

**Return to the Lord and Be Restored!  
God's Grace for Israel and for Us!  
Hosea 14**

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We are about to engage with a message written over 2,700 years ago yet is still the number one component necessary today for any culture wanting to turn away from the pit they have fallen into. Rather than digging a deeper hole, which most are engaged in doing, we need to climb out by grabbing ahold of the hand Jesus offers to us.

Romans 5:6–8

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (ESV)

The message is still to Israel, but the realization is that most will not take the message to heart. This is for the remnant, those who will listen.

To do so means they will become unsafe to the culture they live in. If we choose wisely, then we to become unsafe to the culture if we opt for what the Bible says rather than what the culture says. If you haven't noticed, most will not take the message to heart today either.

We have come to the last chapter of Hosea and as we begin to review it, we need to remind ourselves of the content in the first 3 chapters, the story of Hosea and his wife Gomer.

Hosea loved his wife, but she was unfaithful to the degree that the parentage of 2 of the 3 children we are told about is in doubt. She was high maintenance woman who wanted stuff over relationship.

Hosea outlined all of the things he did to encourage Gomer to return to him and be faithful with the final step being, allowing her to sell herself into slavery. He went to the slave market and purchased her for himself.

Only after an indeterminate amount of time, ensuring that all ties to previous lovers were fully and completely severed, did he reinstitute the relationship that previously existed. It was there the story ended.

As we continued in Hosea, this story became a clearer image of the history of YAHWEH with His wife, Israel, and the efforts He has gone to, to elicit faithfulness from them to Him and the covenant He established with them.

Just as Hosea outlined the consequences his wife would suffer for her unfaithfulness; YAHWEH has done the same. He wrapped up the impact in Hosea 13.

Hosea 13:15–16

“Though he flourishes among the reeds, An east wind will come, The wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness; And his fountain will become dry And his spring will dry up; It will plunder his treasury of every precious article. Samaria will pay the penalty for her guilt, Because she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword, Their children will be slaughtered, And their pregnant women will be ripped open.” (NASB 2020)

A sinful lifestyle leads to strange decision making and leads to consequences we never considered or wanted. The enemy wanted Israel dead, us too.

Ephesians 6:10–18

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.” (NRSV)

Israel had given the enemy opportunity after opportunity to impact their lives, as they followed the no gods into destruction.

Ephesians 4:27

“Do not give the devil an opportunity.” (NET 2nd ed.)

The Greek word that Paul uses, translated opportunity, “is a military term that means a “beachhead.” Do not give a beachhead to the devil. When an army attacks enemy territory, they first try to take a beachhead or an area of control, which is in enemy territory. Once they have this place of control, they can give covering fire for reinforcements. If a believer gives a beachhead to the devil, it means the devil can control that believer from within.” (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 31)

Israel allowed that beachhead to take place. “First Israel in their sin and insanity choose a way of destruction; then God “honors” the choice, takes control, and makes the chosen madness into his chosen

means of punishment. The roles are thus reversed. Pursuing Israel is now pursued, and the redeemer-God becomes pursuer and punisher.” (Beeby 1989, 173)

All the riches that was the pride of the northern kingdom, Assyria will take them all.

There should be no doubt left in the mind of Israel what it is they have invited to occur as consequences to the way they have lived.

With the Lord’s compassion removed (v. 14; cf. 1:6), Israel’s prosperity (he thrives) would come to an end. The LORD would come like a hot east wind which dries up everything in its path. The reality behind the figure is the Assyrian invasion, as the references to plundering and military atrocities make clear. (Chisholm, Jr. 1985, 1406)

Israel will be disciplined by the Lord. There should be no doubt at all in the minds of the people, but there are still those who will hear and will repent even as the dust cloud from the Assyrian army approaches the gate. There is still hope. There is still a future.

YAHWEH still intends to extend grace to His people. For those who will listen now, and in the future. But for those who reject, He will honor their choice and allow the consequences of that choice to take place.

Forgiveness, restoration, and transformation are projected for the future. A later generation looking back at Israel’s history through the lens of ch. 14 would see in it a prophecy pointing to an eschatological future in which past failures and their consequences are overcome by YHWH’s will to redeem. (Dearman 2010, 334)

YAHWEH loves His people.

