



# 6 | HOSEA 6

## RESURRECTED ON THE THIRD DAY

*A Call to Live!*

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*Sam and Mr. Frodo*

## Songs

Come People of the Risen King  
Christ the Lord Is Risen Today  
O Praise the Name  
O Lord My Rock and My Redeemer

## Call to Worship:

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing! Blessing and honor and glory and power be to the One seated on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever! (Rev 5:12-14).*

### Introduction

Our message today is from Hosea 6 on page 752 of your pew Bible. The title of our message today is “Resurrected on the Third Day”.

This sixth chapter is a message from the heart of Hosea. Remember, he has now seen the recovery of his own wife from harlot to faithful spouse. Hosea has witnessed the grace of God transforming her from her idolatry, and he has come to the conclusion that if Gomer can do it, then so can Israel. We are all Gomer in this story. We once were enslaved to sin and completely unfaithful to our Creator. But now we are redeemed from the slave market of sin. Hosea 6 is a call to celebrate that redemption with a particular focus on what Hosea did for Gomer and what God can do for Israel.

## HOSEA'S MAIN POINT: RETURN & LIVE

Hosea went to that slave market and purchased Gomer back and gave her a new life. Hosea's main point to Israel and to anyone who wants to know him is: Return and live. God says in Hosea 6:1a,

6:1a | Come, let us return to the Lord...

Hosea's message is a call to faith in the Lord. There were so many unconverted in Israel. He calls Israel, who knows about the Lord, but does not know him tenderly and personally, to **return**. This is a call to repentance. **Repentance** is more than an act for a Christian. It is a posture.

Gomer in the slave market represents our lives before Christ. Gomer coming back home to Hosea in marital faithfulness represents true Christians.

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## 1. THE PATHWAY TO RESURRECTION (6:1-3)

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Hosea wanted his wife free from prostitution, dedicated and restored to himself. So God is calling out a people from this world to come to him. “He is not wanting that any should perish, but that all come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). Come! On this pathway to resurrection we *hear the invitation* to live and return to the Lord.

### HEAR THE INVITATION TO LIVE (6:1)

6:1a | Come, let us return to the Lord...

Hosea's first word in this message is a cry to "**Come!**" The idea is to come together with God. He's inviting you to a face to face meeting of mercy. There is good news beyond what you can imagine!

Jesus said,

Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Mt 11:28).

Jesus said,

Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:14).

Jesus said after his resurrection,

Come and dine" (Jn 21:12).

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool (Isa 1:18).

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (Isa 55:1).

### *This Invitation is a Word of Return*

6:1a | Come, let us return to the Lord...

Returning to Yahweh implies a new posture of **repentance** and is a major theme of the book.<sup>1</sup> It's not only referring to unbelieving Israel coming back to the Lord in faith, but once they come, they have a posture of **repentance** due to their new life.

There's coming a time for Israel, when they will return to the Lord. He's going to have to take them into captivity for 70 years, and later Jesus comes to the earth, and he's stripped believing Israel down to basically **120 people in an upper room** and gives them his Holy Spirit. And with the Spirit comes a great posture of hatred toward sin and a great love for the Lord.

All the grace of God flows through this return and repentance. For those who have repented and put their faith in Christ, we are told, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). That means "there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those, who truly repent" (WCF 15.4).

Simply put, God says, "Come" and you will be welcomed to him upon your return. This is Jesus' invitation: Come! He always delivers! Can I get a witness?

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<sup>1</sup> Garrett. 158.

