

## **IGNORANCE BY CHOICE!**

**Today's Text:** Hosea Chaps 4-6

**Extracts:**

**Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel; for the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: “*There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. ... My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priests for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children*” [Hos. 4: 1, 6].**

*Darwin's theory of evolution postulates that the perpetuation of all species is based on survival of the fittest. Therefore, it is to be expected that the stronger will outlive the weaker. We usually associate strength with bigger, richer, better, taller and so on. So, underdogs have no place in Darwin's scheme of things. However, we know that the dinosaur, one of the largest animals that ever lived on earth, is extinct whereas the little mosquito is still alive and becoming more resilient than ever! Why has the dinosaur disappeared while the mosquito is still alive?*

*One explanation is that the theory of evolution is all false, as creationists argue. We know for sure that the earth is the Lord's and He created all of us that dwell therein [Ps. 24: 1]. Everything under heaven is His and He provides food for animals that live in the wild [Job 41: 11; 38: 41]. Therefore, only He can explain why the dinosaur is extinct while the mosquito is still alive. However, let us note a significant principle from what the evolutionists have said. The fittest is not necessarily by size or strength, no matter how it is defined by worldly standards, but by ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The mosquito was able to adapt but the dinosaur could not or did not. The little wise one is alive but the big fool is dead!*

*The ability to adapt comes from knowledge of our situation. The absence of knowledge is called ignorance. Some people eagerly pursue knowledge and apply it to deal with problems while others do not. Why is this? In today's lesson, God told the children of Israel that they had preferred ignorance to knowledge of God. As a result, they would perish for choosing ignorance. Are you knowledgeable about God? Are you ignorant of Him? Is your ignorance a deliberate choice or by chance? Let us find out from today's study.*

## 1. Ignorance at a glance!

Most of us are familiar with the story of six blind men who desired to know an elephant. An elephant was brought before them and each of them was given the privilege to touch it and tell the others what they knew about the animal. The blind man who had touched a leg of the elephant said that the animal was like a tree trunk. Another who had touched the tusk said the animal was like a snake. Another that had touched the rough skin said that the elephant was like a wall. In the end, all six had different views of the animal. Would you consider them now knowledgeable about the elephant?

Your answer will depend on your eye sight. If you were blind like the six, you would not be in a position to evaluate them. However, if you had clear sight, you would know that they all were still ignorant. Even if you were to aggregate all the answers, you would still not have a good description of the animal. The six blind men had the desire to learn and they were given the opportunity to learn. Yet they remained ignorant of the truth. Paul made this point about Israel when he wrote that they had “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” [Rom. 10: 2-3]. So, *truth is the beginning of knowledge and whatever deviates from the truth is ignorance.*

We do know that some people are not capable of learning the truth about certain things because of immaturity, such as children before the age of consent, or people with disabilities, such as insanity. Those who are matured or capable of knowing *can choose* to know or not to know. Where do you belong among the following?

a) *You want to know the truth and the opportunity is there*

Some people may be doing things that they thought were right. Then, they come across knowledgeable people that can open the way to fuller knowledge of doing the right things right. If they willingly accept it, then they have graduated out of ignorance. A few examples will make this clearer.

Saul (Paul) was a Pharisee who had strong zeal for God. Like his fellow Pharisees, he had believed that the followers of Christ were blasphemers who needed to be destroyed. He observed and enjoyed the stoning of Stephen to death. In fact, he was the one who held the garments of those that killed him. However, on his way to Damascus armed with an official mandate to arrest and detain Christians, he had a close encounter with Christ that completely changed his life. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul recounted that experience as follows [1 Tim. 1:12-13]:

*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because **I did it ignorantly in unbelief***

Paul seized the opportunity to know the real truth of God and did not hesitate to cease being ignorant.

In another example, a certain Jew named Apollos, “an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures” came to Ephesus where lived Aquila and his wife, Priscilla. Apollos had been instructed about the new faith and taught accurate things about Jesus but “he knew only the baptism of John [the Baptist].” As he spoke boldly in the synagogue, Aquila and Priscilla heard him. They “took him aside and explained to him the way of God *more accurately*.” As a result of the new knowledge, when Apollos then crossed over to Achaia, “he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” [Acts 18: 24- 28]. It was the same zeal that believers in Berea showed. They “searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things (about Christ) were so. Therefore, many of them believed” [Acts 17: 10-12].

b) *You want to know the truth but you cannot handle it!*

Some people are quite desirous to know the truth but when they receive it, they cannot handle it. The temple leaders were always the first to stir up the people against Jesus because what He preached about God did not agree with their concept of the truth of God “for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” [Matt. 7: 28].

After Paul had appealed to Caesar (as a Roman citizen), the Roman governor in Palestine, Festus, wanted to know what accusation to write against him. So, he used the privilege of the visit of king Agrippa and his wife to invite them to listen to Paul’s testimony. The king agreed, saying, “I also would like to hear the man myself” [Acts 25: 1-22]. That suggests a willingness to hear the truth and be better informed about the Jewish faith. However, after Paul’s testimony of the reality of Jesus, anchored on his Damascus experience, he asked the king, “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.” He replied, “You *almost* persuaded me to become a Christian” [Acts 26: 1-28]. Agrippa heard the truth but he could not handle it. He *chose* to remain ignorant!

c) *You don’t want to hear the truth at all!*

Some people do not want to hear the truth at all because it is detrimental to their chosen values or way of life. Instead, they will be ready to spend money and time to defend an alternative ‘truth!’ For example, a racist, masquerading as a top scientist, may tell you that he has found from research that white

people are more intelligent than black people. Yet, Tiger Woods, a black man, is the world's top golfer, and golf requires top intelligence! Recently, I heard the story of an argument between a gay activist and an anti-gay crusader. The gay turned to the woman and said, "I was born gay just as you were born black." The woman replied, "No, honey. On the day I was born, they knew that I was black and female, and my birth certificate says so. Let me see yours and show me where they were able to determine your sexual orientation? Honey, I was born black but you *chose* to be gay!" That man's ignorance was by choice because he was justifying a life style that the truth of God considers an abomination.