Hosea 14:1–2

“Return, Israel, to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your wrongdoing. Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, “Take away all guilt And receive us graciously, So that we may present the fruit of our lips.” (NASB 2020)

The message for Israel began in Hosea 4 with the imperative to listen to the Word of the Lord. After expressing that Word so completely that the charges are clear, the indictment is clear and the impending judgment has been so thoroughly described, the conclusion is obvious...return to God and do so now. Return is a command.

The culture of the northern kingdom is rotten to the core and there is only one solution possible – return to the Lord.

Our culture in the west is also in the same state, rotten to the core. Here in the US, we have become the purveyors of all that God holds to be an abomination, just like the northern kingdom. For our culture in the 21st century, there is only one possible solution that holds any water at all – for this culture to return to the Lord. We need revival.

Dr. Michael Brown expresses the need for us today, which was the same need for Israel then.

He longs to manifest His grace in us and through us. He longs to reveal Himself to us. He longs to pour out His Spirit in power. He is more ready to bless and fill and ignite and anoint than we are to receive. But are we ready? Are we hungry? Are we desperate? Do our prayers bleed? Do we have room for more of God’s presence and power and purpose—in our hearts, in our homes, in our congregations? (Brown 2021, 8)

Let’s examine what Jesus said to the church in Revelation.

### Revelation 3:1

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write the following: “This is the solemn pronouncement of the one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a reputation that you are alive, but in reality you are dead.’” (NET 2nd ed.)

### Revelation 3:15–17

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth! Because you say, “I am rich and have acquired great wealth, and need nothing,” but do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked,” (NET 2nd ed.)

The message to those who name the name of Jesus Christ but have allowed things to slip, for those who have left their first love in favor of “other” things. Repent. We are in the same place that Israel was in as they began to see the dust cloud in the distance from the Assyrian army.

The only hope they had, was for the nation to repent. They did not do so, and the northern kingdom went into an exile that lasted the better part of 2,700 years. Only in 1948 do we see the prophecies of their return beginning to be fulfilled and we continue to see that today.

Most believers in our culture today are suffering from the same problem that impacted Israel...apostasy. A slipping away from the fundamentals and an embracing of a syncretic faith putting together various things from other religions that look attractive and encourage our flesh but have nothing to do with a Biblically based faith. “Maybe there was a time when most adults in this nation had a biblical worldview, but that is clearly not the situation now. We have the research to prove that. In fact, we would have to go a long way back—perhaps close to a century ago—to find a time when most Americans thought and acted biblically.” (Barna 2022, 14)

Today, tens of millions of American Christians need to pray, “God, give us revival or we die!” There is no hyperbole in that prayer. Without a national awakening, America as we know it is doomed. (Brown 2021, 16)

For Israel, the answer was the same and they ignored that answer. We know from history, the results.

There is no salvation for fallen man without return to God. It is therefore with a call to return to the Lord their God, that the prophet opens the announcement of the salvation with which the Lord will bless His people, whom He has brought to reflection by means of the judgment (cf. Deut. 4:30; 30:1ff.). שׁוּב עַד יי (subah) to return, to be converted to the Lord, denotes complete conversion; שׁוּב אֵל is, strictly speaking, simply to turn towards God, to direct heart and mind towards Him. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 106)

### Hosea 14:1

“Return, Israel, to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your wrongdoing. (NASB 2020)

The Hebrew uses a preposition which means more than merely turning to Yahweh. It means complete conversion. The salvation of God must be preceded by genuine repentance. “For you have stumbled through your guilt.” Sin is represented as a false step. (Smith 1994, 279)

The people of Israel had opted for a religion that they could easily accept; a religion that was forgiving of their various lifestyle choices. They opted for a mishmash that provided for being affirmed in their lifestyle choices. They stumbled because of their wrongdoing, that wrongdoing began with choices to excuse behavior and wound up being embraced in a golden calf leading all the way to immorality in the name of religion. It was all about the government and the people retaining control rather than giving God control.

