

Who, What, And Why?

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Hos 4:6 says, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:...*" This is a familiar circumstance in the religious world. People fail to learn what God says. They then act in their own self interests. They want to believe God is pleased with them and He will provide for them. But this verse tells us people are **destroyed** for lack of knowledge. They do not do right because they do not know what is right. Often this is from a conscious rejection of what God has revealed to them.

1. Who is Hosea talking about? The verse says, "*My people*". This was not the destruction of the heathens in Sodom and Gomorrah. This comment is not aimed at the Amalekites, Moabites, or Hittites. This is aimed at Israel. The people who had been given the law of Moses. The people who had prophets and a godly history. They did not lack knowledge because God did not speak to them. They lacked knowledge because they rejected what He told them.

2. What will happen to them? The prophet said they would be "*destroyed*". Israel (the northern kingdom) was taken into Assyrian captivity. They practiced idolatry from the very beginning of the divided kingdom and continued until their end. They turned away from the true God and from His teachings and worship. The opportunity to serve Him was always before them, but they chose to follow the behavior of the Canaanites who lived around them in the land of promise.

3. Why did it happen to them? Hosea says, "*for lack of knowledge.*" When we do not learn God's word we will remain ignorant. This ignorance will produce disobedience. This disobedience will lead to destruction. Without study we will not know what is expected of us. We will follow a charismatic

leader, the majority, the popular trends, or the long held traditions. God will not be obeyed.

About 100 years after Hosea, Habakkuk wrote these words in Hab 2:4 "*... the just shall live by his faith.*" This statement is found three times in the New Testament (Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11, Heb 10:38), but it was originally written to Judah.

1. Who is Habakkuk talking about? "*The just*" are the subject of his quotation. These were the people of Judah who still respected and followed the Lord. When Judah was defeated we read of Daniel who was taken into Babylonian captivity. He and his three friends were justified before God. Ezekiel was later taken captive. He too was righteous. The just Jeremiah witnessed the whole destruction process. He was not taken to Babylon by the Chaldeans, but was later forced to go to Egypt by the unrighteous remnant that remained in the Jerusalem ruins.

2. What will happen to them? The prophet tells us they "*shall live*". The physical application of the text is that they will survive while the wicked of Judah are destroyed. Daniel lived about 70 years in Babylon. There were faithful Jews who were given the opportunity to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple after the Persians became the world power. A spiritual application of the phrase refers to the manner of life in which "*the just shall live*".

3. Why did it happen to them? Habakkuk says they will live because of their "*faith*". To live by faith is to reverence the knowledge of God. Instead of rejecting the Scriptures these people believed and practiced them. God will protect and provide for these people in whatever generation they are found.

Which passage best describes us? We are not concerned with the worldly people, the denominations, or the liberals. We want to focus on ourselves, and what will happen to us and why. It was *God's people* who were destroyed for lack of knowledge. Could that happen to the church of Christ? Do Christians study their Bibles and obey the teachings found within the New Testament? There are many judgment days found in the Bible. Northern Israel was judged by the use of the Assyrians. Judah was defeated by the Babylonians. Later the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. God has another judgment day reserved for us. Heb. 9:27 says, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"*

Acts 17 says, *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* (30-31)

The Bible gives us a clear pattern that has been repeated many times. We can learn God's word, believe and obey it, and be blessed in the end; or we can ignore, forget, and modify His truth and face eternal destruction.

Why do some Christians believe they are acceptable to God just because they were baptized once upon a time. They do not attend Bible studies. They miss worship services. They do not abstain from worldliness. They do not teach their children the divine truths. Can these church members be described as *"the just"*? Are they living *"by faith"*? Could we observe a *"lack of knowledge"* in the way they talk and behave? We should not take comfort in the label of "God's people" or "the church of Christ" if we are an inactive member. We need to be awakened to the truth and get busy obeying it. The just live by faith.