## *This Invitation is a Word of Healing*

**6:1b** | Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us...

### **TORN**

God is like a **doctor** that wants to heal us, yet he must cut and tear into the flesh in order to cut out the tumor. He says God has torn us: literally “**torn us to pieces.**” There’s so much disease to cut into, God has to tear us to pieces. This is how the sinner feels when he comes to God: torn apart. The word for “tear” is fierce. It pictures a deep tear into the flesh with the sharpness of lion’s teeth.<sup>2</sup> We see the image of a surgeon removing a tumor. There is a deep **spiritual cutting** to remove the spiritual cancer of sin in the soul. The picture of the Lord tearing us that he may heal us is one of a doctor opening up a wound to drain the puss and ugliness from the wound. In coming to Christ, we tear sin out of our lives, like the surgeon opening a wound and letting all the junk come out. Even after coming to Christ, we have dead branches that need to be cut and pruned from us (Jn 15:2).

It’s like Pentecost, after Peter preached to the crowd, the Bible says the people were “**cut to heart**” by the Spirit. They were torn to pieces and said, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). And Peter tells them, “Repent... receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (vs 38). Inwardly and outwardly, they return to the Lord.

When we come to know Christ, we have a **posture of hostility toward sin.** This is the essence of repentance. We see sin as odious and filthy and contrary to the glory and majesty and holiness of God. When we heed his invitation, we receive real healing.

### **HEALED**

God **has torn us that he may heal us.** This is certainly true in the medical profession. From our modern frame of reference, we can easily relate to this necessity. Sometimes a body part has to be taken off to save the entire body. Sometimes a bone must be broken in order to set it correctly.

Everything outside of Christ is chaos and disease, but in Christ we are healed. We are whole in Jesus. What is the extent of this healing? It’s a complete healing, a complete reconstitution. Look at how Hosea puts it.

## *This Invitation is a Word of Reconstitution*

**6:1c** | ...he has **struck us down**, and he will **bind us up**.

Here we have another illustration of repentance. It’s like a death. God **strikes us down** in death to put us back together again and “**bind us up**”. The idea is like a person be struck so hard, they die, and their body is mangled. God says, “I’ll strike down your old life in death, and I will bind you up and put you back together so that you live.” This is resurrection language.

We all know the mother goose rhyme:  
*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;  
All the king's horses and all the king's men*

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 382.

*Couldn't put Humpty together again.*

But that's the thing. God can put you back together again. Remember when **Jesus** came to earth, all the hurting and outcasts fled to him. He came to "heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds" (Psa 147:3).

God loves you. This is his nature. He **strikes** you down only in order to **bind** you up. He may inflict pain upon you in arresting you, but he promises to care for your wounds. Listen to this amazing invitation to be brought back to life and healed. Now Hosea says it plainly in verse 2.

### **MEET THE AUTHOR OF LIFE (6:2)**

On this pathway to resurrection, we *hear the invitation to life*, and then we *meet the Author of life!*

6:2 | After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.

#### *A Promise to Israel*

It is clear that in its original context this passage describes the captivity and restoration of Israel, the people of God. Ezekiel develops this concept in his dry bones vision (Eze 37:1–14). The people of Israel would be cut down through the captivity, but they would be brought back and fully revived after the third day.

This is a word to Israel. God says, "I'll bring you out of your physical captivity." When they were taken to Assyria and later to Babylon, it was like the nation of Israel was dead. But remember in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, God brought them back into the land.

While the mention of *the third day* would sound to Hosea's hearers as the mere equivalent of 'very soon', the prophet spoke more significantly than perhaps even he knew; for it is only in Christ's resurrection that his people are effectively raised up, as all the apostles teach us.<sup>3</sup>

It is in Christ's resurrection that believing Israel and the church, grafted together into one people of God, find the ultimate restoration out of captivity. In Christ you have the true resurrection of the people of God.

#### *A Promise to the Church*

So this is not just a word to Israel, it's a word to the church. Augustine says:

Hosea foretold the resurrection of Christ on the third day, but in the mysterious way that is proper to prophecy.<sup>4</sup>

It is impossible for the Christian to read this text and not see that it foreshadows Christ's resurrection on the third day. 1 Corinthians 15:4 asserts that **Christ arose on the third day** "in accordance with the Scriptures," and no other text speaks of the third day in the fashion that Hosea 6:2 does.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kidner, 66.

