

Lesson 47

Last week we looked at the first four verses of Hosea 14, and we saw how those four verses describe God's wonderful plan to bless the entire world. We described verse 4 as the John 3:16 of the Old Testament - "I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them."

And after we are healed, after we are loved freely, and after God's anger is turned from us - what then? The book of Hosea closes with the wonderful answer to that question.

Hosea 14:5-6

5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; 6 his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon.

The focus here is Israel, and I think it is **physical** Israel.

Why? Because physical Israel has been the focus of Hosea all throughout this book. For that reason, I think we are looking here in Hosea 14 at the physical descendants of the people who were listening to Hosea.

But we are also looking at **spiritual** Israel - at the church. We are also looking at us.

Why? Because the blessings that lay in store for anyone from **physical** Israel who later heard and obeyed the gospel are the same blessings that lay in store for anyone who hears and obeys the gospel. And those who obey the gospel are added to the church, which is **spiritual** Israel (Galatians 6:16).

The focus here is on **physical** Israel because they are the people of Ephraim who were exiled and scattered by Assyria. The warnings in this book were directed **first** to physical Israel, and the blessings in this book were directed **first** to physical Israel.

But we today can also learn from those same warnings, and we today can also enjoy those same blessings. There is one gospel, and it is a gospel for all people.

Is there any difference between a **Jew** who obeys the gospel and a **Gentile** who obeys the gospel? And the answer is . . . yes! There is a difference.

But it is **not** a difference of what we must do to obey the gospel. And it is **not** a difference on what happens to us after we obey the gospel. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile in the church.

Romans 10:12 - For there is **no distinction** between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

The difference between a Jew who obeys the gospel and a Gentile who obeys the gospel is not a difference about where they are going, but rather it is a difference about where they came from. That is what Paul tells us in Romans 9 and 11.

Romans 9:4-5 - They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.

Romans 11:24 - For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

Paul tells us that the Jews had great advantages that were not enjoyed by the Gentiles - "to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, . . . the promises," and "the patriarchs."

Jesus was a Jew according to the flesh. The Jews were the “natural branches” that could “be grafted back into their own olive tree.”

But once that grafting has occurred, there is no longer any difference. Both Gentile and Jew become branches on the **same** tree.

Galatians 3:28 - There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And there is no difference in **how** that grafting occurs.

Romans 1:16 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, **to the Jew first and also to the Greek**.

Romans 3:9 - What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin.

The gospel that was proclaimed **first** to the Jews in Acts 2 is the same gospel that was also proclaimed to the Gentiles in Acts 10.

Again, the difference between a Jew and a Gentile in the church is a difference only of where they came from - not a difference of where they are going or a difference of how they get there. There is one and only one church, there is one and only one Savior, and there is one and only one gospel.

Back to verses 5-6, these beautiful verses begin a description of the blessings we enjoy - both Jew and Gentile - in Christ. And we know that these blessings are blessings **in Christ** because of what we read in verse 4.

As we said, verse 4 tells us what God does for us in Christ, and verse 5 begins a description of the blessings we enjoy **after** God does those things for us. Let's look at each of those blessings.

“I will be like the dew to Israel.”

The people of Israel could not live without dew. It was the evening dew that watered the earth when that water was most needed during the summer. It was a calamity when the dew failed to come, and the lack of dew was sometimes a result of divine judgment.

Haggai 1:10 - Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.

God was the source of that morning dew, as God made clear in his questions to Job.

Job 38:28 - Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew?

But the subject of verse 5 is not water. The subject of verse 5 is the blessings that would come to those from Israel who would later obey the Messiah. And, as we know, those same blessings would also be enjoyed by Gentiles.

And the first blessing that God mentions is that he will be like this dew. What does that mean?

How is God like dew? I think we have already answered that question!

As we just saw, dew is a gentle, mysterious, daily presence without which the people cannot live. That is what God is like. That is what the grace of God is like.

“He shall blossom like the lily.”

After receiving the grace of God like dew from heaven, the people of God will blossom like a beautiful lily.

Any time we see a prophecy in the Old Testament about the beauty of God’s people, we should be thinking about the church. Why? Because the church is beautiful!

How do we know that? Because that is how God sees the church. In Revelation 21, we find a description of “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb,” which is the church.

