

Lesson 24

Hosea 6:2

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

When we ended last week, we were looking at verse 2. As we said, it seems most likely that Paul had Hosea 6:2 in mind when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:4 that Jesus “was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

If so, then we have two questions: (1) Why does the prophecy in Hosea 6:2 also talk about two days?, and (2) Isn't the context here about the restoration of Israel – and if so, how can we apply it to Jesus?

Let's start with the reference to two days in verse 2. What does that mean? I think the answer is simple – verse 2 is simply stating the same thing twice.

The phrases “after two days” and “on the third day” mean the same thing here. The third day is the day “after two days,” and it is on that third day that the raising occurs; it is after two days that the reviving occurs. The raising and the reviving are the same event, and that event happens on the third day, which is the same day as the day after two days.

The word “revive” in verse 2 might make us think we are looking here at someone who is just sick but not someone who is dead – but that is not correct.

We are not looking here at someone who is just sick; we are looking here at someone who is dead. And one way we can see that is by comparing the word we see here with the word we see in Ezekiel 37 with the valley of dry bones.

Ezekiel 37:3 – And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

The Hebrew word translated “live” in that verse is the same Hebrew word translated “revive” in Hosea 6:2. The one who is being revived and raised up here in verse 2 is dead.

And I think that fact also lets us know that the “after two day” revival and the “third day” raising are the same event. It is not possible for someone to be raised from the death slowly or in stages! At any particular moment in time, either someone is alive or is not alive. The revival after two days and the raising on the third day must occur at the same point in time.

Our second question is more controversial: Isn't the context here about the restoration of Israel – and if so, how can we apply it to Jesus?

That question raises a huge issue in Old Testament studies, so let's briefly consider an objection that we often hear about prophecies such as Hosea 6:2 (here) and Hosea 11:1 (that we will see later).

And what is that frequent objection? It is the charge that the New Testament writers ripped these Old Testament verses out of their proper context and applied them instead to events from the life of Christ that (the critics tell us) were never in the mind of the original author or the original audience.

Here is how one modern critic describes the position:

It is impossible to establish that any passage in its original literary and historical context must or even should be understood as portending a future messianic figure.

How should we respond to that? Well, let's start with an example – King David.

When David wrote the Psalms, was David thinking about a coming Messiah, or was David thinking only about himself and the events of his own time? The Bible answers that question!

Acts 2:29–31 – Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and **knowing** that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, 31 **he foresaw and spoke** about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

David **knew**. David **foresaw**. David **spoke**. Those aren't my words. Those are Peter's words in Acts 2.

And, of course, David is not the only example. We could also point to Isaiah.

John 12:41 – Isaiah said these things because **he saw** his glory and **spoke** of him.

Isaiah **saw** the glory of Christ, and Isaiah **spoke** about Christ.

But, of course, we are not saying that the Old Testament prophets had the complete picture. We know that they did not.

1 Peter 1:10-11 – Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours **searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.**

God did not reveal everything to the prophets, and so the prophets did not know everything. But the very next verse in 1 Peter tells us what those prophets **did** know.

1 Peter 1:12 – **It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you,** in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

The prophets knew that they were not speaking only about their own times but were instead also speaking about the coming day of the Messiah. Peter confirms that was revealed to them – “they were serving not themselves but you.”

So, the first thing we can say about that common objection is that it is directly refuted by the Scriptures. The prophets knew that they were speaking about the coming Messiah, and, of course, the New Testament by inspiration very often confirms that fact by quoting Old Testament verses and applying them to Jesus. (Many of the prophecies shown on the handout for Lesson 24 fall in this category.) We cannot believe in the inspiration of the Bible and not also believe that many Old Testament scriptures are about the life of Christ.

But, of course, the same liberal scholars who reject the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament also reject the inspiration of the Bible, so those arguments are not likely to sway them.

Is there anything more we could say to them? Yes, there is. We can make an even stronger statement.

Even if the prophets had no idea what they were speaking about, and even if their audience had no idea what the prophet was speaking about – even then it would still not mean that the prophecies could not be about Jesus.

How do we know? Because we have a prophecy about Jesus that is just like that.

