

XIII. “Return to the Lord Your God”

29-Feb-04 Hosea 13:1-14:9 Bentley Chapters 20-22

Theme: God transforms certain death into life by His mercy and grace.

Key Verses: Hosea 13:14; 14:1-2 ,4 – ¹I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes. ... ¹O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity; ²take words with you, and return to the Lord. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.’ ... ⁴I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them.

Review

Last week we looked at Hosea chapter 12. Hosea uses historical examples from the life of Jacob – the father of their nation – to exhort the people of both Ephraim and Judah to return to the Lord God Almighty. Jacob’s birth grasping the heel of his twin brother Esau led to his name, which means “deceiver” or “supplanter.” His name accurately reflected his character: he deceived his brother, his father, and his uncle, and he attempted to manipulate God. Jacob was a deceitful, heel-grasping supplanter, and yet he was chosen by God. Jacob was chosen by grace. This is the gospel. God chose a deceiver like Jacob to bring blessings into the world. God chooses sinners like us to be His blessings in the world. This is the first lesson from a reformed supplanter.

Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord at the Jabbok brook. This experience changed his life. Previously he had been a deceiver, a supplanter. But now God names him Israel – “prince with God.” Hosea reminds us of Jacob wrestling with God at the Jabbok to point out what matters most – we must cling to the Lord and never let go if we are to receive His blessing. Yet the Israel of Hosea’s day is characterized by unconcern and prayerlessness. They had Jacob’s grasping character, but when would they be like him and grasp hold of God, with Jacob’s intensity, emotion and entreaty? The same question can be asked of you and me: do we grasp hold of God in consistent, relentless, faithful, prayer? This was the key to the transformation of Jacob into Israel. And that is the second lesson from a reformed supplanter.

The third reference to Jacob’s life is meeting God at Bethel. In the life of Jacob, Bethel represents the before and after. The first time he came there, he was a fugitive with nothing to his name but what he wore on his back. He was a deceiver and supplanter. Years later, Jacob comes back to Bethel a changed man. He is no longer Jacob but Israel – obedient and submissive to the word of God. He cleanses his household of idolatry and worships the Lord properly. Bethel had been the “the house of God,” but in Hosea’s day it was Beth Aven, a “house of wickedness,” the shrine of idolatry where the golden calf was worshiped. Hosea is telling his countrymen that they need to be like their ancestor Jacob and find the true God at Bethel, not the perverted, man-made idol that they pretended was God. Like Jacob, they need to purify themselves, rid themselves of their idolatrous worship, and put on clean garments symbolic of repentance and a life that is right with God. This is the third lesson from a reformed supplanter.

At Bethel, Jacob worshipped the Lord God Almighty – Yahweh the faithful, covenant God, the all-powerful God of hosts. And this is the same God that the Israelites of Hosea’s day should

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have known and worshiped instead of the a golden calf. They needed to take another lesson from a reformed supplanter and worship the true covenant God, the Lord God Almighty.

These lessons from a reformed supplanter were supposed to drive the people of God to return to their loving Husband, to return to the Lord God Almighty: “So you, by the help of your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually” (12:6). But Israel refused to listen to the Law and the Prophets, including Hosea, and so they were judged guilty. But it is not too late for us to learn the lessons of a reformed supplanter.

Introduction

Chapters 13 and 14 are like the grand finale of a symphony. All of the themes of the earlier sections are revisited before reaching the great crescendo. There are references back to every chapter in Hosea 13&14. And so, in a way, our study of Hosea 13&14 this morning will also serve as something of a review for the whole book. Chapter 13 rehearses many of the negative themes and pictures of Hosea. I’ve labeled chapter 13 “Death.” In contrast, chapter 14 shouts out the wonderful theme of “Life,” and that is how Hosea closes his prophecy. Although Death has been prevalent – death through wickedness, rebellion and sin – God has the last word and it is “Life.” So let’s hurry on and listen to the great ending of Hosea’s opus. Because we are covering two chapters today instead of one, we will not be able to go quite as in depth as we have been doing the rest of the quarter – but that should be okay since many of Hosea’s ideas, phrases, and pictures will be familiar to you by now.

Exposition

A. Death (13:1-16)

1. Mist, Dew, Chaff, and Smoke (13:1-3)

“When Ephraim spoke, trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended through Baal worship, he died. Now they sin more and more, and have made for themselves molded images, idols of their silver, according to their skill; all of it is the work of craftsmen. They say of them, ‘Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!’ Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes away, like chaff blown off from a threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney” (13:1-3).