We are often told that Revelation 21 is describing something that we cannot see (heaven) with images that we can understand. But is that true? I don’t think so.

We know from the opening verses of that chapter that, whatever is being described, it is not heaven.

Revelation 21:2 - And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, **coming down out of heaven** from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21 is not describing a place - it is describing a people.

Rather than describing something we **cannot** see (heaven), I think Revelation 21 is describing something we **can** see (the church) but that we aren't seeing correctly. God is telling us that the church is beautiful! The poor persecuted church of the first century likely saw themselves differently - and so God was telling them what they looked like to him!

Revelation 21:18-19 - The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel.

And Paul also told us that.

Ephesians 5:27 - So that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

The people of God are beautiful!

What blessings have we seen so far? The faithful people of God would receive the grace of God like dew, and the faithful people of God would be beautiful like a lily. And the next blessing?

“He shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out.”

The next blessing is that the people of God would be stable like a large tree with deep roots growing in all directions.

This blessing brings to mind the opening Psalm.

Psalm 1:1-3 - Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. **He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.**

But why is Lebanon mentioned? We know that Lebanon is famous for its cedar trees (as we see on the handout for Lesson 47), but let's save that question for later because we are going to see Lebanon again in these final verses.

Instead, let's look now at the next blessing.

“His beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon.”

Again, we are reminded of a Psalm.

Psalm 52:8 - But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.

As with the lily, we again see the beauty of God's people. The world may not see us that way, but is there anything that the world sees correctly? We know that we are beautiful because we know that is how God sees us, and we know that God sees us as we really are.

But there is a difference between the beauty of the lily and the beauty of the olive tree. Unlike a lilly, olive trees are useful and expensive, providing food, fuel, and medicine.

The church is not just something beautiful to look at. The church is something beautiful that is costly and useful.

1 Peter 1:18-19 - Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **but with the precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Titus 2:14 - Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for **good works**.

And our fragrance is like Lebanon.

Earlier in Hosea 5:11-13 we saw filth, dry rot, and festering wounds. And we can imagine that putrid fragrance of decay.

But the faithful people of God smell nothing like that!

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 - But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the **fragrance** of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the **aroma** of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a **fragrance** from life to life.

But why is Lebanon mentioned again? Let's save that question for later.

The description of the blessings that we enjoy in Christ continues in verse 7.

Hosea 14:7

7 They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

“They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow.”

In the ESV, God is the tree, and Israel dwells in his shadow. And that translation is widely adopted because it fits well with what we see elsewhere in the Bible about God and about the people of God.

Isaiah 49:10 - They shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.

Psalms 121:5-6 - The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

But, while the ESV translation fits well with some **distant** verses, it does not fit as well with **nearby** verses. Why not? Because the ESV translation causes this metaphor in verse 7 to be different from the other botanical metaphors that we see in verses 5-7.

In verse 5, Israel is like a lily and like a tree with deep roots. In verse 6, Israel is like a growing tree and like an olive tree. Later in verse 7 Israel will be like grain and like a vine.

But, if the ESV is correct, then at the beginning of verse 7, God (rather than Israel) is like a tree casting its shadow.

But what if the ESV is not correct? Another possible translation of verse 7 is “those who dwell in his shade shall return” where “his shade” refers to **Israel’s** shade.

That translation fits better with the surrounding metaphors, but what does it mean? Who is dwelling in the shade of the faithful people of God - and what would it mean that they return?

What we may be seeing here are the Gentiles who would repent, obey the gospel, and be added to the church, the Israel of God. This metaphor would then be giving us the same ordering that Paul gave us in the book of Romans, which is the same ordering that we see occurring in the book of Acts.

Romans 1:16 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, **to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

And as for the church being a tree, that is one way that Jesus described his kingdom.

Luke 13:18-19 - He said therefore, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.”

So which is it? Is God the tree or are God’s people the tree?

As we just saw, either view could be correct, but I favor the second view because it fits better with the immediate context.

“They shall flourish like the grain.”

Again we have a translation issue, and again the ESV’s choice is the most common choice - that Israel would flourish like grain. And if that is what it means then its meaning is self-explanatory.

But the Hebrew word translated “flourish” does not really mean flourish. Instead, the Hebrew word means to make something else live - to keep it alive or to make it alive.

