

"Who is Wise?"

Hosea 12-14

Hosea the prophet's message is rooted in Deut. 28-29 where God through Moses said that should Israel obey God He would meet their needs in the land through abundant and timely rainfall so that when they sowed their fields with seeds, they would yield healthy crops. Your cattle need grain so they are healthy and can provide milk. You need grain, olive oil, fruit, etc., to live on but also to trade for things you need that someone else has. Moses said, the same God who brought you miraculously out of Egypt and the wilderness will get you to the land of Canaan and provide for you.

However, Deut. 28-29 also warned them that should they disobey the Word of God and follow other man-made idols, falsely thinking they control the rain and sunshine - like Baal - then God will withhold the rain which drastically affects the sowing and reaping rhythms of life, making eating and working difficult. And if you still refuse to repent, and going harder after these gods with more sacrifices, adding immoral practices to arouse the gods to work, or even the horrific extreme of offering your child as a sacrifice to show your devotion, God says then the fairest thing for Him to do is remove you from the land God worked so graciously and miraculously to get for you - exile.

Hosea's message, which was consistent with all other prophets, had a unique illustration so that maybe now they would wise up and hear what God was saying. God told Hosea to marry a prostitute and have children by her and God gave each of these children names that emphasized His message. And yet, through all this God keeps saying 'I want you back. I made a covenant with you that I intend to keep because I am God and I keep my Word.

1:10 "Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'children of the living God.' 11 The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

2:19 I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.

20 I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.

21 "In that day I will respond," declares the LORD—"I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth;

22 and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, and they will respond to Jezreel.

23 I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

And many other places, as we've seen. As we finish the book today, we'll see the warnings again in Ch. 12-13 but Ch. 14 is the greatest chapter of hope in the book, which we need to see.

Ch. 12 actually begins with the last verse of Ch. 11.

11:12 Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, the house of Israel with deceit. And Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One. 12:1 Ephraim feeds on the wind; he pursues the east wind all day and multiplies lies and violence. He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt. 2 The Lord has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds.

Now some of our translations actually word 11:12 slightly differently, putting a positive spin on Judah the southern kingdom which says, "*but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.*"

Yet clearly, two verses later, Hosea includes Judah and speaks to Israel as a whole charging them both with failure to keep God's covenant. While v.12 literally could translate Judah as sounding obedient (and they were better than the North overall), some wonder if it is sarcasm on Hosea's part. Clearly both are indicted for covenant breaking. Eventually Judah will fall to Babylon, as we already know.

But Hosea has a new twist in his confronting them of their sin. He compares them to the patriarch Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel ('one who wrestles with God'). V. 3

12:3 In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God. 4 He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there— 5 the Lord God Almighty, the Lord is his name of renown! 6 But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice and wait for your God always. 7 The merchant uses dishonest scales; he loves to defraud. 8 Ephraim boasts, "I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin." 9 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of your appointed feasts. 10 I spoke to the prophets, gave them many visions and told parables through them." 11 Is Gilead wicked? Its people are worthless! Do they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal? Their altars will be like piles of stones on a plowed field. 12 Jacob fled to the country of Aram; Israel served to get a wife, and to pay for her he tended sheep. 13 The Lord used a prophet to bring Israel up from Egypt, by a prophet he cared for him. 14 But Ephraim has bitterly provoked him to anger; his Lord will leave upon him the guilt of his bloodshed and will repay him for his contempt.

Why does God compare both the North and South Kingdoms to Jacob. Because He confronts them with their sin.

Stop Deceiving God Who Knows All: Return **(11:12-12:14)**

God is showing this generation that you're no different than your father Jacob who, right from the womb showed his grasping nature. Why did he trick Esau into giving him his right as first born? Because firstborn gets double the inheritance. Later he uses knowledge of sheep raising to trick his father-in-law Laban so he can multiply his flocks - income. Yet, Jacob gets tricked along the way; tricked into marrying Leah instead of Rachel. Laban tricks him into working for him as cheap labour.