Biblical Christianity is not only about giving God control, but also about making choices that reflect His prescribed ways of life. That includes embracing brokenness, submission, surrender, sacrifice, and

simplicity. That feels un-American these days, promoting an approach to life that is at odds with the American Dream, or certainly out of step with the constitutional guarantee of the right to happiness. (Barna 2022, 65)

Hosea 14:2

“Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, “Take away all guilt And receive us graciously, So that we may present the fruit of our lips.” (NASB 2020)

For Israel, this requires them to “take words with them.” “Hosea then spelled out the method by which a return to God could be effected. When Israel returns to God they must not be empty-handed. Instead of Canaanitish sacrifices they must bring with them words expressing true repentance and contrition.” (Smith 1994, 279)

It is not what is required is what is interesting. They are not supposed to be bringing anything other than words. In the Hebrew, this is an interesting word when used as a noun such as it used here. The word is דְּבָרִים (debarim). It can mean “word; matter, affair; thing, something; word of God.” (Brannan 2020)

The command is to bring words and embedded on the word is the implication of an agreement with the assessment of YAHWEH regarding their situation, the Word of God.

Israel’s crime was not just breach of law; it was an offence against the divine person, the Husband of chapters 1–3, the Parent of chapter 11. As such it could not be dealt with by the offering of sacrifice and the payment of fine (cf. 6:6; Mic. 6:1–8). The personal relationship could be restored only by words that make a personal commitment, words so important that the prophet could not leave them to chance but listed them precisely in a litany of contrition. (Hubbard 1989, 238-239)

The significance of taking “words” is very great. One might cynically say that Israel had nothing else to offer; and of course part of the meaning is that the sacrifices of the cult were no longer acceptable and that some alternative was essential. But much more is intended. Without denying the need for obedient action in the slightest, we may state that biblical faith is word-centered. It is based on what God has done. It is a story of events, a story that must be told. The events demand that they be witnessed to, in words. (Beeby 1989, 179)

This is no different than how we approach the Lord today. We cannot approach Him in our self-righteousness, there is nothing we can do to earn salvation, but we must look at ourselves without Christ in the same way He looks at us, as sinners in need of a Savior. Israel had blown it and done so badly.

They had defected from YAHWEH to other gods and participated in what was nothing more than the equivalent of eye wash. It meant nothing at all and what was needed was an agreement with the Words of God about their situation.

Hosea outlines what needs to happen with those words.

Hosea 14:2b

“Say to Him, “Take away all guilt And receive us graciously, So that we may present the fruit of our lips.” (NASB 2020)

Or to continue the thought from the NT, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;” (Ephesians 2:8, NASB 2020)

There is nothing that the nation can do at this point. They have nothing to offer other than themselves in repentance.

They are to confess their sins to God.

Psalm 32:5

“My sin I acknowledged to you; my iniquity I did not hide. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin! Interlude” (ISV)

This is not a detailed recitation of wrongdoing, but a simple realization of just who they truly are – sinners.

Luke 18:13

“But the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even look up to heaven. Instead, he continued to beat his chest and said, ‘O God, be merciful to me, the sinner that I am!’” (ISV)

What that means is a recognition of their true condition and a heart level acceptance of who YAHWEH is and what their failures, sin, have been.

We have the same need today and thanks to the achievement of Jesus Christ on the cross, a ready solution to take advantage of.

Again, it does not entail a detailed recitation of all we have done, but that we are incapable of doing anything to help ourselves because we are sinners. That is agreeing with God about who we truly are.

Paul outlines this for us.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

How do we do that?

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

Let’s recap what we just learned.

### **ABC’s of Salvation**

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

This is what God required of Israel, and some took Him up on that as part of the remnant. We can do the same.

God indeed will receive them graciously and He has done the same for us. Again, it is by His grace we are saved. There is nothing I can do to save myself; Christ has done it all.

For Israel, once that is resolved, they can now “...present the fruit of our lips.”

The Hebrew here gives us a, well, really interesting picture.

Remember, there is nothing the people can do at this point other than turn their heart to YAHWEH and reflect that with what the words they bring to Him say.

The word for fruit here is the Hebrew word פָּרִים (parim). It means “bull. An uncastrated, adult, male of domestic cattle; often associated with strength. (Lexham Press 2017)

The text says “...Take away all guilt And receive us graciously, So that we may present the bulls of our lips.” (Hosea 14:2b, NASB 2020)

What does that mean?