A better translation may be: “they like grain shall sustain *people*,” where “people” is an unstated direct object of the verb “flourish” or “sustain.”

And who are these people who are sustained? Once again, this may be faithful Gentiles who would partake of the same spiritual blessings that were promised here to faithful Israelites.

If we are on the right track here, then the opening two phrases in verse 7 are both pointing to the blessings that the faithful Gentiles would enjoy. And how did those blessings come to the faithful Gentiles? They came through the faithful Jews.

As we recall from our study of Ezra, it was faithful Jews who returned to Jerusalem under Cyrus, who rebuilt the temple, and who restored the proper worship of God.

They also remained faithful during the Greek desecration that occurred between the Testaments. And, as a result, there were faithful Jews such as Mary and Joseph living in Palestine, ready to welcome Christ into the world.

The gospel was then proclaimed to the Jews first, and the word of the Lord went out first from Jerusalem. Faithful Gentiles owe a great debt to faithful Jews.

“They shall blossom like the vine.”

Again, faithful Israel is described as a plant - this time as a vine that gives joy to others with the fruit of that vine.

In each of the descriptions that we have seen so far in verse 7, faithful Israel is described as the agency by which God extends his mercy and grace to others.

Israel is a tree under which others can go for shade. Israel is grain by which others are sustained. And now Israel is a vine that brings joy to others.

I think what we are seeing here is what God told Abraham in Genesis 12:3 - “and **in you** all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Notice that phrase “in you.” Yes, it was God who blessed the world, but God did that through Abraham, through the Jewish race, through the Jewish Messiah.

But God was not planning to just **ble**ss Israel. God was also planning to **use** Israel, and God was using Israel to bless the entire world.

Faithless Israel in Hosea’s day had threatened that plan by forgetting about God and turning to false gods. And for that reason, God had given them up, declaring that they were no longer his people. Instead, God would turn to Judah to bring about his great plan of redemption. If God could not use Israel, then God would use someone else.

“Their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.”

I don’t like the ESV translation of “fame.” I think the Hebrew word is better translated as a “remembrance.”

Proverbs 10:7 - The **memory** of the righteous is a blessing...

The blessing is not that the faithful would be **famous**. The blessing is that they would be **remembered** - and that they would be remembered fondly. That, apparently, is how people remembered the wine of Lebanon - with fondness.

But who is doing the remembering here? Who is remembering the faithful Israelites with fondness? It is God.

All throughout the book of Hosea we have seen God remembering Israel’s past. Sometimes those recollections have been pleasant, but often those recollections have been painful.

We have often seen God’s recollection of Israel’s past used as a basis for condemning them in the present.

Hosea 9:10 - Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to the thing of shame, and became detestable like the thing they loved.

But we have also seen God’s fond recollections of Israel’s past used a reason for showing them compassion.

Hosea 11:3-4, 8 - Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. . . . 8 . . . My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.

When correctly translated, the end of verse 7 is a beautiful capstone on all of the blessings that God promises here to faithful Israel. Once again, God would remember Israel's youth - but this time all of the memories would be fond memories. God would not remember their sin.

Jeremiah 31:34 - . . . For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Before we leave verse 7 we need to answer a question that we have been kicking down the road since verse 5 - why is **Lebanon** mentioned here?

Lebanon is not mentioned anywhere in Hosea except here in verses 5-7 where it is suddenly mentioned three times.

- **Verse 5** - He shall take root like the trees of **Lebanon**.
- **Verse 6** - And his fragrance like **Lebanon**.
- **Verse 7** - Their [remembrance] shall be like the wine of **Lebanon**.

And these references to Lebanon almost seem a little forced. Why? Because, while we know that Lebanon was known for its trees, it is not as clear how Lebanon was known for its fragrance or for its wine.

So here is the question: **Why the sudden interest in Lebanon?**

As we see on the handout, Lebanon was located north of Galilee. It was famous for its trees and was the source of the wood that Solomon used to build the temple.

1 Kings 5:6 - Now therefore command that **cedars of Lebanon** be cut for me. And my servants will join your servants, and I will pay you for your servants such wages as you set, for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians.”

But cedar was not the only thing that Lebanon exported to Israel - Lebanon also exported the cult of Baal.

