

Lesson 11

In verse 8, we see a continued description of the woman, who represents the evil society and culture of Israel. And starting in verse 8, we again see the cycle that we saw earlier in this same chapter.

- In verse 8, we again see the sin.
- In verses 9–13, we again see the punishment.
- And in verses 14–23, we again see the redemption.

Hosea 2:8

8 And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.

Notice the pronouns in verse 8 – **She** did not know, and **they** used for Baal.

That switch from singular to plural confirms what we have been saying about chapter 2 all along – the focus here has shifted from Gomer the person to Israel the people for whom Gomer was a sign.

By any measure, verse 8 is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. It reaches back to and depends on verse 5.

I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.

But verse 8 reaches back much further than that! After all that God had done for Israel throughout its entire history, Israel had reached the low point of verse 8 in which Israel was thanking Baal for the gifts of God!

The grain, the wine, and the oil had all come from God, but the people had given the credit for those gifts to Baal.

And note that these three examples – grain, wine, and oil – are all examples of food that come from God without being processed and transformed by human hands. These gifts had come straight from God to their tables.

And God did not just give them these basic commodities, but God also gave them luxuries – verse 8 tells us that silver and gold had been lavished on her by God.

And what did the people do with those gifts from God?

Look at the handout for Lesson 10 – in the lower left you can see a statue of Baal that is overlaid with gold. That is what is described in verse 10 – “Who lavished on her silver and gold, **which they used for Baal.**” Or perhaps better (in view of the handout) as another translation renders it, “**which they made into Baal.**” The people took the gifts of God and made false idols with them.

So the people were guilty of two things – they were not thankful to God for the blessings that

he had given them, and they used those blessings for purposes that were opposed to God.

The people thought Baal was the god of fertility, but fertility was a blessing from the one true God. And the people **should** have known that – and, in fact, they **would** have known that had they been following the law as they should.

In the Feast of Firstfruits, the people were intended to acknowledge that the bounty of their promised land was a gift from God.

Leviticus 23:9-14 – And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD. And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.”

But the people had rejected all of that in favor of their sex-crazed worship of Baal. They had forgotten what God had done for them and was still doing for them. They had rejected this “statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.”

And worse, in rejecting this feast celebrating the gifts of God, the people had turned their back on the greatest gift of all. Look again at Leviticus 23:12.

And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD.

The gifts, the feast, the thankfulness, the sacrifice – they were all pointing to Christ (as were all of the other Jewish feasts). And so when the people looked to Baal instead of looking to God, they were telling God that they neither wanted nor needed any gifts from him – **including the gift of his son.**

So does that mean the people weren't celebrating this feast at all? No. In fact, later in verse 11 we will see that they were still keeping the appointed feasts.

But they were just going through the motions. They were just feasting to have a good time with their friends and to take off time from work. There was no thought behind any of it. They were keeping the feasts, but they were not keeping God. And worse, they had turned the feasts of God into feasts of Baal.

And not only had the people not credited God for the gifts he had given them, but they had then heaped those gifts on a false god!

There is a great lesson here for us – not only must we be thankful for all that God has given and is giving us, but we have a responsibility to

use those gifts in service to him. If we were instead to use those gifts for some evil purpose, then how would we be any different from the people of Hosea's day who took the gold and silver from God and used it to overlay a statue of Baal?

As we study Hosea, we need to keep in mind that the Bible is both a window and a mirror. Yes, I can look through that window and see the horrible sin of ancient Israel, but I also need to look at that mirror and see the same sin in my own life. I need to look for the gold-covered statues of Baal in my own life.

There is a key word in verse 8. For the first time, Hosea uses the word "know."

One commentary says that that one little word – "know" – "as much as any single word captures the essence of what God wants and what Israel is lacking. Intimacy, loyalty, and obedience – the three-fold cord of the covenant – are braided together in this word."

There are two Hebrew words in Hosea translated "know" and "knowledge," and each occurrence of those two words in Hosea is shown on the handout for Lesson 11. Perhaps the best known use of the word in Hosea is found in Hosea 4:6 – "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." And whatever else that verse may tell us, one thing it tells us for certain is that this knowledge is extremely important! What we don't know can destroy us!

The Hebrew word translated “know” in verse 8 is the word “yada,” and that word is used in many ways in the Bible.

Genesis 3:22 – And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to **know** [yada] good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

Genesis 4:1 – And Adam **knew** [yada] Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

Exodus 1:8 – Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which **knew** [yada] not Joseph.

Deuteronomy 7:9 – **Know** [yada] therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.

This knowledge is not just an academic knowledge. Although it does include such knowledge, it also includes much more. This knowledge is an **academic** knowledge that is also an **intimate** knowledge and an **experiential** knowledge.

Here, the woman did not **know** [yada] that God had given her these gifts. What does that mean?