In Hosea 11:10-11, we saw the attitude of the people after God the lion roared: “When He roars, then His sons shall come *trembling* from the west; they shall come *trembling* like a bird from Egypt” (11:10b-11a). We noted that this posture of *trembling* indicated a proper fear of and submission to the Lord. That is the posture of Ephraim in the first half of verse 1: “When Ephraim spoke, *trembling*, he exalted himself in Israel” (13:1a). They were in a right relationship with God. However, when Ephraim turned away from God and turned toward Baal, “he died.” So, right at the beginning of chapter 13, Hosea introduces this motif of *death*. Death is the overwhelming subject of this chapter. The language here is reminiscent of the Fall of Adam. God tells Adam he can eat of any tree in the garden except for one. That one “you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely *die*” (Gen. 2:17b). Kidner points out that in disobeying God Ephraim died “as surely as Adam did, although like Adam he went on living, to all outward appearance.” Of course, the kind of death Adam experienced, and the kind of death Hosea is talking about is spiritual death.

“Hosea’s point is that, although Israel is spiritually dead (v. 1), she nevertheless goes on sinning (v. 2). She is a walking, sinning corpse” (Boice). In verse 2 they “sin more and more,”

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reminiscent of this charge in 4:7 – “The *more* they increased, the *more they sinned* against Me” (4:7). Their sin took the form of corrupt worship, including silver idols formed by craftsman (cp. 8:4) and golden calves (cp. 8:5-6; 10:5). It is interesting that Hosea says these idolatrous worshippers “kiss the calves.” The kiss is a sign of obeisance, of submission, of fealty to a sovereign. In kissing the golden calf, they are rejecting the Lordship of God. In this, they are ignoring the exhortation of the Psalm: “*Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little*” (Ps. 2:12a). This is the attitude of the post-Christian society. They will kiss anything and everything that comes along, but reject the Son of the Living God.

“The inevitable judgment for such worthless worship is to become worthless, in fact, to vanish (v. 3). A four-fold simile of fading into nothingness is Hosea’s powerful way of intensifying the picture by multiple repetition” (Hubbard). These four pictures are morning cloud [mist], early dew, chaff, and smoke. Hosea even borrows the first half of his four-fold simile from 6:4 – “*For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud [mist], and like the early dew it goes away*” (6:4). The conclusion is that corrupt worship leads to insignificance and worthlessness. Like these fading figures, a post-Christian society loses all significance. There is no substance in such a culture. All you can look forward to is death.

2. Lion, Leopard, and Bear (13:4-8)

“Yet I am the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but Me; for there is no savior besides Me. I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. When they had pasture, they were filled; they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me” (13:4-6).

Once again, Hosea reminds Ephraim of their past redemption from Egypt. The first half of verse four is almost identical to the first part of 12:9 – “But I am the Lord your God, ever since the land of Egypt” (12:9a). We’ve also seen this theme of redemption from Egypt in 2:15 and 11:1 (“out of Egypt I called My son”). Furthermore, verse 4 is a deliberate echo of the first commandment: “*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me*” (Ex. 20:2-3). Of course, this is the whole problem with Israel. They have broken the first commandment, and therefore have broken all of them. Idolatry is specifically forbidden in the second commandment, but in order to commit idolatry, you have to place other gods, other created things, in a position of higher value than God, whether it is money or pleasure or power or comfort or anything else. Hosea has already proven that idolatry prevents us from knowing God: “For the spirit of harlotry is in their midst, and *they do not know the Lord*” (5:4). This is utter foolishness, because their redemption, their hope, their savior is the Lord whom they have forgotten. “Therefore they forgot Me” echoes the earlier sentiment of 2:13 – “‘She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, and went after her lovers; but *Me she forgot,*’ says the Lord” (2:13b).

God says he knew Israel in the wilderness; this is reminiscent of Hosea 9:10 – “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness” (9:10a). The Hebrew translated in the NKJV as “I knew you” is translated in the NIV as “I cared for you” and literally means I “shepherded you.” God is the great Shepherd and He takes care of His sheep. He provides all of our needs. However, we need to be careful not to get complacent. It is when we are in relative prosperity that we tend to forget God. That is why God uses trials and suffering to sanctify us and make us more and more dependent on Him. Eaton puts it this way: “When God is good to us we have a habit of

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attributing what he does to luck or mere good fortune. God's very goodness to us has a danger attached. We can take it for granted or misinterpret it. The goodness of God is designed to lead us into gratitude and responsiveness to God in the way we live! It is a symptom of human wickedness that it can have the opposite effect."