<sup>4</sup> FC 24:123, Augustine, The City of God.

<sup>5</sup> Garrett, 158.

This is a Messianic prophecy. The pronouns in Hosea's prophecy become vitally important and teach us about Christ's union with his people. It's not just about "them" but about "us". "Revive us...raise us up, that we may live..." Wait. I thought this was about Christ. It is. It's also about his people, his body. All God's people are united to Christ in his resurrection.

WCF 26.1, "All saints are united to Jesus Christ their Head by His Spirit and by faith, and have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory".

This is the prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus as the true Israel of God, that brings all God's people out of their captivity. On the third day when Christ was risen, sin's hold was broken and death was put to death for all of God's people.

Let me just shout it out: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, just as the Scriptures in Hosea prophesied. It happened. The tomb is empty. Death is defeated. He has overcome sin, death and hell. Death has no victory. The sting of death is gone. Death is now the entrance to life. He is risen! He is risen indeed!

### EXPERIENCE LIFE WITH THE LORD (6:3)

6:3a | Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord...

In Hosea 6:3, we get the reason we were invited and raised from the dead: to know the Lord. This resurrection is given to us that we might **press on to know the Lord**. What does this mean to press on?

#### MEANING OF "PRESS ON"

The word for **press on** has the idea of this zeal to pursue and overtake, like hunting an animal,<sup>6</sup> or like Paul persecuting Christians,<sup>7</sup> or like Jacob wrestling with God (Gen 32:22-32). Paul explains this verse in what is likely an allusion to Hosea in Philippians 3. Paul, what does Hosea mean to "press on"?

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; <sup>11</sup> in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but **I press on** so that I may **lay hold** of that for which also I was **laid hold** of by Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not regard myself as **having laid hold of it** yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> **I press on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:10-14, NASB).

Hosea says: Press on to know Yahweh. Paul says: Press on to know Jesus. That's **the goal for the prize of the upward call**. This is what spiritual resurrection does. Christ

<sup>6</sup> Keil and Delitzsch. *Hosea*, OT vol. 10, 64.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, "An Exposition of the Prophecy of Hosea," in *An Exposition of the Prophecy of Hosea*, ed. James Sherman (Edinburgh; London: James Nichol; James Nisbet & Co., 1863), 315.

lays hold on us to give us a knowledge of him. Let's press into what Christ obtained for us: a knowledge, a relationship with him.

To this I say brothers and sisters, let's press on to know the Lord. We press on to know him more and more, from one degree of glory to a higher level, and then a higher level (2 Cor 3:18). We turn to what we know about God. We press on to know him more and more, even though right now even the best that we see is "in a mirror dimly" (1 Cor 13:12), knowing that one day very soon, when Jesus comes, and that perfect One arrives, we shall see him "face to face."

The more you sincerely press on and pursue God, the more you will know of him, for "the pure in heart shall see God" (Mt 5:8).<sup>8</sup>

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO PRESS ON TO KNOW THE LORD?

We can press on to know him more and more because he is as sure and steady as the dawn each morning. He is as sweet as the spring rains.

### *Knowing God is an Experience like the Dawn & Glory Cloud*

6:3a | Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his **going out** is sure as the dawn...

You can press on and pursue Yahweh as your highest ambition, because **his going out is as sure as the dawn** (6:3b). The going out of the Lord was first understood as his **glory cloud**, the **manifest presence** of Yahweh among the people. Whenever the pillar of glory would move, the people would move and follow God wherever he took them.

Today, God's manifest presence is his indwelling Spirit. His going out with you in fellowship is as dependable as the rising sun. Actually, it's more dependable. The Lord is always there for you. He never leaves you. You may leave him, but he will never leave you. There is no one like him. Everyone and everything else changes. The Lord remains the same, like the sun that comes up every day. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). **His going out** with you in fellowship is predictable and dependable.

### *Knowing God is an Experience like the Rain*

6:3b | ...he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.