And when Jacob wrestles with the angel because he fears losing all when Esau wants to have a brotherly reunion, Jacob refuses to let the angel go unless he gets blessed. At a cost; he limps for the rest of his life. Meanwhile God has worked in Esau's angry heart over the years and when they meet Esau shows his heart change and hugs the stuffing out of Jacob! Jacob - one who has made a commitment to God but still trying to manipulate God for his own selfish purposes, finally gets it. And here's the point of Jacob illustration:

Anyone can change (vv.11:12-12:6)

Esau changed; Jacob changed. Will you change Ephraim? Judah? Will you return to Me, God says?

! ⁶ But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice and wait for your God always. ⁷ The merchant uses dishonest scales; he loves to defraud. ⁸ Ephraim boasts, "I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin." ⁹ "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of your appointed feasts.

Why was Israel worshipping Baal? Why were they cheating others with false scales? I have become wealthy. I want more. But God says 'I'm God. I brought you here to your own land. I've gifted you; I've blessed you. I am the Lord God Almighty. I see everything you do and know every deceptive thought you have. You think you're being smart and coy, using people for your own advancement. Confess your sin and return to Me or go back to exile and live in tents again. Why does God use Jacob? To show them that anyone can change. Anyone can return to God. It's not too late. The Israelite reader knew the story of Jacob's testimony. Especially Gen. 35,

Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau." ² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you and purify yourselves and change your clothes. ³ Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone." ⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem. ⁵ Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

He returned to God and got rid of his idols. He changed. Anyone can change. You can return to God too if you have been toying with idolatry for the sake of personal gain. Or if you have ignored God because your too busy pursuing worldly status and success. Bethel was the place where God first met Jacob. Return to God. Remember where and when he called you to Himself. The only way to change is

Obey the Word of God (12:7-14)

God sent prophets time and time again (v.10) to confront their sin. God saved Israel through the prophet Moses (v.13) but they refused to change. The prophets continue to speak to us in the Word. All Scripture is God's Word spoken through His messengers to confront us with our sinful nature and in need of a new heart, or to return to God if we know Him but like Israel have been pursuing the wrong things to make us content. And that's the direction Ch. 13 goes in.

^{13:1} When Ephraim spoke, men trembled; he was exalted in Israel. But he became guilty of Baal worship and died. ² Now they sin more and more; they make idols for themselves from their silver, cleverly fashioned images, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of these people, "They offer human sacrifice and kiss the calf-idols." ³ Therefore they will be like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears, like chaff swirling from a threshing floor, like smoke escaping through a window. ⁴ "But I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me. ⁵ I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat. ⁶ When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me. ⁷ So I will come upon them like a lion, like a leopard I will lurk by the path. ⁸ Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open. Like a lion I will devour them; a wild animal will tear them apart. ⁹ "You are destroyed, O Israel, because you are against me, against your helper. ¹⁰ Where is your king, that he may save you? Where are your rulers in all your towns, of whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'? ¹¹ So in my anger I gave you a king, and in my wrath I took him away. ¹² The guilt of Ephraim is stored up, his sins are kept on record. ¹³ Pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him, but he is a child without wisdom; when the time arrives, he does not come to the opening of the womb. ¹⁴ "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O

grave, is your destruction? "I will have no compassion, 15 even though he thrives among his brothers. An east wind from the Lord will come, blowing in from the desert; his spring will fail and his well dry up. His storehouse will be plundered of all its treasures. 16 The people of Samaria must bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their God. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open."

God pleads with them in v.4 *But I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me. 5 I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat. 6 When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.*

Hosea reminds them saying,

There is No Saviour Other than the Lord; Remain **(13:1-16)**

God saved them from Egypt. God met their needs. But listen to what God warned them about just before getting into the Promised Land. Deut. 8:10

¹⁰ When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. ¹⁶ He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. ¹⁷ You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." ¹⁸ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Yet what did they do? Exactly as God warned:

Worship the Creator not His blessings (vv.1-6)

We too can forget that God is the only reason we have life. God gives us the abilities to work and make money. God has put us where we are and when we live (Acts 17). Yet, somehow the world becomes more attractive than God. So God warns His people, the world does not satisfy. I can disrupt and even destroy this world. With a lightening strike in a forest in Quebec, God can all of a sudden make millions of peoples lives very difficult. You think exiles, floods, hurricanes and other catastrophes are always for other people?