We have a prophecy about Jesus given by someone who had no idea that it was a prophecy about Jesus. We have a prophecy about Jesus that was delivered to an audience who likewise had no idea that it was a prophecy about Jesus. And yet we

know with absolute certainty that it was in fact a prophecy about Jesus.

John 11:47-53 – So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

Neither Caiaphas nor those listening to Caiaphas thought that Caiaphas was making a prophecy about Jesus. And how do we know that? Because “from that day on they made plans to put him to death.”

Neither the speaker nor the audience saw any prophecy about Jesus in what was said, and yet they were all mistaken.

“He prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

What can we learn from that? What we can learn from that is that God, and God alone, determines whether something is a prophecy about Jesus. Not the speaker, not the hearer, not the context, and not the liberal commentator throwing barbs at the

Bible from his air-conditioned ivory tower – but only God and God alone.

And sometimes God gives us those prophecies about his Son in unexpected contexts and from unexpected sources. And sometimes God lets the speaker know that he is prophesying about Jesus, but sometimes he does not.

So what can we conclude from that? What we can conclude is that it makes no sense to argue that a verse in the Old Testament cannot be a prophecy about Jesus because it comes from an unexpected source or in an unexpected context. If God tells us that it is a prophecy about Jesus, then that is what it is.

Now let's get back to our prophecy here: "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him."

Yes, the context here is the restoration of Israel, and yes, even if that context is unexpected that would not mean this prophecy is not about Jesus – **but is that context really unexpected?** Should we be shocked to see a prophecy about Jesus in a section of Hosea dealing with the restoration of Israel? Not at all!

We have already seen in this book that God had some wonderful things in store for Israel despite their faithlessness and their rebellion.

We have already seen that a time would come when "in the place where it was said to them, 'You are

not my people,' it shall be said to them,
'Children of the living God.'" (Hosea 1:10)

And we have already seen that those promises of future blessings are the same promises that God makes to all people through the gospel of Christ. God promised to bless the entire world through the Messiah.

Given the terrible disaster that would soon come from Assyria, those promises of future blessing make no sense at all apart from the gospel of Christ.

And so, the context here of the restoration of Israel cannot be separated from the context of Christ. They are the same context, and we see that right here in verses 2 and 3. Had Jesus not been raised on the third day, then there could have been no future blessings for Israel or for anyone else.

So, no, we should not be surprised at all to see a prophecy in Hosea about the resurrection of Christ. Why not? Because the book of Hosea would make no sense at all were it not for the resurrection of Christ. Absent that event, the promises of future blessing in Hosea would be just empty promises.

Yes, Israel would be restored (Jeremiah 31:1-30), but that restoration would occur under the new covenant of Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-40).

So is verse 2 about Jesus? Yes, it most definitely is, and I like how one commentary from 1885 explained it:

The Resurrection of Christ, and our resurrection in Him and in His Resurrection, could not be more plainly foretold. The Prophet expressly mentions two days, after which life should be given, and a third day, on which the resurrection should take place. What else can this be than the two days in which the Body of Christ lay in the tomb, and the third day, on which He rose again, as the Resurrection and the life, the first fruits of them that slept, the source and earnest and pledge of our resurrection and of life eternal?

And further:

In shadow, the prophecy was never fulfilled to Israel at all. The ten tribes were never restored; they never, as a whole, received any favor from God, after He gave them up to captivity. ... The strictest explanation is the truest. The two days and the third day have nothing in history to correspond with them, except that in which they were fulfilled, when Christ, "rising on the third day from the grave, raised with Him the whole human race."

I think that final comment explains the plural pronouns that we see here in verse 2: "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him."

The resurrection of Christ is our resurrection as well.

John 11:25 – Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."

Romans 6:5 – For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

1 Peter 3:21 – Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt

from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Hosea 6:3

3 Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

The wonderful song of repentance that started in verse 1 ends here in verse 3.

And verse 3 begins with a restatement of one of the primary themes of this book: "Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD."

And that motto is a wonderful motto for the people of God at any time in history!

"His going out is sure as the dawn." We can depend on God just as surely as we can depend on the sun to rise each day. And the coming of the Lord will be a time of joy and light, just as the dawn brings joy and light following a night time of darkness.

Earlier we saw darkness consuming the land, but here we see light consuming the darkness.