Let us pray that we never forget God so that He brings as severe trials upon us as He did upon ancient Israel. Because they forgot Him, God says, "So I will be to them like a lion; like a leopard by the road I will lurk; I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs; I will tear open their rib cage, and there I will devour them like a lion. The wild beast shall tear them" (13:7-8). The Shepherd is supposed to protect the sheep from the wild beasts. But here, the Shepherd has become the very wild beasts that He has defended against in the past. The lion, the leopard, and the bear are all wild beasts sent to tear and devour Ephraim. The tearing lion is the same one we have already seen in 5:14 – "For I will be like a *lion* to Ephraim, and like a young *lion* to the house of Judah. I, even I, will *tear them* and go away" (5:14). Again, because of Israel's sin, because of Israel's idolatry, because of Israel's rejection of God, the end result is death.

3. The Stillborn Child (13:9-13)

So far, Hosea has used ephemeral imagery and the rending of wild beasts to symbolize the spiritual death of Israel that come from their idolatry, from the corruption of their religious worship and duty to God. In the next section (vv. 9-13), Hosea uses another powerful image to portray their spiritual deadness and the decay of their society. Remember, we have seen throughout Hosea that corrupt religion leads to corrupt living. "O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from Me. I will be your King; where is any other, that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'? I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath" (13:9-11).

God starts out this section talking again about death and destruction. The NIV translation of verse 9 is a bit clearer: "I will destroy you, O Israel, because you are against Me, against your helper." In this translation, it is clear that the root of the death and destruction of Israel lies in their rebellion against God their helper. "I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my *help*? My *help* comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1).

Instead of relying on God for their help, they looked to their kings and to their fortified cities. When you forget your Maker, when you rebel against your Helper, when you reject your King, all you have left is your own strength – the fortified cities you can build, and the political leaders that you can follow. But as Hosea has already reminded us, reliance on their politics and their internal strength was a losing proposition. "For Israel has forgotten his Maker, and has built temples; Judah also has multiplied *fortified cities*; but I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces" (8:14). "As for Samaria, her *king* is cut off like a twig on the water. ... At dawn the *king* of Israel shall be cut off utterly" (10:7; 15b). God says that cities rise and fall, kings rise and fall, and He is the one responsible! "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away."

The vivid image that Hosea uses to portray the spiritual deadness in relying on their own strength instead of trusting in the Lord is given in verses 12-13. The NKJV translation is a bit difficult at this point, so I will be reading from the NIV instead: "The guilt of Ephraim is stored up, his sins are kept on record. 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" (13:12-13). What Hosea in essence is saying is that Ephraim is both like a woman in the throes of a difficult childbirth and also like the unborn child who refuses to be born. The end result of this still birth

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is death for both mother and child. It is a startling and bleak picture of the spiritual deadness of Israel. Boice describes it this way: “If the baby cannot be born, it is unnatural, dangerous, and eventually fatal. This is Israel’s state. Her rejection of God is unnatural, for the one who has been delivered and kept by God should be thankful. It is dangerous because it invites judgment. It is ultimately fatal because God will judge the nation that rejects Him.”

4. An East Wind (13:15-16)

I’d like to skip over verse 14 and come back to it in a few moments. But first let us consider verses 15-16: “Though he is fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come; the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness. Then his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up. He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize. Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword, their infants shall be dashed into pieces, and their women with child ripped open” (13:15-16). Here the imagery of an east wind of judgment (cp. 12:1) leads to a war of destruction and terrible human tragedy. The picture of suffering at the end of verse 16 echoes an earlier passage in Hosea: “As Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle—a *mother is dashed in pieces upon her children*” (10:14b). The deadly horrors of war descend upon Samaria as the east wind—assuredly a picture of Assyria—comes to take away their blessings, their riches, and even their lives.

Why is this deadly judgment pronounced? “Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God” (13:16a). Hosea is merely repeating what he has charged previously: “Destruction to them, because they have *rebelled* against Me!” (7:13b, NIV). “Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the Lord because the people have broken My covenant and *rebelled* against My law” (8:1). What is the end result of rebellion against God? Death.

5. Death of Death (13:14)

And that brings us back to verse 14 – a verse that may be more familiar in its New Testament context: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes” (13:14). If there is any hope to be found in this chapter of death, it is here in verse 14, where Hosea prophesies the death of death.

Despite their spiritual condition; despite their spiritual deadness; despite their being lost like the ephemeral mist, smoke, chaff and smoke; despite their being torn apart by the wild beasts; despite their being a stillborn child; despite their being destroyed by the ill east wind; despite all these images of death, the good news is that God has power over death. God has power over death. God can rescue the dead by ransoming them and redeeming them. Both *ransom* and *redeem* imply paying a price in exchange for the rescued one. This is another familiar concept in Hosea’s prophecy: we’ve already seen Hosea paying a price to redeem his wife Gomer out of slavery in Hosea 3:2.