1 Kings 16:31 - And as if it had been a light thing for him (King Ahab) to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.

Sidon was a Phoenician city located on the Mediterranean coast within Lebanon, and so King Ethbaal of Sidon and his infamous daughter Jezebel were both from Lebanon.

It is interesting to think about how Jezebel personifies some of the key themes in the book of Hosea. She was a worshipper of Baal and the daughter of King Ethbaal. She was killed at the command of King Jehu who was chosen by God to destroy the house of King Ahab. And, as we know, Jezebel was an evil wife.

1 Kings 21:25 - There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited.

And so, just in that one person Jezebel, we see Baal worship, we see Jehu (whom we saw earlier in Hosea 1:4), and we see an evil wife.

I think the reason why Lebanon is mentioned three times in these verses is that Lebanon was firmly associated with Baal and with Jezebel.

But why do we see the **trees** of Lebanon, the **fragrance** of Lebanon, and the **wine** of Lebanon? Because **faithless** Israel had viewed Baal as the source of these agricultural blessings. Israel (going at least all the way back to Jezebel) had seen Baal as the god of fertility, and they had thanked Baal for these blessings.

But that would all change. Faithful Israel would understand that the **trees** of Lebanon came, not from Baal, but from God. Faithful

Israel would understand that the **fragrance** of Lebanon came, not from Baal, but from God. Faithful Israel would understand that the **wine** of Lebanon came, not from Baal, but from God.

Not only was Baal of Sidon not the source of fertility in distant Israel, but Baal was not even the source of fertility in its own hometown area of Lebanon! Baal was not a source of fertility anywhere.

As one commentary describes it:

It is by God's grace that Israel, once a source only of grief to the mind of God, would lose the stench of Baal and become to him like the wine of Lebanon.

Hosea 14:8

8 O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit.

If Hosea had written only a single verse instead of writing an entire book, I think verse 8 would have been that single verse.

And if God had decided to say only one thing to Ephraim instead of all the many things that God has said in this book, I think that one thing might have been verse 8.

In a sense, verse 8 summarizes the entire book. "O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?"

The sadness of the book, the seeming frustration of God that we see in this book, and the foolishness of the people all shine through in that short question from God - "O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?"

That question conveys the sense that God is fed up talking about idols! God is fed up having to explain to these people why idols are worthless and powerless.

If they can't understand how ridiculous it is to build something with your own hands and then to fall down and worship that thing you yourself built, then how can they ever understand anything about anything!

We see that same concern in Isaiah:

Isaiah 44:14-20 - He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. Then it becomes fuel for a man. **He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it.** Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!" And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. **No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?"** He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

The beginning of verse 8 leaves us with the definite impression that God would love for the entire subject of idols to just be over and done with.

And, in fact, that eventually happened, at least with these graven images - but it did not happen with Israel. Instead, it happened with Judah.

This sort of overt idolatry was never the problem in Judah after the Babylonian exile that it had been prior to the exile. That was one lesson that Judah learned from their punishment, although Judah certainly learned it the hard way.

It is I who answer and look after you.

The idols don't answer anyone, and the idols don't look after anyone. Why not? Because those idols are mute and lifeless.

Jeremiah 10:5 - Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.

The idols don't answer the people or look after the people, but God does both of those things.

Psalm 38:15 - But for you, O LORD, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.

Psalm 63:7 - For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.

And there **may** be some subtle wordplay going on in verse 8.

The Hebrew verb translated "look after" sounds in Hebrew like the word for **Assyria**, and it also sounds like the name of the false goddess **Asherah**. And the Hebrew verb translated "answer" sounds in Hebrew like the false Canaanite goddess **Anat**.

So some commentators suggest that verse 8 is, through this wordplay, making the point that it is God who answers them and looks after them rather than Assyria or these false gods.

But we can't say for sure whether any of that wordplay is going on here. This may just be a case in which the scholars are a bit too clever in coming up with some new ideas.

I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit.

Earlier Israel was a tree, and God used that tree to bless the world, But here we see what we already know - God is the source of those blessings. Yes, God may use Israel to bless the world, but God is the one who is doing the blessing.

In Hosea's day, the evergreen cypress was a common symbol of fertility. And so, once again, God reminds the people that he is the true source of these blessings and not Baal or any other false god.

