**10. The Journey Home**

*Read Hosea 14*

Throughout the prophecy of Hosea we have repeatedly seen how far Israel had departed from God, and through all of the powerful language that described the rottenness of Israel and the severity of the judgement that deserved to fall, there has always been the promise that God would restore. All the way back in Ch2 God had promised *I will allure her…and speak tenderly to her* (2:14). Though Ch13 ended with the terrible cost of unfaithfulness to God, Hosea now ends his prophecy with a clear declaration of hope.

**A. The Turning of Israel *(Hosea 14:1-3)***

1. Twice in vv1-2 Israel is called to *return* to the Lord – but he tells them to take something with them, what is it? What do you think Hosea means by this?

2. Consider the things Israel needs to say to the Lord (vv2-3).

1. What do they need to recognise and acknowledge about themselves and what do they need to recognise and acknowledge about God?
2. What do we need to recognise and acknowledge to be made right with God?

The end of v2 literally reads *so that we may pay bulls, our lips*. The sense of this is “that we may offer our lips as [sacrifices of] bulls” (cp. NIV footnote). They will finally recognise that the genuine expression of their hearts is worth more to God than the sacrifice of animals.

3. Israel needs to be convinced that God receives the orphan (cp. Hosea 1:10), which speaks of the readiness of God to be their Father. In what sense do we as Christians need to be convinced of this attribute of God? (e.g. Matthew 7:7-12; 1 John 3:1)

**B. The Turning of God *(Hosea 14:4-9)***

4. From verse 4, what has happened that enables God to heal and freely love his people?

5. This principle of turning away God’s anger by a sacrifice is an important Bible concept – it is part of the definition of the word *propitiation*. What do we learn about this concept in the following New Testament passages (N.B. it is often translated ‘sacrifice of atonement’)?

1. Romans 3:21-26,
2. Hebrews 2:17;
3. 1 John 2:1-2 & 4:7-10

*“The basic description of the saving death of Christ in the Bible is as a ‘propitiation,’ that is, as that which quenched God’s wrath against us by obliterating our sins from his sight…Jesus Christ has shielded us from the nightmare prospect of retributive justice by becoming our representative substitute, in obedience to the Father’s will, and receiving the wages of our sin in our place.”*

***J I Packer****, Knowing God pp212-3.*

6. What does the imagery of vv5-6 imply about the results of God healing his people?

7. Verse 7 is more literally rendered in the NIV: *People will dwell again in his shade*. In other words it is not God’s shade that is being dwelt under, it is Israel’s. What might this mean? Who did God design Israel to provide shelter for? (cp. Genesis 12:2-3; Isaiah 49:1-6; Romans 1:16)

8. Notice that in v8 Israel’s restoration is not just a restored status, they are to be fruitful. Where is that fruitfulness going to come from? What makes God’s people continually fruitful? What is spiritual fruit? (Deuteronomy 6:10-12; Psalm 1:1-3; John 15:1-8; Galatians 5:22-26)

Hosea has brought us face-to-face with the harsh realities of sin – the reality of how utterly sinful human beings are; the reality of how odious a thing sin is to God; the reality of how severe God’s just punishment for sin is; the reality of how sad and painful life is in rebellion to God. But Hosea has kept bringing us back to the undying love of God; to God’s pursuit of sinners; to God’s readiness to receive and restore the repentant. Hosea has been pointing us to the need of salvation and God’s commitment to provide it – he has been pointing us to the Lord Jesus Christ, the sin-bearer, in whom all the promises of Scripture are fulfilled. These are the greatest truths human beings can know, and so Hosea ends with some challenges – if we fail to take them on board, then all of our study of this book has been in vain.

 *Who is wise? Let them realise these things.*

 *Who is discerning? Let them understand*

 *The ways of the Lord are right;*

 *the righteous walk in them,*

 *but the rebellious stumble in them. (****Hosea 14:9****)*

*In your group…*

Share points for prayer.

Worship God for his attributes revealed in this passage

Pray for fruitfulness in your life and in the lives of the rest of your group.

Pray over what has challenged you about this passage of Scripture?

Pray for each other’s needs.