

The Unknown God

Many lessons and sermons have been presented about the Unknown God. Most of them use Acts 17:22-23 as a basis for teaching. The people of Athens, Greece knew many false gods, but they were unaware of the only true and living God. The lesson usually develops into a series of reasons for increased evangelistic personnel work to the masses who have not read or heard the gospel message of salvation. Granted, there is a need for each of us to do more to spread the gospel here and abroad. But we also need to ask, "Can God be unknown to His own people?"

A time came when the Northern Kingdom of Israel finally compounded their sins to the point of being unbearable to God. The king that was anointed to end the evil reign of Ahab and Jezebel had proven himself to be evil and an idolater. The conditions became so bad God declared that there was no knowledge of God in the land (Hosea 4:1-3).

With the final destruction of Israel by the Assyrians nearing, God sent Hosea to spread the word through the land. *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children"* (Hosea 4:6). This time is about 670 years from when Israel crossed Jordan to enter their promised land. Through the conquest of the land, the days of the Judges, the United Kingdom, and the Divided Kingdom years, God had sent His prophets to both tell and show that He was a living and active God. The people, however, continued as they had in the days of the Judges, *"every man did what was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 17:6).

Although God had given laws and instructions and shown His mighty power to the people, they had pushed Him far from their thoughts. He said of them, *"They will return to Egypt (go into captivity), For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; And Judah has multiplied fortified cities"* (Hosea 8:13-14). Wicked Assyria believed God's word presented by the prophet Jonah and escaped judgment. But Israel and Judah depended on their self-confidence and national alliances to defend and provide for themselves. God, however, knew the heart of the nations they looked to for support. Those nations viewed Israel and Judah with contempt and good for nothing except a place to conquer for slaves. *"They are now among the nations Like a vessel in which no one delights"* (Hosea 8:8).

The God whom Israel forgot about is:

The living God. *"Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place Where it is said to them, 'You are not My people,' It will be said to them, 'You are the sons of the living God.'" (Hosea 1:10).*

The Holy God. *"I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst" (Hosea 11:9).*

The Creator God. *"I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King" (Isaiah 43:15).*

The Faithful God. *"Ephraim surrounds Me with lies And the house of Israel with deceit; Judah is also unruly against God, Even against the Holy One who is faithful" (Hosea 11:12)*

The Righteous God. *"Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, And the righteous will walk in them, But transgressors will stumble in them" (Hosea 14:9).*

The God of Mercy. *"Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us" (Hosea 6:1).*

God's children today have said, "I will never forget my God!" In reality, many have. Consider what Paul wrote of people in his day. *"For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (Romans 1:21-23).*

Today, many people care more for the eggs and seeds of animals and plants than for unborn human children. Many have a fond affection for lands, seas, stars, and earthlike planets and no affection for the destitute of humanity all around them. The self-styled educated reject the teaching that there is a spirit within a person that will someday stand before a righteous judge and answer for their rejection of God and His Son. Today, many are just like those in Israel long ago.

May we ever remember and serve the loving God and His Risen Son.