And we also saw a drought earlier, but here we see showers and spring rains from God watering the earth. It is God, not Baal, who controls the rain and who blesses the world with life and fertility.

The terrors of the lion, disease, decay, darkness, and drought are replaced with healing,

the binding of wounds, the light of dawn, and the blessing of rain.

As we said, this is the song that God longed to hear from his people, but God did not hear this song from them.

This song tells us what God wanted to do for Israel, but Israel wanted nothing to do with God.

And it is to that sad fact that Hosea turns in the next verse.

But before we get to verse 4, let's pause and note something wonderful about what God tells us here.

If God had ever thrown up his hands and said that the sinful people on this world were not worth the life of his Son, this would have been that time. Despite all that God had done for Israel, they had repeatedly thrown those blessings back in God's face and had instead embraced Baal. Rather than thanking God for those blessings and worshiping God, they had thanked and worshipped Baal. They did not know God. They were faithless.

And yet what do we see God doing here at the beginning of Hosea 6? We see God planning to send his Son to die for this world and then be resurrected on the third day. What we see here is the same thing that Paul would later tell us about.

Romans 5:8 – But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Can we ever fully understand the love of God? I don't think so, but Hosea 6:1-3 is a good place to start.

Hosea 6:4

4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.

Verse 4 begins with what can be described only as a cry of anguish from God: "What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah?"

What shall I do? What shall I do? It is a cry of love, but also a cry of frustration.

It is the cry of a parent or of a spouse who has tried everything and who now wonders if there is anything left to try. Or perhaps it is the cry of someone who knows what must be done next, but who really does not want to take that final step.

In that cry we see both the great love and the great sadness of this book. What can I do? What can I do? What can be done to change someone's heart. It is a cry that we still hear today.

God's love is unwavering – but not so with the love of Israel. God says: "Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away."

The people depended on predictable rainfall for their livelihood, and so they would have

immediately understood the figures in this verse of a morning cloud that looks like rain but proves to be disappointing and of morning dew that promises moisture but that quickly evaporates.

The morning clouds and the morning dew are fleeting – and so is the love of Israel toward God. Israel's love is wavering and unsteady and inconsistent – all the opposite of God's love for them.

One day the people act like they want to follow God, but the next day they are worshiping Baal and they are looking to foreign nations for help. Their commitments to God mean nothing; they are disloyal and unfaithful.

Hosea 6:5

5 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light.

In verse 4 we saw God rhetorically asking what he could do to get through to this rebellious people. Here in verse 5 we see what God did – God sent forth his prophets, God sent forth his word, and God sent forth his judgment.

Verse 5 is not describing the actual punishments, but rather verse 5 is describing the prophetic pronouncements of the actual punishments. These people are not being struck down by soldiers and slain by arrows – they are being struck down by prophets and slain by words.

Verse 5 is a remarkable testament to both the certainty of God's word and the power of God's word. Whether you are slain by an Assyrian arrow or by God's promise of an Assyrian arrow – you are just as dead either way.

If God tells us that something will happen, then that something becomes a certainty – so much so that the promise of the event and the event itself become effectively interchangeable. That is what we see here with people who are hewn not be soldiers but by prophets and who are slain not by arrows but by words.

And who were these prophets? Hosea is certainly included, but so are Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and many others. The prophets had all told the people what would happen if they rejected God.

As for God's judgment, verse 5 tells us it goes forth as the light. What does that mean? It means that God's judgments cut through the darkness; they uncover the darkness; they shine in the darkness.

Elsewhere in Hosea we have seen the darkness that comes when people do not know God, when they do not teach their children about God, and when they engage in idolatry, sexual immorality, and drunkenness.

We have seen the darkness that comes when people play the whore and when they place their trust in their false gods, in their foreign alliances, and in their own military power.

But God's judgments are just the opposite – they go forth as light!

1 John 1:5 – This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

John 3:19 – And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

Verse 5 is directed to both Ephraim and Judah. Both had been warned, and both would soon experience the promised judgment from God. That judgment was coming very soon for Ephraim with the Assyrian invasion, and it would come later for Judah with the Babylonian invasion.

Hosea 6:6

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

Hosea 6:6 is one of the great texts of the Bible. Let's begin our study of this verse by looking at how Jesus used it.