Even though the name Ephraim means doubly-fruitful, Ephraim's fruit does not come from Ephraim or from Baal. God says, "from me comes your fruit."

And that word "fruit" is God's final spoken word in this book to doubly-fruitful Ephraim!

Hosea 14:9

9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

Verse 8 is God's final **spoken** word in the book of Hosea, but this verse from the pen of Hosea is God's final **written** word in the book.

But why did Hosea add this verse? I think it is because Hosea knew that this book would be hard to understand. Hosea knew that we would need to be wise and discerning to understand it.

And how did Hosea know that? He certainly knew it by inspiration, but I suspect Hosea also knew it because he had frequently seen the puzzled expressions on the faces of his listeners!

Remember, Hosea was trying to wake people up! And we will never wake anyone up by being dull! We will never wake anyone up by telling them things they already know and that they have already heard countless times before. Yes, there is a place for review, but if all we ever do is review, then no one will ever grow. Instead, they will just stagnate.

Here is how one commentary describes it:

“In this sense the words of Hosea are like the parables of Jesus. They both instruct and confuse; they both explain and disorient. They are not simply riddles, that is, word games that are interesting until the proper solutions are found and then can be laid aside like completed crossword puzzles. The meaning of the words is both on the surface and yet progressively beneath the surface. The interpretive task is a pilgrimage, the goal of which is ever more gloriously in view but never fully attained. The text invites the reader to a way of life; it is a path that leads to understanding and to God.”

And so, yes, Hosea is a difficult book, but it is difficult for a reason, and I think we see that reason right here in the final verse.

“For the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”

Do we walk or do we stumble? That is our final question in the book, and (after 47 lessons) I think we are walking! I think we understand the book of Hosea!

Here is how one commentary ends its discussion of this book:

Hosea’s final message to us is this: “How do you read the words of this book? Do they enlighten or confound? Are they life or death? Your response describes not so much the state of my book as the state of your soul.”

Yes, the book is difficult, but the book can be understood by those who approach the book with the right heart. And that is true of every verse in the Bible!

Epilogue

That’s the end of our journey! Who knew we would be spending so much time with Hosea and Gomer and Not Loved and Not Mine and Jezreel!

It has been a wonderful blessing and honor to have this opportunity to teach this book of Hosea. And, yes, it took longer than many of us, including me, expected it to take. But, if our goal is to understand the book of Hosea, then I’m not sure what we could have left out. And if our goal is something other than to understand the book of Hosea, well, that would have been easy.

Hosea is very dense. Hosea is very difficult. And so we had to move slowly. We had to move carefully to understand it. Many times, a single verse in Hosea would correspond to an entire chapter in the book of Isaiah.

I’ve taught the book of Revelation four times, verse by verse. I’ve taught the book of Daniel three times, verse by verse, and I’ve taught the book of Zechariah twice, verse by verse. I have never taught a book as difficult as Hosea.

We’ve seen many wonderful themes in the book of Hosea. We’ve seen the love of God. We’ve seen the grace of God. We’ve seen the plan

of God. We've seen the judgment of God. We've seen the wrath of God.

And, we've seen the importance of knowledge. People are destroyed for lack of knowledge, God said in Hosea 4:6. And, as we saw, that knowledge is not just an academic knowledge, but it is a deep knowledge of God.

It's the same word describing the knowledge between a husband and wife, and we know that the overriding metaphor in this book is the relationship between God, the husband, and his people, the wife, and between Hosea, the husband, and Gomer, the wife.

What these people lacked is knowledge, a deep abiding knowledge of God. And that lack what was destroying them. They did not know God. They did not know the things of God, the ways of God, the word of God, the people of God, or the plan of God. They did not know the love of God. They did not know God.

They knew about God. They were still going through all the motions. They were still keeping all the special feast days. We saw that.

But they had mixed in Baal worship, and they thought God would be fine with that. Who could possibly think such a thing? Only a people who did not know God. That's what they lacked, that knowledge of God. And if we take any message away from our study of Hosea, that needs to be the message we learn. We, the people of God, need to know God.

Thank you very much for your attention throughout all these studies of the book of Hosea. I plan to keep studying Hosea, and I hope you do as well. But next week, we start Joel!

Eric Hall (August 25, 2024)