A bull, in the sacrificial system of Israel, was involved in the sin offering as outlined in Leviticus 4. Seeing this term used would bring a Jew to the thoughts connected to that. Bulls could also be offered in thanksgiving to the Lord, and when it was a bull, it was an extravagant offering of thanksgiving. Hannah did this when the Lord blessed her with Samuel, on the day she fulfilled her vow.

1 Samuel 1:24

“When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a jar of wine. And though the boy was still very young, she brought him to the House of the LORD at Shiloh.” (Jewish Publication Society 1985, 1 Sam 1:24)

“Even though an offering of three bulls may seem extravagant, it is probably best understood as reflecting Hannah’s great thankfulness...” (Vannoy 2009, 52)

The natural result of being forgiven is worship and thanksgiving. They no longer kiss livestock as a means of worship, now they worship in spirit and truth. No more crazy behavior. It is what comes out of their lips. It is their sacrifice of worship and praise to YAHWEH.

Psalm 96:1–6

“Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.” (ESV)

Hebrews 13:15

“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.” (, ESV)

Psalm 51:16–17 “For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” (ESV)

What, for the nation, will be some of the elements that are reflected in that praise?

Hosea 14:3

“Assyria will not save us, We will not ride on horses; Nor will we say again, ‘Our god’ To the work of our hands; For in You the orphan finds mercy.” (NASB 2020)

Israel is to confess that neither the power of Assyria nor that of their cavalry or chariots will deliver them. (Dearman 2010, 339)

The nation is also to confess that never again will they look to anything else as God. Those things they worshipped in the past, political power, military power, alliances, and the fertility gods are all to be things of the past. “The intention of the threefold vow is to put Israel wholly in the hands of Yahweh. He is the

only God that Israel knows and they have known him in his historical acts, not by cultic media; he is their only Saviour and no other powers in history can be the object of their trust (13:4f.)." (Mays 1969, 187)

Israel now recognizes that their trust is in God and God alone. This intentional abandonment of all that they felt comfortable with in the past is in essence, making them orphan like but they discover that in Him, the orphan finds mercy.

In the light of this humbling experience they may well have felt forsaken, especially as they had the Assyrian threat hanging over them. But this is where we see the graciousness of God. If only they returned to the Lord they would discover that, although they were like orphans, their God would be a Father to them. (Bentley 2000, 217)

Hosea 14:4–7

"I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, Because My anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; He will blossom like the lily, And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon. His shoots will sprout, His majesty will be like the olive tree, And his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon. Those who live in his shadow Will again raise grain, And they will blossom like the vine. His fame will be like the wine of Lebanon." (NASB 2020)

What is apostasy? Is it backsliding?

Apostasy is the "act of rebelling against, forsaking, abandoning, or falling away from what one has believed." (Fink 2003, 87)

It is a deliberate act. "Beginning with the fall of Adam in Genesis 3, the apostate impulse in the human heart becomes the salient feature of the race. But apostasy finds its most pungent expression among the covenant people, by reason of the covenant itself, especially when apostates reach a sort of 'critical mass' in the corporate soul of the community so that the whole nation departs from its allegiance to God." (Ortlund, Jr. 2000, 383-384)

With repentance and a return to YAHWEH comes restoration. The first thing God heals is their apostasy, their overall inclination to turn to other things and pervert the worship of the living God. At the end of the age, with the Holy Spirit being poured out on His people, that problem is healed. The past is remembered no longer.

The same happens to us as NT believers today when we trust in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit comes into us at conversion to empower us to remain faithful. The temptation is to stray, and Satan takes advantage of the predilection. But we are healed of our apostasy our sin, justified, at the moment we believe.

Ephesians 1:13–14

"And when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation)—when you believed in Christ—you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory." (NET 2nd ed.)

The Holy Spirit is the proof that He will finish what He started. We are being sanctified, made more like Jesus, day by day through the power of the Spirit and He is the pledge that we will be glorified in the future.

As we come to Christ, when He forgives us of our sin, we are truly forgiven. "Forgiveness is the legal act of God whereby He removes the charges that were held against the sinner because proper satisfaction or atonement for those sins has been made." (Enns 1989, 325)

Colossians 2:13–14

"And even though you were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he nevertheless made you alive with him, having forgiven all your transgressions. He has destroyed what

was against us, a certificate of indebtedness expressed in decrees opposed to us. He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Their apostasy will be healed. When we come to Christ, our sinful ways, our apostasies are healed. This means a change in lifestyle, a change in behavior, a change in the way we think and act and do life. All due to the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer as we participate with Him in our sanctification.