Who is the one who ransoms Israel? Who is the one who redeems His people? Of course, we know it is Jesus Christ. Paul takes this verse from Hosea and applies it to Jesus: “*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?* The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55-57). Christ has won the victory over death and the grave. The Psalmist tells us: “You will not abandon Me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay” (Ps. 16:10, NIV). Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. He paid the

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ransom price for us with His own life: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a *ransom* for many” (Mt. 20:28). His blood redeemed us: “Knowing that you were not *redeemed* with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pe. 1:18-19).

So, Hosea tells us that corrupt religion and a corrupt lifestyle lead to judgment and death. That’s the message of Hosea 13. There is no hope in a post-Christian society, because it leads to death. But there is hope beyond death. Jesus Christ is that hope. Jesus Christ is the only hope for a dead and dying world, because He is the only one who has broken the power of death. We need to return to Jesus Christ, the victor over death, we need to return to our Loving Husband, because that is the only place we are going to find what we all most need – life.

B. Life (14:1-9)

1. True Repentance (14:1-3)

And that leads us right into chapter 14. If chapter 13 was all about death, then chapter 14 is all about life. It is about repentance and forgiveness, and restoration. It is about returning to the Lord. “O Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity; take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, ‘You are our gods.’” For in You the fatherless finds mercy” (14:1-3).

Back in chapter 6 we talked about repentance that does not count – repentance that is not real. In chapter 6, the people had suffered and called out to God, using Biblical words such as “return” and “acknowledge.” And these are certainly important elements in repentance. Repentance involves a returning to God and an acknowledgement of Him as Lord. However, there were two critical elements of repentance missing there. Those two elements were confession of sin and forsaking the sin. While they recognized the consequences of their sin, they did not confess or forsake their sin. And without these elements, their repentance was not real, it did not count.

The situation is different here in chapter 14. If chapter 6 gave us repentance that does not count, then chapter 14 shows us repentance unto life. All of the elements of true repentance are present here. Israel at last hears and heeds the call to “return to the Lord your God” (14:1a, cp. 2b). Hosea has continually been sounding this clarion call of returning to the Lord in 3:5, 5:4, 6:1, 7:10, and 12:6, but at last there is a positive response.

Israel now acknowledges that they have sinned: “For you have stumbled because of your iniquity” (14:1b). They are ready at last to confess their sin, to “take words” to “say to Him” (14:2a). And look at what they say. They not only confess their sin and ask forgiveness for their sin – “Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips” (14:2b) – but they list specific sins. They are finally admitting their specific guilt in corrupting their religious worship and in trusting in their own strength or the strength of others rather than in God.

Throughout the book of Hosea, Israel has been leaning toward Assyria for strength (5:13, 7:11, 8:9, 12:1). But now they confess that “Assyria shall not save us” (14:3a). Furthermore, they have also relied on their own strength (7:15, 8:14), but now they say that “we will not ride on horses” (14:3b). Horses were a symbol of military strength and might. No longer will Israel rely

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on the strength of their own arms – they will trust instead in the Lord God Almighty, the Lord of hosts. And the key sin that has led to all the others – idolatry, corrupt worship – is also confessed here: “Nor will we say anymore to the works of our hands, ‘You are our gods’” (14:3c).

The final line of verse three takes us full circle in the book of Hosea. Way back in chapter 1 through the children Lo-Ammi and Lo-Ruhamah, God had declared that Israel was “not a people” and without “mercy.” Cut off from their Father, Israel was little more than a pitiful orphan. But now, “in You the fatherless finds mercy” (14:3d). They are no longer Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi – they have been transformed into Ruhamah and Ammi – the people of the merciful God.

Thus, we see true repentance has occurred. Israel has acknowledged her sin. She has confessed it in detail. She is forsaking her sin. And she is returning to God and relying on His grace and mercy. Corrupt religion has led to corrupt living and judgment, but their confession of these sins leads to life.

2. *True Forgiveness (14:4-8)*

Even more exciting than the true confession of Israel is the response that God has to it. He responds in true forgiveness. “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon. Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall be revived like grain, and grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, ‘What have I to do anymore with idols?’ I have heard and observed him. I am like a green cypress tree; your fruit is found in Me” (14:4-8).