Knowing God is a rain shower in a place it rarely rains, like the Middle East. The Lord's fellowship is like a river that never runs dry. Hosea says knowing God is like the **showers** that come after a long dry season, like **spring rains that water the earth**.

"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High" (Psa 46:4).

Never forget that you are the holy habitation of God by his Spirit.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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## 2. THE INSTRUMENTS OF RESURRECTION (6:4-6)

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**6:4a** | What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah?...

Now God gives three instruments he uses for resurrection: his kind dealings with Israel, his Word through the prophets, and his unrelenting love. He also gives proofs of Israel's spiritual deadness: self-serving love, hardness to God's Word, and self-righteousness. These proofs are listed as a mercy to us. God's heart is never to shame a lost person. God didn't send his Son into the world not to condemn the world but to save it (Jn 3:16-18).

God gives the law to condemn us but to show us that we are dead and need Christ. The law is like an autopsy report. You shall not lie. You shall not lust. You shall not steal. You shall honor God above all else, and so on. Love God. Love neighbor. We don't have the ability to do these things. The Bible gives us the autopsy report: we are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-3). One of the purposes of God's law is to give us the knowledge of sin, pointing us to our need for Christ as a school master (*cf* Rom 3:20; Gal 3:24). God gives us his law not to condemn us but to show that we are already condemned. Lost people are dead in their sins, in a spiritual morgue. The motive of God's heart in showing us this is not to rub our nose in our filth and sin. It is to show us the reality of the wretchedness we are experiencing so that we might put our hope in Christ and experience God's everlasting love.

### WE NEED AWAKENING (6:4)

**6:4b** | ... Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.

Oh how we need awakening. The sinner outside of Jesus is cold and hard and dead. Often there is initially a tenderness, but if a sinner walks away from that, they get hardened.

**Ephraim** (the northern kingdom) and **Judah** (the southern kingdom) are both named. At one time they were united and were inhabited by the Lord of hosts, filled with his love. Now their love was cold. They had a form of **love** (Heb, *hesed*) to God, but it was fleeting, like **clouds** and **dew**. Like the **morning** fog, it vanished quickly. Like the **dew** on a sunny day, it disappeared suddenly.

God has been so kind to Israel but has received a very tepid response. "**What shall I do with you?**" obviously is a cry of frustrated love, borne of their refusal to "return" to God and pursue the knowledge of him. It's like Paul's exasperation to those at Rome:

"Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?" (Rom 2:4, NLT).

God wants to bless us, but he cannot until we return to him. Here, for the first time, we see Yahweh taking on role of the wounded husband whose love has been rejected after he has given all his love to his wayward spouse. This is the constant cry of God in the Scriptures:



All day long I opened my arms to a rebellious people (Isa 65:2, NLT).

If you see God's mercy, you need to humble your pride and embrace his kindness.

### **GOD'S WORD AWAKENS US (6:5)**

There is a call here in Israel for a spiritual resurrection, and we find a powerful tool that God uses to wake us up is his Word. The people of Israel were spiritually dying and dead, and they need to be awakened. God sends out his messengers the prophets with his Word to cut open their hard hearts. God's Word is here likened to a sword in the hands of the prophets. God's Word is powerful to awaken you if you are without a true relationship with Christ.

#### *God's Word Cuts*

The prophets of Israel are described as **hewing** the people – literally *cutting the people to pieces* with God's Word.

**6:5a** | Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth...

Israel is said to be "**slain**" by God's Word. In response to Peter's Pentecost sermon, the people responded and "they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37). God's Word cuts to the heart and touches our innermost being.