They 'skillfully' made these idols to worship. It's easy to worship your skills and what we can do rather than the one who made us that way. So Hosea gives them a dire warning of what the future holds. Do you believe this will happen? Don't worship the creation since it can't save you. Worship God alone who promises salvation by grace through faith and then

Live by faith not by sight (vv.7-16)

In the midst of more judgment coming at the hands of the brutal Assyrians, we read v.14 which the apostle Paul quotes in 1 Cor. 15 regarding our victory over death through the resurrection. Some

translations have God saying I will ransom them from the grave while others have it as a question 'Shall I ransom them from the grave?'

Ultimately the answer is both no and yes. Many would die at the hands of the Assyrians but it would not be the death of the nation. And so Paul applies this to resurrection because yes, we will all physically die but the sting is removed for those who know Christ since we will experience resurrection if we have placed our faith in God alone and His Son Jesus as our Saviour.

Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

And we finish with hope in Ch. 14.

Hope and Purpose in God are Available; Repent **(14:1-9)**

God gives one more call to repent. Even though judgment through exile will come, doesn't mean you can't repent nor does it mean Israel does not have a future. Once more He calls

Them to Renounce idolatry and renew hope in God (vv.1-3)

14 Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall! 2 Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. 3 Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount war-horses. We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion."

The Word of God tells us what we must do and say if we are to repent and turn back to God if that's what we need to do as His child or to turn to Him in faith for the first time. We have to speak words. We have to verbalize it and internalize it. Israel tried to buy their security through Assyria to save them, but only God can save you. Nothing we have or can do can save us. We all sin and fall short of God's glory. Jesus paid the price for our sins now we must confess with our mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the grave and you will be saved. O if we are saved and need to return to God, we still need to repent and verbally confess our sinfulness and ask forgiveness, and He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. When we repent,

Watch God work in your life! (vv.4-8)

4 "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. 5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; 6 his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. 7 Men will dwell again in his shade. He will flourish like the grain. He will blossom like a vine, and his fame will be like the wine from Lebanon. 8 O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me."

I believe these verses clearly speak of Israel's future in their land when Jesus returns. A Jewish reader would take it no other way. The comparisons to the beauty, bounty and majestic land of Lebanon (at that time, sadly not today) spoke of abundance and security.

However, the spiritual analogies of deep roots and healthy, productive vines are scattered all over Scripture for all believers. When we come to faith in Christ or when we return to God repenting of following the creation instead of the Creator, God says I will strengthen you, provide for you and produce fruit in you. This is God's promise. This is what He made us for. That means He will satisfy us, if we have the faith to believe that serving God, walking in fellowship with His Spirit as He speaks to us through the living Words of Jesus will satisfy us more than anything this world has to offer. The world offers temporal happiness. God, Jesus and the Spirit offer eternal joy, that we have now in Christ.

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. [Ps. 34:8]

You and I who know Christ have experienced the goodness of God, of the joy that obedience and fellowship with God brings. Jesus Himself told us the key to joy in John 15:10

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Ps. 16:8 I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, 10 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

And so the last verse is an invitation to do the wise thing; return to God or turn to Him for the first time by faith:

9 Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

Continue to walk in wisdom (v.9)

The only wise thing to do is turn to God through faith in Jesus if you never have. Jesus died for our sins because we can't pay the price for our sins. We can't do enough good works to tip the balance of favour our way. God doesn't work that way. All of us have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). We need to confess Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9-10). We can only please God by faith in His Son (Heb. 11:6).

And if we know Christ but have been choosing to be satisfied by what God has made in this world, we need to repent and return to Him. 'Draw near to god and He will draw near to You' (James 4:7).

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If you have any questions or comments about this message please contact us at
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