The use of the same word “know” in Genesis 4:1 (“And Adam **knew** Eve his wife”) is important in the context here. Why? Because in both Genesis 4 and Hosea 2 the word is used in the context of a husband and wife.

What the use of that same word here in verse 8 means is that Israel did know God with the

knowledge that a wife should have of her husband. And that knowledge between husband and wife includes academic knowledge, intimate knowledge, and experiential knowledge.

This lack of knowledge in verse 8 is a reminder that the marriage bond had been broken. It is a reminder of what God said back in verse 2 – “she is not my wife, and I am not her husband.”

What we are seeing here with the use of the word “know” in verse 8 is perhaps the central theme of the entire book of Hosea – spiritual adultery. That spiritual adultery was the reason why the marriage bond between God and Israel had been broken, and that spiritual adultery was the reason why God commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute.

And the lessons about this word “know” and the warnings against spiritual adultery are not lessons and warnings only for ancient Israel. They are also lessons and warnings for us today.

1 Corinthians 6:15-17 – Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” **But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.**

Ephesians 5:29-32 – For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” **This**

mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Of course, Israel should have known that her blessings were from God, and Israel should have known that in every way that is encompassed by the meaning of the word “know” in verse 8.

Israel should have **academically** known that her blessings were from God. Why? Because the Scriptures told Israel her blessings were from God and the prophets told Israel that her blessings were from God.

Israel should have **intimately** known that her blessings were from God. Why? Because God had shown his love for Israel in countless ways as a husband shows his love for his wife. In fact, Israel’s then current existence despite her repeated rebellions was evidence of God’s love and providence toward Israel. Israel should have known that these blessings were from her husband.

Israel should have **experientially** known that her blessings were from God. Why? Because Israel had experienced the blessings of God over and over throughout her history. God had led Israel out of Egypt and given her a land of milk and honey. God had repeatedly saved Israel from her adversaries. Israel should have known from her own experience that these blessings were not from Baal but were from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Israel should have known these things, but Israel did not know these things. And that ignorance can be described only as a willful ignorance.

Isaiah 1:3 – The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but **Israel does not know**, my people do not understand.

Romans 1:28 – And even as they **did not like to retain God in their knowledge**, God gave them over to a reprobate mind...

And this willful ignorance led to ingratitude.

The people of God are a thankful people – how could it be otherwise when we think about all that God has done for us, is doing for us, and will do for us?

Romans 8:32 – He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him **graciously give us all things**?

Colossians 3:15 – And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. **And be thankful.**

1 Thessalonians 5:18 – **Give thanks in all circumstances**; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

And, as for knowing God, remember the beautiful prophesy of the church that we see in Jeremiah 31.

Jeremiah 31:34 – And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

In the church everyone knows God. Those outside the church do not know God, but those inside the

church all know God, from the least to the greatest.

What was lacking in the kingdom of Israel is a defining characteristic of the kingdom of Christ – knowledge of God. Those in Christ know God; those not in Christ do not know God. Those in the church know God; those not in the church do not know God.

Galatians 4:8 – Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

1 Thessalonians 4:5 – Not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 – In flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Titus 1:16 – They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.

1 John 2:3-4 – And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 4:8 – Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Let's keep all of this in mind as we continue through Hosea and as we encounter the many other uses of the word "know" in this book.

Hosea 2:9-10

9 Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness. 10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.

The sin in verse 8 is followed by punishment in verses 9-13.

We see several things going on with this punishment.

First, we see a refutation by God that Baal is the source of fertility.

The grain and the wine come from God, not from Baal. And whether the people have these blessings or do not have these blessings is up to God, not up to Baal.

That the grain is taken "in its time" and the wine "in its season" means that they are taken when they ripen, which points to a failure of the harvest – the very thing that the people had turned to Baal to avoid.

This first aspect of the punishment reminds us of Elijah's announcement of the drought, which showed that God rather than Baal was the bringer

of rain. Here we see that God rather than Baal is the bringer of the harvest.

But second, the punishment in these verses also points back to the marriage bond between God and Israel.

Now that that bond had been broken, God as a husband is retrieving his property from his wayward wife. God is taking back that which is rightfully his.

Verse 9 tells us that the wool and the flax were intended to cover the woman's nakedness, but now the wool and the flax have been taken away from her. As a result, as we see in verse 10, she is uncovered in the sight of her lovers.

We talked about verse 10 earlier when we looked at verse 3. As we said then, this public exposure most likely points to the exile that was coming for Israel because of her spiritual adultery. In the ancient world captives were often taken away naked, and ancient art work routinely depicted departing exiles as naked.

These lovers in verse 10 are the foreign nations in which Israel trusted and the foreign gods Israel worshipped, but I think the focus here is on the foreign nations. Assyria was one such nation, and it was Assyria that would soon lead Israel away naked in exile.