God's agents, the prophets, in Hosea are said to have faithfully and forcefully conveyed the cutting words of Yahweh's mouth. Their preaching are described as acts of 'hewing' or 'hacking' and 'slaying' the very souls of God's people, tearing them up.<sup>9</sup> We ought to rejoice that God's Word cuts us deep! *The Scripture is described as a sword that can cut us to pieces.*

"For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

#### *God's Word Enlightens*

**6:5b** | ...my judgment goes forth as the light.

God's Word is also said to "**go forth as the light...**" (6:5). It shows the way. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psa 119:105). If there is no response, there is a hardening. This is a true warning for the sinner! Spurgeon said,

"The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins."

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<sup>9</sup> Hubbard. *Hosea*, 136.

Sadly, the people in Hosea's day were "hewn" by God's Word in a negative way. The Lord wanted to give them life through his Word. He offered them abundant life, but they dodged the sword of his Word. They therefore had to undergo the discipline of his Word. If our hearts remain unchanged by God's Word, like Israel we will have to experience the discipline of the curses of God's Word (Deut 30:1-10). Essentially if God's people do not respond in tenderness to God's Word they lose every earthly blessing so their soul can be saved for heaven.

Since God's Word is so powerful to enlighten us and awaken us, we should meditate, memorize, and hold on tightly to it. "My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart" (Prov 4:20-21).

### GOD'S LOVE AWAKENS US (6:6)

God lays down the bottom line – "*I want you to know my love. I don't need your sacrifices.*" Those who think God needs religious ritual is for God are mistaken. God desires a heart of steadfast love and worship. Outward worship is great, but it can be faked. God wants you to worship him in steadfast, covenant love. The Lord, through Hosea, says:

6:6 | For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

The northern kingdom is mainly unbelievers. The true believers have the responsibility to take back the true worship of God. John Calvin comments on this verse:

God desires to be worshipped differently than lost people imagine; the lost only display their outward ceremonies, and neglect the spiritual worship of God, which stands in faith and love.<sup>10</sup>

It is easy for us to criticize the false worship of other religions but much harder for us to recognize where our praise has degenerated into mere formalism. Let us regularly examine our worship to make sure it is in spirit and truth.

More than anything, God **desires** to demonstrate his **steadfast love**. The word "desire" denotes the very highest pleasure possible.<sup>11</sup> The thing God delights in most is expressing his unconditional, unrelenting, **steadfast love** (Heb, *hesed*) to sinners, and he wants that love returned rather than the outward activities of sacrifices.

If you have faith in the Lord, you will have a deep love for him. That's what he wants. He wants you to return his love for him.

As Paul says in Philippians 3:

**"I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus"** (Phil 3:12).

Christ laid hold of me that I may know him, so I'm going to lay hold of him for that purpose. In the same

<sup>10</sup> John Calvin and John Owen, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 231.

<sup>11</sup> W. E. Staples. "The Meaning of Hēpeš in Ecclesiastes," JNES 24:110–12. THAT, I, pp. 621–22.

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### 3. OUR HOPE FOR RESURRECTION (6:7-11)

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No one can raise themselves from the dead. Just like Gomer couldn't redeem herself from the slave market, God makes it very clear that those who are still in their sins cannot come to him on their own. It's very clear that all mankind can do well is break God's covenant. This is the emphasis of the last five verses.

Applied to the picture of resurrection at the beginning of Hosea 6, we might say that Israel's love for God is dead. The marriage is dead. Their only hope is resurrection. They are lost, and they can't reach God through rituals or mere intellectual knowledge. They need surrender.

So first we have an autopsy report on the marriage by looking at three covenants in the Bible that illustrated Israel's spiritual marriage covenant with God.

#### WE NEED HOPE, LIKE ADAM IN EDEN (6:7)

6:7 | But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.

Adam is the first man, the original sinner, and thus the model for Israel's unfaithfulness. Like Adam, we've committed spiritual adultery. We've put ourselves in a place where only God in mercy can help us. We need God to resurrect our spiritual marriage covenant with God. He still loves us.