Matthew 9:9-13 – As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who

are sick. Go and learn what this means: **'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'** For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 12:1-8 – At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, **'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,'** you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

I think we also see an allusion to Hosea 6:6 in Mark 12, not from the words of Christ but from the words of a scribe who answered Jesus wisely.

Mark 12:28-34 – And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, **is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.**" And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he

said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

There is a great deal we can say about those verses, and quite a lot that we will say about them – but let's start with a simple yet wonderful fact: Jesus read and studied the very same verses that we are reading and studying in this class!

Jesus knew the Scriptures – and yes, we know that Jesus is all-knowing, but we also know that Jesus grew up studying the Scriptures.

Luke 2:52 – And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

So, yes, Jesus studied Hosea, and, based on what we just read, perhaps we can say even more – perhaps we can say that Hosea 6:6 was Jesus' favorite verse in Hosea!

So, with that background, what does verse 6 mean?

Let's start with what it meant to those who first heard it.

"I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."

What have we already seen several times about the people of Israel in Hosea's day? What we have seen is that, although they had turned their back on God, they had not turned their back on the rituals of God. We saw that most clearly in Hosea 2.

Hosea 2:11 – And I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts.

They were just going through the motions, but their hearts were about as far from God as it was possible for them to be. They kept the Sabbath and the appointed feasts, but they did so in honor of Baal and for the purpose of sexual immorality. And, yes, Israel made burnt offerings, but they did so for Baal!

Hosea 2:13 – And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD.

So no one – not Hosea, not Israel, and not us – should be surprised when God tells us in verse 6 that he desires steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

God did not then – and God does not now – want people that just go through the motions. God wants people who know him and who love him. That is what verse 6 is telling us, and, again, that message should not come as a surprise to anyone.

So now, let's fast forward seven centuries from the days of Hosea to the days of Christ. And what God said in Hosea 6:6 was still true.

In Matthew 9, Jesus was confronted by Pharisees who asked him why he was eating with tax collectors and sinners. And Jesus, quoting Hosea 6:6, said:

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

In Matthew 12, Jesus was once again confronted by Pharisees who accused his disciples of breaking the Sabbath when they plucked heads of grain and ate. And Jesus, quoting Hosea 6:6, said:

I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.

What do those two events have in common?

- Each of them is an example where the Pharisees placed form over substance.
- Each of them is an example where the Pharisees missed the big picture.
- Each of them is an example where the Pharisees displayed their hypocrisy.
- Each of them is an example where the Pharisees were just going through the motions with no thought of God.
- Each of them is an example where the Pharisees shows their lack of knowledge, their lack of faithfulness, and their lack of steadfast love.

And when faced with such people, Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6.

So now, let's fast forward again – this time let's move forward 27 centuries from the days of Hosea and 20 centuries from the days of Christ to

our own days. And, again, what God said in Hosea 6:6 is still true.

Can we sum up the message of Hosea in a single statement? What is the most valuable lesson that I, living in 2024, can learn from the prophet Hosea, who lived 27 centuries ago? I think Hosea 6:6 gives us that answer.

What is the message of Hosea? What is the most valuable lesson I can learn from Hosea? I think it is this: **God does not want a people who just go through the motions. God wants a people who know him and who love him.**

So what does that mean for me? What it means is that if I am just going through the motions, then I have a big problem. In fact, I have the same problem that the people of Israel had in the days of Hosea!

I might be tempted to read Hosea and say to God, like the Pharisee in Luke 18:11, "I thank you that I am not like these other men." But if I am just going through the motions, then I am exactly like these other men!

Why am I here today? Why am I singing? Why am I praying? Why am I taking the communion? Why am I giving? Why am I listening to God's word? **Is it all just to get my ticket punched?**

Have I left God, but kept the rituals of God? If so, I would hardly be the first to have done so! The people of Hosea's day had done the exact same thing.

Yes, God wants me to worship him according to the pattern that he has given us in his word, but God wants those acts of worship to be done in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Absent the right heart, my acts of worship are not acts of worship. I cannot worship God as God wants to be worshipped if I do not know God and love God.

That is certainly the message of Hosea 6:6, and it may be the message of the entire book.