israel deserved was death (**Deut 21:18-21; Hos 11:7**), yet Israel was punished by exile (**Hos 11:8**). This is accommodated language. God reveals Himself using a picture of a father anguishing over the just deserts of his disgraceful and guilty son, seemingly unable to take up the stone and cast it NOT because He is a God, who equivocates about doing what is the right thing because it is personal to Him, but to show how serious a situation this is and what it would take and why God would go to such lengths to be the just and the justifier of the ungodly? (**Hos 11:9; Rom 3:26**). **Verses 10-11** outline

God's sovereign plan of mercy that is not at the expense of His justice. Ephraim/Israel would be ravaged and expelled from the land and removed into exile. Yet there would still be a future life for this people, all because of God's incomparable grace that is mighty to save his people. This future return is described using the image of the Lord as a lion who roars and is heard throughout the forest so that his people come trembling back as repentant doves. God thus depicts the call of his grace when it is made effectual to save those whom he has chosen by grace. In a day to come, the offspring of his people who had been scattered to Assyria as captives and into Egypt as refugees would hear his mighty voice, believe, and come home to salvation through faith (**Hos 11:10-11; Rom 9:25-26; c.f. Hos 2:23**).

Hosea 11:10-11 depicts God's Word as being preached, sounding the offer of forgiveness ultimately found through faith in Christ's blood.

3. Unravelling Mysteries

The first mystery concerns Matthew's statement that Hosea 11:1 was a prophecy fulfilled in the birth narrative of Jesus Christ (**Matt 2:15**). In the immediate context, **Hos 11:1** refers not to Jesus but to Israel's deliverance from Egypt in the exodus. A prominent theme in Matthew's Gospel is that Jesus is himself the true Israel of God, just as he is God's true Son. Jesus represents Israel. Whereas Israel failed and fell under God's wrath, Jesus prevailed and gained a righteousness in which God's people can stand.

In this way, we see Matthew's point in referring Hosea's words "out of Egypt I called my son"-originally spoken of Israel's beginning-to the beginning of Jesus' life and ministry as the true Israel in which God's people find their salvation home

What is true of Israel is also true of every Christian: Jesus is our representative. How can God turn aside the full wrath of His justice and show mercy and grace to guilty sinners (**Gen. 18:25**)? The Lord gave a preliminary answer (**Hos 11:9b**). but a clearer explanation is given in the New Testament, where it is revealed that grace achieved our salvation not by annulling God's justice but by fully satisfying its demands in the substitutionary offering of Jesus in the place of sinners on the cross (**Rom. 3:26; 4:5; 1 John 2:1-2**).

It is this message of Jesus Christ as the substitute and sacrifice who satisfies God's justice, that God proclaims in the spirit of Hosea 11 in His gospel. God calls like a lion, and sinners believe and are saved. The hardened prodigal comes willingly with a changed heart, like a dove trembling in humble repentance, flying home to God on the wings of faith provided by his grace. Do you hear the Lion roaring in the gospel? If you do, then fly to God with a humble heart, gratefully believing the gospel that his grace has provided.