Previously God had said that “I will love them no more” (9:15e), but here He says, “I will love them freely” (14:4b). In chapter 8 God said that “My anger is aroused against them” (8:5b), but here He says, “For My anger has turned away from him” (14:4c). There has been a reversal of Israel’s status with God. God has heard their prayer of confession, and He has answered it. He “will heal their backsliding” (14:4a). This is good news! God hears prayers of confession and answers them. Regardless of what we have done, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9). This is true forgiveness.

James Boice has some excellent comments on this section, so I will quote him at some length. *Boice*: “Having called on the people genuinely to repent of their sins, God now promises a full measure of restoration for when they do. God says He will do three things. First, He will heal their waywardness. Second, God says He will love them. The pattern here is the love of Hosea for Gomer even after her fall into slavery. The life of slavery had taken its toll, but Hosea loved Gomer anyhow and acted to redeem her—which is how God acts with us and with Israel. Third, God says that He will cause His people to prosper again.”

Boice: “This last promise is couched in a series of images that may well be the most beautiful and poetic section of the book. They are all pastoral in nature. The judgment of which the earlier chapters speak is harsh and sudden. Ruin results. But from the ruins, like plants or trees gradually forcing down their roots and rising above the destruction, the people would again begin to grow under God’s divine presence and blessing. He would be like the early dew of

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morning—quiet but effective. They will be like flowers, trees, vines, and fields of grain (vv. 5-7).”

Boice: “When God says that His blessing will result in the growing of blossoms like a *lily*, He is saying that He will restore *beauty* to the nation. Israel was beautiful once. But sin is ugly, and sin had ruined Israel. Sin likewise makes us ugly, and none can change that ugliness but God. When God speaks of sending down *roots* like one of the great *cedars of Lebanon*, He is saying that He will restore *strength* to the nation. This too is important. Sin not only makes us ugly; it also weakens us. Has sin made you weak? Has it taken away the strength you once had? Repent of that sin and turn to God. He can make you strong again (Is. 40:30, 31).”

Boice: “When God speaks of the splendor of the *olive tree*, He is saying that He will restore the nation’s *value*. The splendor of the olive is oil. It was highly valuable in ancient times. It would be the equivalent of petroleum today. In their sin the nation had ceased to have value, even in its own eyes, but the love and blessing of God would make it valuable again. Has sin robbed you of your value? Has it made you feel worthless in your own eyes and in the eyes of others? Repent of that sin and turn to God. He can teach you to bring forth fruit that will last for ever (Mt. 25:21).”

Boice: “When God speaks of the *fragrance* of the *cedars of Lebanon*, He is saying that He will again make the nation a *delight*. Fragrance has no utilitarian value, but it is a pleasure to all who breathe it. If you have ceased to be a pleasure to God or others through sin, repent of that sin and turn to God (2 Cor. 2:14, 15). In verse 7 a number of images are combined: the *shade* of a tree, the flourishing of a *field of grain*, the luxuriant blossoming of a *vine*. It is a way of talking about *abundance*, which God says He will cause to be true of Israel in the day of their return to Him. If sin has robbed you of the abundant life that God intended you to have, repent of that sin and return to God. He will make you fruitful in His service (John 15:5, 16).”

Boice: “God is the source of every good gift and all fruitfulness. Beauty! Strength! Value! Delight! Abundance! These are in Him. He is beauty, strength, value, delight, and abundance. He is the answer to our need. We must come the whole way. If we would have God, we must renounce our idols entirely (Hos. 14:8). What will cure us of the idols of our lives? The only thing that will do it is a vision of Him whose glory eclipses all else and whose love draws us to Himself alone.”

3. True Wisdom (14:9)

The book of Hosea concludes with a proverb: “Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them” (14:9). This proverb underscores the idea of *the two ways*: the way of life and the way of death. Chapter 13 has been all about the way of death, but chapter 14 has been about the way of life. The way of life is walking in the ways of the Lord. How do you do that? By confessing and forsaking your sin, receiving forgiveness and pardon from God, and returning to the Lord. This is true wisdom that leads to life.

Conclusion

It is clear from history that Israel did not repent and thus was taken away into Assyrian captivity and destroyed. It is too late for them. But it is not too late for us. Although we live in a post-Christian society, much like that of Israel in the 8th century BC, we still have the opportunity to

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return to our loving Husband. Our nation, our society still has the opportunity to repent and return. And the Church still has the opportunity to repent and return.

I hope that our study of the book of Hosea has been encouraging to you. I pray that all of us as individuals and as a local church body, would take the message of Hosea seriously. It was written for the people of God in Hosea's day, but it was also written for the church of our day. Remember, that even in a post-Christian society, it is still not too late to return to our loving Husband.

Amen.

Next week: End of Quarter. Spring quarter classes begin next Sunday.

Close in Prayer.