We all know the story of Adam and Eve in the garden. Adam was given a covenant with God to enjoy everything in the garden, worshipping God in his garden temple. Adam had every sign of God's love there. He was told simply not to touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:15-17). It was what we might call the "God" tree. It symbolized that God alone is God and Adam had freedom to do all things except be his own god. We all know what happened. Adam crossed the line that day. He transgressed the covenant he had with God and **faithlessly** hid himself from God, running from accountability. If this were a marriage covenant, we would say that Adam and Eve were unfaithful. They committed spiritual adultery on God.

Since Hosea's hearers are extremely familiar with this story, the prophet says: "You're just like Adam. You are running from God: lost and hiding in your sins."

#### WE NEED HOPE, LIKE JACOB'S IN GILEAD (6:8)

6:8 | Gilead is a city of evildoers, tracked with blood.

Gilead is a the mountain region where the most famous town: Peniel (Heb—"face of God")

Instead of **Gilead** (and her most famous city: Peniel), it is here called the **city of evildoers**. God is saying to the northern kingdom: you've changed. You've gone back to being Jacob. You've taken on his worst characteristics—selfishness and cunning—without having his redeeming experiences—encounters with God.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Garrett, 163.

Instead of faithfulness there is adultery, the spiritual marriage covenant is dead. Resurrection needed. This is a message for the younger generation. You need a Gilead experience. You need to see the face of God.

### **WE NEED HOPE, LIKE ABRAHAM AT SHECHEM (6:9)**

If Adam in Eden and Jacob in Gilead are not two of the most famous places of covenants in the Bible, then Hosea gives the third and most important place of covenant: **Shechem**, where God sealed his covenant with Abraham. It was that covenant place where God blesses Abraham's Seed, for through that Seed, our Lord Jesus Christ, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3; cf Gal 3:7-9, 16). This should be the most celebrated and joyous mention of all the places of covenant, for it is here in Shechem that God "announced the gospel in advance to Abraham" (Gal 3:8, NIV), but God, through Hosea, says no! Those who govern Shechem today are not in any way faithful to the Gospel covenant of Abraham. Instead of giving out God's grace, they are thieves and **robbers**.

6:9 | As robbers lie in wait for a man, so the priests band together; they murder on the way to **Shechem**; they commit villainy.

Instead of shepherding the people, the **band together** to hurt the people of God, hence the priests commit "**murder on the way to Shechem.**" The word for "**murder**" means a premeditated, cold blooded, calculated taking of life. They may literally be taking the lives of God's people, but this is likely metaphorical. If it is metaphorical, it is not watering down the meaning but making it stronger. They are not merely taking away temporal physical life but everlasting life from the people.

Either way, the priests are certainly like **bands of robbers** who are taking advantage of their position to get something for nothing. The **priests** of Israel are completely out of control, using their position **to commit villainy** (every kind of sin imaginable). Instead of loving and teaching and caring for the spiritual needs of God's people, Hosea rightly compares them to *serial killers*. They should be dispensing mercy and grace to Israel, but instead they rob them of God's comfort, his promise, and of life itself.

Instead of celebrating God's covenant of grace with Abraham at **Shechem**, the **priests** make a compact with the devil to prepare the people of Israel for hell. Again, the current state of the priests in Israel gives us the same conclusion: Israel is in dire need of God's mercy. They have done everything to break his covenant of undying love. The marriage is over. It's nothing to celebrate but only lament.

### **OUR ONLY HOPE FOR RESURRECTION (6:10-11)**

God makes his final review of his marriage with Israel: they are spiritual whores. The marriage is over. The covenant is broken. The marriage bed is defiled.

*It can't be us (6:10)*

6:10 | In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim's whoredom is there; Israel is defiled.

God's conclusion is that the spiritual adultery ("**whoredom**") of Israel is a disgusting atrocity that is in full view of God's eyes. God has examined his bride, the **house of Israel**, and concluded that his marriage to her is truly **a horrible thing**. This describes

something that is inedible or unpalatable. It is something like a refrigerator surprise. “I wonder what is in this Tupperware—*Blecch!*” But here it is more. It is something so gross that you do not even desire to look at it. It is truly horrid.