Many so-called believers are steeped in denominational Christianity without knowing the truth of Jesus which is total obedience to His Father's will. They look down on believers in other denominations, claiming they are the only ones that are saved. However, their fruits cannot lead unbelievers to Christ! They are practising ignorance by choice.

In general, one should not be held accountable for doing what one does not know is wrong or unacceptable. Yet, we do know that ignorance of the law is not an excuse. If you stole and claimed that you did not know that it was an offence in that place, they would still put you in jail and you would be free to tell the prison wardens your reasons for 'visiting' them! In matters relating to God, ignorance is neither an excuse nor a plea. Therefore, we had better listen to what God was telling the people of Israel in today's bible text on the matter

## 2. Dangers of culpable ignorance

In the book of Hosea, Chapters 4-6, God is upbraiding the people of Israel (both priests, prophets and parents) for losing truth and mercy and knowledge of God, while practising lying, killing, stealing and adultery. In fact, they had lost all restraint [**Hos. 4: 1-2**]. So, God pronounced judgment on them as follows [**v. 6**]:

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me, because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*

Let us pay attention to the key words in that message:

### a) *The message is for God's people*

In the text, God was addressing the chosen people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Unlike the surrounding idolatrous nations, Israel worshipped the one true God who had visibly shown His might and power as He took them out of bondage in Egypt to settle them in the Promised Land.. Therefore, they had no excuse for not knowing Him. God made this point through another prophet, Amos, as follows: "You only have I known of all the

nations of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” [Amos 3:2].

Under the New Covenant, believers (as members of the body of Christ) are the people of God, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people,” and our duty is to “proclaim the praises of Him who called (us) out of darkness into His marvelous light” [1 Pet. 2: 9]. Therefore, the message is also for us, not just everybody in the world. Paul made the point when he wrote to the Corinthian church concerning sexual immorality among its members. He said, “I certainly did not mean [keeping company] with the sexually immoral people of this world... since then you would need to go out of the world. *But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother [or sister], who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reveler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner- not even to eat with such a person*” [1 Cor. 5: 9-11].

b) *To God’s people who have rejected knowledge*

The Jews had rejected the law of their God by ceasing to obey Him [Hos. 4: 4, 10]. Their ignorance of the law of God included not keeping the Ten Commandments [Ex. 20: 1-17] and also ignoring the penalties that go with breaking them [Deut. 28: 15-68]. It included ignoring all the great miracles and wonders that God had performed in their lives. That their ignorance was a deliberate choice made it all the more painful to God. Instead, they “walked willingly by human precepts” [Hos. 5: 11].

We are much worse today than the people of old, for just as Paul had predicted two thousand years ago, “perilous times will come, for men will be lovers of themselves (and) of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control... having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof;... *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” [2 Tim. 3: 1-7]. See how churches today place more (or sole) emphasis on material blessings than repentance? See how fornication, adultery, abortion, divorce and homosexuality are being passed as civil rights instead of sin? Where is the knowledge of the law of God in all these? There is hardly any because believers have chosen ignorance over knowledge. We may call it ‘accommodation’ or being ‘progressive.’ The truth is that we are wallowing in ignorance while we count our economic and social progress with human benchmarks. We relish our earthly status in government or church without realising the spiritual decay within. Sooner than later, God’s axe will fall.

c) *The culpably ignorant people will face God’s wrath*

The people of Israel ignored their God and wallowed in a false sense of security [Hos. 4: 11-13]. Therefore, they were not prepared for attack from

Babylon. Their watchmen were “blind,” “ignorant,” “all dumb dogs [that could not] bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber” [Is. 56: 10]. They were destroyed because they chose ignorance over the knowledge of their God. The Lord rejected them as His priests and confined their children to seventy years in exile in Babylon.

Many of us are today suffering one form of God’s wrath or another for our culpable ignorance of His word. Why are modern floods and storms more ferocious or the fires more destructive? Why is there renewed ethnic/racial hatred and increasing wickedness? Why are so many priests and pastors being disgraced and sentenced to prison for sexual and other forms of immorality? Why is there growing rebellion of children against their parents or school authorities? Certainly, God’s people are being destroyed for lack of knowledge. The time has come for self-examination.

### 3. Conclusion: Time to know the Truth of God in Jesus!

Hosea says to the people of his days, “Come, and let us return to the Lord, for He has torn, but He will bind us up. *After two days* He will revive us. *On the third day* He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know; let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord” [Hos. 6: 1-3]. In deed, the Lord came to us in flesh as Jesus the Christ. He suffered on the cross and before He died, He pleaded with God, saying, “Father, forgive them for *they know not what they do*” [Lk 23: 34]. In other words, He was pleading for human kind’s ignorance of the law of God from the foundation of the world to the end of the age [Heb. 9:7]. *On the third day*, He rose from the dead, thereby restoring us to life. He is now sitting at the right hand of God from whence He will soon come again to judge the living and the dead. *Jesus* Himself has told us that *He is the way, the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him* [Jn 14: 6]. That is why Paul has called Christ “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” [Rom. 10: 4]. If you still have not received Christ as your Lord and Saviour, i.e., obey His Father in every way, you are wallowing in culpable ignorance.

So, what is holding you back from accepting knowledge of the truth of God? Time is running out. Don’t be like the dinosaur and die in self-inflicted ignorance. Choose Christ and live.