

June 19

2 Kings 14

2 Chronicles 25 & 26

Hosea 10, 11, 13 & 14

Today we read passages from 2 Kings 14; 2 Chronicles 25 & 26; and portions of Hosea 10, 11, 13 & 14. We are going to mainly focus on the chapters in Hosea.

The portion of Hosea's great book of prophecy that we read today contains the pronouncement of God's righteous judgment against the people of Israel. In chapter 10 there is an image that is of special importance because of the frequency with which it occurs not only in the prophets but also in the New Testament. Israel is likened to a spreading vine -- the vine of the Lord. Isaiah will use a similar analogy calling Israel a vineyard. Jesus himself will pick up on both the vine and the vineyard analogies. This passage may well have provided the background for John:15 -- one of the "great" chapters of the Bible in which Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches ..."

The punishment that God will bring upon Israel is spelled out quite explicitly. Samaria and its king will "float away like a twig on the surface of the water." She will go into captivity to Assyria.

An important section that we read is found in chapter 10:12 - "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love and break up your unplowed ground for it is time to seek the Lord until He comes and showers righteousness on you."

Israel stood in desperate need of revival -- a revival that never came -- not because God was unwilling to send it, but because Israel was unwilling to do the hard work of repentance and obedience. It is repentance that breaks up the unplowed ground in our lives and it is obedience to the Word of God that sows the seed of harvest in our lives. What we are confronted with in chapter 10 then is God's formula for bringing revival to His people. Since we too stand in need of a great revival, I would encourage you to memorize that verse because it is profoundly important that we do what God really wants as opposed to what we think He wants. Once again, these verses point out the simple but often overlooked truth that our attitudes are the all important thing. God looks at our hearts, not our external appearance!

The section of the Book that we read today places a heavy emphasis upon the love of Jehovah for His people in spite of their sins and waywardness. It magnifies the attitude of the Lord toward Israel.

Today we encountered words and expressions that might be familiar to us because of our knowledge of the New Testament. Today's reading revealed the source of the New Testament words and emphasized how much the minds and thought patterns of the early Christians were shaped by their understanding of the Old Testament. Right at the beginning of today's reading we found the Lord saying, "When Israel was a child I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son." Do you think the self-imposed exile of

Joseph, Mary and Jesus in Egypt during the reign of Herod the Great, who sought the Holy Child's life, was a fulfillment of this prophecy? Let me remind you how Matthew used the passage in Hosea 11. Matthew 2:14-15 follows a statement the verse before telling us that Joseph had a dream in which the Lord told him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt because of Herod's plot against Jesus. Verse 14-15 says: "So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt where he stayed until the death of Herod and so it was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" The words in Hosea do not appear to be written in any way as a prophecy because they look back to the Exodus, not to some future Messiah. There is no indication in chapter 11 that Hosea was making a prophecy at that point. We cannot say that Matthew has violated the integrity of the text in his interpretation. The answer is found in understanding that Matthew viewed Israel as a "type" of the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore made this rather surprising application.

The other passage in the last section of Hosea that finds a second life in the New Testament is the one in chapter 13 which points to a future "resurrection" for the nation of Israel -- to a time of national restoration. "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?" The Apostle Paul knew every portion of the Old Testament well, and those words are reshaped a bit as they find their way into I Corinthians 15. They come in their original form from Hosea 13. The significance of noting that is to reinforce the importance of being people who are steeped in the Word of God. I am praying that our experience together in Project 4:4 will begin to give us that kind of mental and spiritual perspective.

Hosea ends his prophecy of destruction on a note of hope. "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily ... Men will dwell again in his shade ... he will blossom like a vine."

These prophetic books of the Old Testament are important because they provide a platform to understand the New Testament with clarity as we make the same connections the original authors and readers did.