



Hosea 13:14

Ransomed from the Power of Death

"Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight" (Hosea 13:14, NASB95).

It is helpful to keep in mind that this remarkable passage is set against the background of a nation that had for 250 years maintained an idolatrous worship. The context of chapters twelve and thirteen tell us that judgment was imminent toward Ephraim. Evil leaders led the northern kingdom astray. It all began with self-exalted pride, and then idolatry to rob the people's hearts away from God. The nation had committed spiritual adultery by going after the neighbor's idols. Hope had all but disappeared for the people of Israel. The probability of Yahweh's judgment seemed certain because there was no way Israel could escape divine judgment. They had provoked the LORD God to anger. None of their iniquities had been forgotten. Every evil deed would be called to account. God would send Sheol to do its worst (v. 14a,b). They were beyond mercy. The future of the nation would be one of drought, famine and loss of everything valuable they had gained through dishonesty and deceit (v. 15).

The two opening statements in verse fourteen may be translated better as rhetorical questions implying a negative answer: "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death?" The context demands that verse 14a,b be read a question, "Will I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Will I redeem them from death?" The NET Bible reads, "Will I deliver them from the power of Sheol? No, I will not! Will I redeem them from death? No, I will not! O Death, bring on your plagues! O Sheol, bring on your destruction! My eyes will not show any compassion!" (Hosea 13:14).

Judgment was coming upon the nation.

It is time for death to unleash its thorns of destruction upon the people (cf. vv. 15-16). They alone were responsible for their guilt. In the Old Testament, death was viewed as an impossible situation from which there was no return. All who died went to the grave called *Sheol*. There was no return from this huge, relentless monster standing with mouth open wide ready to sweep everyone into it.

In verse twelve the prophet refers to an ancient Oriental custom of tying up money and other valuables in a bundle and hiding it. This was done for security purposes. The Lord will see to it that their sins and iniquities will not be hidden. All their sins were preserved for judgment. "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is stored up" (v. 12). It is interesting that the pains of childbirth come upon "him" (v. 13).

Redemption from death will come. They will be ransom from the power of Sheol. From the context it is obvious Israel will be raised from its national

Sheol. From the context it is obvious Israel will be raised from its national death. She has long been buried among the nations without spiritual and national life, just like those who sleep in the power of Sheol. Yahweh will deliver the faithful of Israel and Judah and they will rise from the dust of the earth. Israel was like a dead man, buried among the nations, wandering like a shade in Sheol. It is a picture of national restoration.

Yahweh had delivered His people in the past, could He do it again? In spite of the coming judgment Yahweh gives a word of hope saying He will redeem His people from the power of national death. With the threat also comes a promise.

Once again, it is a reminder of the words of Daniel 12:1, 2; Isaiah 26:19 and Ezekiel 37. A remnant of Israel and Judah will awaken from their death – sleep, and shall come forth at the call of Yahweh to return to Zion with singing and everlasting joy in their LORD.

The idea of the resurrection of the dead was not a clear understanding in the Old Testament. There is nothing in the Old Testament that can compare to the great passage like Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. Even a grand passage like Ezekiel 37 is not teaching a doctrine of the resurrection as its main point. However, since Yahweh is the author of life, the possibility of the resurrection must be kept open. Both Hosea and Daniel give us insight into that hope and Ezekiel saw the nation raised from destruction to newness of life. "The full and deep meaning of these words was but gradually unfolded to believers under the Old Testament, and only attained complete and absolute certainty for all believers through the actual resurrection of Christ" (Keil). The annihilation of death is expressed forcibly with these words of triumph: "O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting?" Let me hasten to caution that this passage in Hosea does not teach restitution of the wicked. It has nothing to do with the wicked dead and their future. It applies to the restoration of Israel. Of course, it is a small step from the realization that the God who could resurrect a dead nation can also conquer the greatest enemy of mankind.

Death is dead

The only one who ever escaped the reign of death was Jesus Christ. On some blessed morning there will be another fulfillment of these words of Hosea. "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28, 29). These words of Jesus shouldn't cause us to be amazed, because right now there are those who having read this passage have made a personal commitment of their lives to Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have passed from spiritual death to life. The day of the Messiah's appearing in glory has not yet come. This is a day of calling out men and women to turn from the self worship to the Savior.

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The Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, applied the language of this text to depriving Sheol of its prey (cf. 1 Cor. 15:55-56). He was not offering a textual and exegetical analysis of verse 14, but saw in these words a grand application of our own resurrection. The apostle Paul wrote in 15:51-57 the following:

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch says, "The Apostle Paul had therefore very properly quoted these words in 1 Corinthians 15:55 in combination with the declaration in Isaiah 55:8, 'Death is swallowed up in victory,' to confirm the truth, that at the resurrection of the last day, death will be annihilated, and that which is corruptible changed into immortality."

What a difference the resurrection of Jesus Christ makes when we look at history. It would appear that Satan is the victor when we look at the events in the Garden of Eden and Calvary until we bring the resurrection clearly in view. Jesus reversed the disobedience of Adam when He rose from the dead. "Disarming the rulers and authorities, he has made a public disgrace of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15, NET).

The Christian hope, since Christ rose from the dead, is that both the living and dead shall be changed and therefore receives the resurrection body. We find the same idea at more length in First Thessalonians 4:13 – 18.

Death will be utterly vanquished forever. For those who belong to Christ, death's power will be removed forever. The apostle Paul saw in the resurrection of Christ the absolute defeat of death and absolute and everlasting triumph of the power of God. We look forward to the ultimate and final resurrection when Christ returns. What a day of rejoicing that will be!

The great apostle reminds us to keep our perspective about these future events. He keeps our feet on the ground saying, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord" (v. 58). The Second Coming of Christ always has its ethical applications for those of us living today.

The all-sufficient work Jesus Christ includes power over death. Have you received His free gift of eternal life by grace through faith in Christ alone? Here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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