And who would be there to rescue Israel from that terrible fate? The end of verse 10 answers that question – **no one**. “No one shall rescue her out of my hand.”

Before we leave these verses, let's look for a moment at the word "wine" that we see in verses 8-9.

There are 14 different words used in the Bible to denote "wine." The word used here is *tiyros* (from the word for expulsion) and refers to freshly squeezed out grape juice that has not fermented. And that word makes perfect sense from the context here – God takes this wine back "in its season," which means at the moment that it would have been harvested.

Why do I point this out? I point this out because it is wrong to assume that every use of the word "wine" in our English translations refers to intoxicating wine, and that warning applies to both the Old and the New Testaments. Whether or not the word "wine" in the Bible refers to alcoholic wine must be determined based on the Hebrew or Greek word that is used and based on the context in which that word appears.

And, to be very frank, we should avoid the *reckless* use of the Bible to justify the *reckless* use of alcohol!

Sometimes we hear an appeal to the Bible from those who seek to justify the use of recreational alcohol by a Christian, and very often those appeals are based entirely on our current understanding of the English word "wine" combined with unwarranted assumptions about what that word means in the Bible.

If we were to embark on that study, I think that what we might find is that the Bible never speaks

with approval about the recreational use of intoxicating beverages. And I know that we would see that we need to be extremely careful before we ever suggest otherwise.

And that warning is especially important given the **tremendous evil** that the alcohol industry is inflicting on our world today and given the frequent commands in the Bible that Christians must always be **sober and watchful**.

But if anyone is looking for an example in the Bible where the word “wine” is used to refer to **fresh grape juice**, then you can look at verses 8–9. And there are many other such examples in the Bible.

Hosea 2:11

11 And I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts.

In verse 11, God says that he will put an end to the various religious celebrations that the people of Israel held each year.

Most likely these events were mixtures of various feasts and celebrations under the old law with various feasts and celebrations in honor of Baal. As we discussed earlier, the people were guilty of syncretism in their mixture of true and false religion.

The feasts and celebrations under the old law had been ordained by God so that the people could, with joy, show their love and gratitude to God.

Deuteronomy 26:11 – And you shall rejoice in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you.

But the people had rejected God, and they had forgotten what God had done for them. And while they continued to celebrate, they were now using those celebrations to thank and honor Baal.

Some commentators even suggest that the people had turned some of these feasts into the sexual orgies that were a part of the worship of the fertility god Baal.

As for the list of events in verse 11 (feasts, new moons, Sabbaths, and appointed feasts), that list reminds us of similar lists describing the true of worship of God.

2 Chronicles 2:4 – Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the LORD my God and dedicate it to him for the burning of incense of sweet spices before him, and for the regular arrangement of the showbread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed feasts of the LORD our God, as ordained forever for Israel.

Ezra 3:4-5 – And they kept the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule, as each day required, and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the LORD, and

the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the LORD.

But these Sabbaths and new moons and appointed feasts in verse 11 were no longer a part of the true worship of the one true God. Instead, these events were being offered as false worship of a false god.

And so God was going to put an end to it all.

The verb used here for “put an end to” is the same verb that was used in 1:4 to announce the end of the rule of the house of Israel – “I will **put an end to** the kingdom of the house of Israel.” And, likewise, when Assyria showed up, all of these celebrations would come to a complete end.

There is a lesson here for the people of God at any point in history. In Hosea’s day, the people had turned their back on God – but they had not turned their back on the rituals of God.

They were able to carry on with those outward expressions without realizing that God had rejected them and was very soon going to put an end to both them and their pretense of worship.

And the lesson for us?

John 4:24 – God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

In Hosea’s day, the people were going through the motions, but their hearts were directed to Baal. If I ever find myself just going through the

motions with my hearts directed elsewhere, how am I any better than those ancient Israelites?

Matthew 15:8-9 – This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

As we read about Israel in the book of Hosea, we are seeing Israel at its lowest point. But we need to remember that Israel did not start out at its lowest point. Instead, Israel was once at its highest point. Israel had once been a part of a unified kingdom under King David and King Solomon.

But what happened? What happened was that Solomon died and Israel rebelled.

2 Chronicles 10:19 – So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

And step by step Israel moved further and further away from God until they eventually reached the point where we meet them in Hosea, at their lowest point and near the very end of their history.

And what is the lesson there for us? The lesson is that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

If we ever find ourselves a thousand miles away from God, we need to realize that once we were only a single step away from God. Let's resolve never to take that single step!

Hebrews 2:1 – Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we **drift away** from it.

2 John 1:9 – Everyone who **goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ**, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

Let's keep our feet on our firm foundation and not wander even one step off the narrow path that leads to God.