The priests are guilty of causing **Israel** to be **defiled**, i.e. violated over and over again, like pimps in the sex trade. The reason for their defilement is spiritual prostitution—not fornication among men, but spiritual adultery against God in the form of idolatry. The **priests** have led the way to religious syncretism. With the golden calf worship, they have led the people to **whoredom** by moving the central place of worship in Jerusalem to Dan and Bethel. The altar in Dan is still standing to this very day.

The point is, Israel has made choices that have destroyed their marriage to God. God sees his marriage to the **house of Israel** and says, *I can't continue in covenant with you as you are. The marriage is dead, but I have a plan to resurrect it.*

*It must be Jesus (6:11)*

6:11 | For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed, when I restore the fortunes of my people.

Our only hope is in the mercy of God. The Lord gives polar opposites as options: **For Judah, a harvest of judgment is appointed** that will actually lead to a **restoration** of the **fortunes** of Israel. Judah has a choice – to go down with northern Israel, or to be restored. In Christ, of course, there is no condemnation to anyone with genuine repentance and faith (Rom 8:1). The restoration of the fortunes of Israel are found in Christ. In him we have all spiritual blessings. Outside of Christ, there is only the harvest of God's judgment.

**Judah** is about to watch as the northern kingdom is slaughtered by the Assyrians but must not be too proud. Why? **A harvest is appointed.** Judgment is coming for all unbelievers. But for those who trust Yahweh an amazing restoration is coming. God will **restore the fortunes** of his **people**. God will have Israel ready for that time when the restoration begins: Messiah's coming.

### *Conclusion*

What is the point? Spiritual resurrection cannot be manufactured in ourselves. “Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil” (Jer 13:23). We are beyond self-help. We need a spiritual resurrection (6:2). We need a new nature. Our own attempts at real change and transformation will come to nothing. The ultimate restoration for Israel and for us is on the third day with Christ in his resurrection. Without this regeneration, we can only look forward to the harvest of God's judgment. In Christ, God restores the fortunes of his people. Our only hope is resurrection with the one who was raised on the third day.

### *Sam and Mr. Frodo*

In the books and film series, Lord of the Rings, there is a scene with Samwise and Frodo Baggins. Frodo is hanging off a precipice of Mount Doom in Mordor, barely hanging on, dangling over the Crack of Doom, lava belching and splashing in the abyss below his exhausted body. Samwise is the humble savior figure, leaning over the cliff holding on to Frodo with all his might, keeping him from plunging into the abyss. The

ring has been destroyed, but Frodo is hanging on for dear life. Frodo looks down, and you can see the utter despair on his face. He just wants it to end. He's tired of fighting. He's so exhausted, scarred by the ring's evil. He's set free, but he also wants it all to end. Sam almost reads his mind. He sees the despair in Frodo's eyes. He says, "Don't you let go Mr. Frodo!" And Sam and Mr. Frodo tighten their grip on each other. Sam thwarts death for Mr. Frodo and drags him off the precipice. What happens to Frodo? Frodo is saved. He's redeemed. He's free from the ring.

Jesus is the one who has broken the power of the ring over you. The deadly ring of sin's reign is destroyed. Jesus is like Sam, he's got his grip on you. He's looking at you saying, "Don't you let go! Don't you dare let go." The beautiful thing about our precious Jesus is that even if we do let go, he still carries us. He's got you! You may be exhausted by sin's effect on you from your former life. Its lingering effects are discouraging, making you long for heaven. But don't lose heart. Don't let go. You are dead to the ring's power. You are alive in Christ. You are raised from the dead with Christ.

You are tired, but you are safe. You are alive! You are not completely healed yet, but Jesus has you, and he will never let go of you. By his death, death and sin are defeated. And in the power of his resurrection, we walk in the power of his life far from that crack of Doom in Mordor. Jesus carries us to higher places.