

Returning to the Lord

Hosea 6:1-11

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Hosea 4:10-19 (NIV)

“Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. ²After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.

³Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.” ⁴“What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. ⁵Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth— then my judgments go forth like the sun. ⁶For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. ⁷As at Adam, they have broken the covenant; they were unfaithful to me there. ⁸Gilead is a city of evildoers, stained with footprints of blood. ⁹As marauders lie in ambush for a victim, so do bands of priests; they murder on the road to Shechem, carrying out their wicked schemes. ¹⁰I have seen a horrible thing in Israel: There Ephraim is given to prostitution, Israel is defiled. ¹¹“Also for you, Judah, a harvest is appointed. “Whenever I would restore the fortunes of my people.”

v1 – Why should Israel return to the Lord?

He has torn, but He will heal us: Hosea prays with the right heart in response to the chastening hand of God.

- Hosea recognizes that God’s chastisement is only intended to get Israel to turn back to Him.

How could Hosea be so confident that God would heal Israel?

Because of His unconditional promise to them:

Genesis 12:2 – *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.*

He also no-doubt recognized that it was Israel’s unfaithfulness that resulted in their being exiled from that land God gave them, but that too would be temporary...

Deuteronomy 4:25-27 – *When you... act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the Lord your God to provoke Him to anger, ...you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; ... And the*

Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you.

God gave the land of Israel to the people of Israel forever, but their use of the land was contingent on their faithfulness.

v2 – What does it mean, “after two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us?”

- One commentator said this is a shadowy prophecy of Jesus’ resurrection on the third day. Certainly, on the cross Jesus was torn and stricken for our sake, *that we may live in his presence.*

But the context here is the restoration of the nation of Israel and thus has significance in light of:

Psalm 90:4 – *For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past*

Book of Hosea written ~740 B.C. so two days would go through ~AD 1260 and the third day: ~AD 1260 – 2260. We are well into the third day!

- The Millennial Kingdom begins *on the third day!*

v3 – What did Hosea exhort his countrymen to do?

In light of Israel’s eventual restoration, they should speed that up by acknowledging Him and getting to know Him. As the NKJV says, *“let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord.”*

What results from pursuing the knowledge of the Lord?

We are blessed when we grow in the knowledge of the Lord. This comes not from a superficial pursuit of knowledge about Him, it must be a pursuit. When we endeavor to know the Lord, especially through His word, He reveals Himself to us.

Hebrews 11:6 – *He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

What does it mean the Lord will come to us like the rains that water the earth?

In Israel, the only way crops were watered was by rain. So, farmers waited for the rain with great anticipation. When we anticipate and wait for God with this kind of earnest expectation, He answers and will come to us.

What was the significance of the fall/winter and spring rains?

- The fall/winter rains prepared the earth for seed; the Spring rains prepared the full ear of the grain for the harvest.

Peter explained what had happened at Pentecost by quoting Joel's reference to the pouring out of God's Spirit which was likened to the early and later rains.

- In Joel's prophecy, the early rain was in the Spring, the latter rain was in the first month (the Fall).
- It is thus likely that Israel will be restored in conjunction with the Fall Feasts.

What is the "latter rain movement" in the church?

- This was mostly a Pentecostal doctrine believing that there'd be a great revival accompanied by miraculous signs and wonders proceeding the rapture of the church. Many such revivals have come and gone without the rapture of the church.

The Pentecostal latter rain doctrine resulted from an erroneous view of Bible prophecy and was marked by:

- An emphasis on signs and supernatural works as marks of true revival.
- Replacement theology, replacing Israel with the church.
- Dominion theology, saying the church will conquer and rule the world.
- An elitist attitude, promoting the idea of a group of "super-Christians."

v4 – What was the problem with Israel's faithfulness?

It wasn't that there was no faithfulness among the people of God. It's just that whatever faithfulness there was quickly dissipated like the early dew.

v5 – What would God do about Israel's fleeting faithfulness?

- Have His prophets foretell their being cut up
- Kill them by His words
- Make His judgments as dependable as the sun.

True faithfulness will be persistent; superficial faithfulness will be revealed for what it is in time.

v6 – What did God long to see in Israel?

For I desire mercy and not sacrifice: At this time, God's people were still good at bringing sacrifice (Hosea 5:6). But they had forsaken mercy because they gave up the knowledge of God and truth (Hosea 4:1).

- God would rather have right hearts, full of truth and mercy than sacrifice.
- Jesus twice quoted this passage of Hosea to the religious leaders of His day (Matthew 9:13 and 12:7).

They also missed the heart of God, focusing on the wrong and superficial things.

Instead of just going through the motions with their animal sacrifices, what should Israel have been doing?

Instead of bringing animals for sacrifice, they should have instead brought themselves as a living sacrifice...

Romans 12:1 – *present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*

They missed what God really wants: a deep, close relationship with Him.

v7 – What is the significance of bringing up Adam as the source of Israel's unfaithfulness?

Humanity's unfaithfulness began with Adam and that sin nature was passed on to all Adam descendants.

- Israel was present in the genes of Adam
- Unfaithfulness was not just an Israel problem, it is a characteristic of all humanity

v8-9 – What were Israel's bands of priests doing?

When Israel's priests went to places of pagan sacrifice, it was a thieving, killing sin that had consequences of leading people away from God.

How are religious leaders robbing and murdering people today?

False doctrine robs people of the good news about Christ. The consequences are that their proselytes will suffer the second death (eternal separation from God).

v10 – How was Israel defiled by her unfaithfulness?

The more the culture turned from God, the more ungodly it became... it was like a snowball growing larger rolling down a hill; their ungodliness got worse and worse.

v11 – What does it mean that God would restore the fortunes of Judah?

When the people of God came back into the land after the Babylonian exile, they mainly settled in the area of Judah. The harvest of returned exiles was mainly for Judah, not for Israel.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- We can and should be confident in God's promises.
- We are living in the Age of Israel's restoration!
- God will pour out His Spirit on Israel during the Tribulation; we are seeing the stage being set!
- Growing in the knowledge of the Lord is way more important than sacrificing for Him.
- Unfaithfulness is not just an Israel problem, it is a human problem!