

LETTER 49
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THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA

You have undertaken a rather difficult task in giving a series of sermons on Hosea. After the first few chapters it is a very difficult book. The outline of its latter chapters is extremely difficult. One suggestion has been that they contain extracts from sermons. It would be easier at your present stage of training to take the minor prophets one-by-one and select a few outstanding points that would bring intellectual and spiritual help to those present.

All the chapter divisions in the Bible were inserted many centuries after the various books were written. Sometimes they represent natural division points, and sometimes they do not. I once heard a very prominent Bible teacher say that in nine-tenths of cases the chapter divisions are in the wrong place. I think this is quite exaggerated but I feel that it is always good to learn to find the natural division points ourselves rather than to place too much dependence on chapter divisions.

Hosea 11:1 has puzzled many. Since Matthew does not say that a type was fulfilled but that what was spoken by the prophet was fulfilled by Christ's sojourn in Egypt, it is most likely that this verse is really prophetic rather than historical. It was in view of God's future plans for Christ, which involved bringing Him back from Egypt, that he loved Israel, delivering its people from Egyptian bondage and bringing them into the promised land.

Hosea 13:11 probably refers to Saul (1 Samuel 15:22-23; 16:1).

In view of the rather disconnected nature of much of the book of Hosea, it is difficult to be sure of the exact meaning of 14:8. Since it comes right after the promises of future blessing there is much to be said for the KJV interpretation, which promises that Ephraim will turn completely away from idols, and assures him that the only source of real blessing is to be found in the true God....