Healing first implies illness. I have no problem calling alcoholism, drug addiction and homosexuality “illnesses” if they are considered this kind of illness—illness of conscious choice. The Israelites were not apostate because they were “born that way” or because of some irresistible impulse, but rather because they abandoned God. They made themselves sick. But healing also implies the possibility of change. Thanks be to God we do not have to remain in a sinful state. Through Jesus we have a remedy for the sin that ails us. (Hammons 1998, 22)

Jeremiah and Ezekiel would expand the picture consistently with Hosea 14. God would provide a New Covenant involving a new heart He would put in people to obey His Word (Jer. 31:31ff.). He would, as Ezekiel 36:25–27 fills in also, cleanse from all sin and trust in idols, give a new heart and spirit, even His Holy Spirit, and empower the trusting to do God’s will. (Rosscup 2008, 1309)

Again, this points to the end of the age.

Christ achieved this for us on the cross. “God will heal our sinful ways. He does it freely, generously. We do not have to ‘deserve’ it. It is more than forgiveness that he offers. He heals the actual sin itself. He works in our lives so that the power of sin is steadily and increasingly broken.” We are being sanctified. (Eaton 1996, 196)

God’s chastening anger against His people is now gone. The relationship has been made right because they have repented.

Hosea 14:5

“I will be like the dew to Israel; He will blossom like the lily, And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon.” (NASB 2020)

The restored relationship means restoration for the nation. This is a picture of what will take place at the end of the age when Christ returns in power for His people as the avenger of blood. He rescues them and now the relationship is restored physically and spiritually.

God states that He is acting alone in this by His statement that “I will be...”. The restoration of the land and the people is solely based on God’s grace to His people who have confessed and returned.

With Christ on the throne, “the people would again begin to grow under God’s divine presence and blessing. He would be like the early dew of morning—quiet but effective. They will be like flowers, trees, vines, and fields of grain.” (Boice 2002, 113)

The sin that Israel was engaged in made them ugly to the outside world. They were self-centered selfish people who did anything for a buck. Now though, everything is changed and they “blossom like the lily.”

God is promising future blessing and future growth for the nation. Not only blessing, but strength. Putting down roots like a cedar of Lebanon is God saying “he will restore strength to the nation.” (Boice 2002, 113)

As a result of returning to the Lord and repenting, the nation is now experiencing the blessings promised in the Torah. This is a clear picture of the nation at the beginning of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

Being healed of sinfulness, and having spiritual wholeness will be experienced to a grand extent in the Millennial Kingdom after the Messiah's second coming (Isa. 11:6–9). And in the ultimate conditions that follow after even that, in the eternal New Jerusalem, believers will eat of God's tree of life. (Rosscup 2008, 1310)

Hosea 14:6–7

“His shoots will sprout, His majesty will be like the olive tree, And his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon. Those who live in his shadow Will again raise grain, And they will blossom like the vine. His fame will be like the wine of Lebanon.” (NASB 2020)

Under God's care, the nation is fruitful and will branch out becoming all that God had in store for them. “Israel's future blessedness is portrayed not just as fruitful, but as also partaking of royal splendor.” (Dearman 2010, 342)

When Jesus Christ returns to earth to save His own, we know, based on what the scriptures clearly teach, that He will rule and reign from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1 – 9, Psalm 2:6, Psalm 48:2). On top of that, God Himself will reside with His people in the rebuilt Temple of the millennium (Ezekiel 43) also located in Jerusalem. Israel's majesty is evident, and many will want to live in the shadow of Israel.

Israel will grow like never before; his shoots will sprout. This is all pointing to what will take place in the very near future when Jesus returns.

Those who dwell under the shadow of the Lord, those who have taken refuge in Him (cp. Is 4:6), will return to their land, be fruitful as the grain and the vine. They will no more bring forth wild grapes (Is 5:2), but their fragrance will be as the wine of Lebanon. (Feinberg 1990, 67)

Indeed, the fame of Israel, because of who is there and what He has done for His people will be known worldwide when Jesus is on the throne.

Isaiah 60:3–5

“Nations will be drawn to your light, And kings to the dawning of your new day. Look around you and see what is happening: Your people are gathering to come home! Your sons will come from far away; Your daughters will be carried like children. You will see this and be filled with joy; You will tremble with excitement. The wealth of the nations will be brought to you; From across the sea their riches will come.” (GNB)

God's intent has always been to live with His people, to bring Eden to earth again. “Only now Israel themselves are the paradise among, and for, the nations. The images offer a view of what the people of God ought to be with YHWH as their God.” (Moon 2018, 221)

Hosea 14:8–9

“Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant juniper; From Me comes your fruit. 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 righteous will walk in them, But wrongdoers will stumble in them.” (NASB 2020)

The first statement is better translated “Ephraim shall say.” It is not the Lord questioning here, it is Ephraim, now in their right mind, asking a self-searching question. Why did we do this?

Many, when they come to Christ, say the same thing. What was I thinking, why did I do this? When Christ saves us, He heals our mind and we come to our senses. Things that used to be acceptable now no longer is. The past behavior is gone. The prodigal has returned home.

What we are seeing here at the end of the age is “the power of divine grace. Ephraim had been joined to his idols (ch. 4:17), was so fond of them that one would have thought he could never fall out with them;

and yet God will work such a change in him that he shall loathe them as much as ever he loved them." (Henry 1994, 1494)

YAHWEH responds to Ephraim confirming that He is the one who has answered them and is looking after them. There is a comparison that takes place here, the only place it does in the OT, where God is compared to a tree.

The backsliders have returned, and have repented from sin as well as for it. Those who were "joined to idols" are now joined to the Lord. And the Lord reminds them, in a closing word, that all their "springs" are in himself. Jehovah is "like a green cypress tree;" he is "the Tree of life," and the Giver of "fruit" to all who dwell under his shadow. (Spence-Jones 1909, 446)

The tree is green year-round, reminding Israel of the presence of God's life-giving power, even when Baal is dead. All their fruit is found in the Lord. As a source of blessing for others, Israel can draw only on God. All other resources will render Israel's effectiveness in the world null and void. (Guenther 1998, 213)

Now with Jesus on the throne, Israel realizes who the source is, and now filled with the Holy Spirit, fruit is evident, fruit only possible because of God.

Hosea 14:9

"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 righteous will walk in them, But wrongdoers will stumble in them." (NASB 2020)

Hosea now concludes by first of all, calling those who read and understand what it is he has written about, wise, understanding and discerning. This ties to the source which is "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7, ESV)

The question is asked, who is wise, who understands and who is discerning and again the answer is found in Proverbs 1:7, the source of wisdom is the Lord. The source of understanding and discernment is the Lord.

Not everyone is wise. Not everyone has ears to hear. Hosea is aware that some will respond to his teaching, others will not, but the truth about them is that they are not in the state to hear. They are spiritually deaf. (Eaton 1996, 198)

The message is simple and still stands the test of time today. If we are seeking the Lord, then we will have the wisdom to understand that His ways are right. Those who see that seek to be more like Him and as we give our life to Jesus Christ, He tells us that His righteousness is then imputed to us.

Romans 8:10–11

"But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." (ESV)

Philippians 3:8–11

"Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!" (NLT)

The imputation of God's righteousness to the sinner is a manifestation of his love and grace, for the sinner, by his/her own efforts, can never merit God's approval. In summary, the righteousness of God refers to the intrinsic, immutable, moral perfection of God, from which He commands all things, in heaven and earth, and declares as good that which conforms to his righteousness and as evil that which deviates. The righteousness and the justice of God work together. Whatever God's righteousness requires, his justice executes (either to approve or reject, to bless or condemn). (Cook 2018, 198)

If we have listened well to Hosea's prophecies, we perceive that what he wished for his fellow countrymen can be for us and for believers of all ages. We do wisely (1) to let God be God of our lives and (2) to abandon whatever idols we may have erected that cloud the sense of his love for us. Indeed, we demonstrate our love for Christ by walking in the way he commanded (John 14:15). As those who are truly wise, may we let the message of Hosea direct us on our way. (Patterson and Hill 2008, 91)

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