

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**C0936 – September 23, 2009 – Hosea 4:4-6 – Israel Has Rejected  
Righteousness**

When you're studying the OT there are three divisions and you want to know what division you're reading because it gives you a hint how to read it. If you're in the *Torah*, the first five books you're reading about Law, God's will for the nation Israel. If you're reading Proverbs you're reading from the *Kethubim* and the *Kethubim* are the wisdom writings. There you're learning skill in living, labor, marriage, family, finances and how to handle those details in life. We're in Hosea and Hosea is in the *Nabiim* or the prophets and the prophets are dealing with the problem of rejecting Torah; they've gone negative volition to the word of God and they've fallen into deep, deep carnality to the point they've become idolatrous. When you go negative to the word of God you lose fellowship with God and if you don't confess your sin and be restored to fellowship you fall into deep carnality and this destroys your perception of God, you distort who God is and this is a part of idolatry. You start worshipping and serving the creation rather than the Creator. This is one of the negative effects of sin on the human soul. And the prophets are trying to correct the nation.

That's why the prophets are so strong on discipline. Discipline is given to correct the nation's view of God so they can be convinced of their sin, confess and be restored to fellowship. And as long as your view of God is screwed up you can't be convinced of your sin. So you read the prophets for the deep carnality and idolatry problems you may be facing. And if you've been on negative volition to the word of God for years and years just tuning God out, and you've consequently wrecked your life and the life of everyone around you then you are in deep carnality and idolatry and therefore the literature for you is the prophets. The prophets begin to cleanse and correct your view of God. That's the only way you're ever going to get out of the mess you are in.

And don't expect it to take five minutes, getting out of deep carnality and idolatry takes years because you've simply trained your mind to respond to all kinds of fleshly stimuli and now when those stimuli are presented it's just natural to respond to that. So getting out of idolatry requires training the mind to respond to godly stimuli till it becomes natural to respond to that. Every day, every decision you make you are training yourself to respond to stimuli. And you're training yourself either in the direction of the flesh or the direction of the Spirit of God. So just know you are hardening your position in either direction and the more you train in one direction the more natural it becomes and the more difficult it becomes to go the other way. So we lay patterns down in our soul that are difficult to change. But the prophets are about getting deep into the soul and resolving that kind of a situation.

Beginning in Hosea 4 and extending through Hosea 14 we have the second section of the prophet. Chapters 1-3 dealt with the theme of God's marriage to the nation Israel and by parallel the historic marriage of Hosea to the prostitute Gomer. That we've covered and now Hosea is narrowing in on the details of the prostitution in chapters 4-14. We have in chapters 4-10 said the theme is YHWH brings a lawsuit against the nation Israel and in chapters 11-14 the theme is God's passionate love for the nation Israel. And so in chapter 4 YHWH brings a lawsuit against the nation Israel and the ideas in this chapter are a summary of the ideas in chapters 4-10, so we have to spend significant time in chapter 4 just to make it easier for us in chapters 5, 6, 7 and so forth. So chapter 4, Hosea is the lead attorney in YHWH's lawsuit against Israel. And since to argue a case presupposes a standard of law, what's the standard of law? It's the Mosaic Law, the Mosaic Covenant. And it's on the basis of the Mosaic Covenant that the nation Israel is being taken to court and accused.

We have dealt with Hosea's introduction of the case in vv 1-3. We said this is very clearly the *rib* structure that's reaching back to the Deuteronomy structure. Deuteronomy is the second law and on the basis of the second law this lawsuit is being taken up. Verse 1a was the court procedure; verses 1b-2 was the indictment; verse 3 was the pronouncement of judgment. God's indictment in verse 1a is all theological evil, there's no "faithfulness," that means no stability, there's no "kindness," that's the word *chesed*, it means no loyalty, no loyal love, and finally "no knowledge of God in the land" and that surfaces again tonight in v 6 so we'll handle that in detail later on. But the

thing to notice is that all that indictment of v 1a is theological evil. Verse 2 is the social evil which is where everyone focuses their attention - the swearing, the deception, murder, stealing, and adultery. That list is the 10 o'clock news every night of the week, that's what gets people all bent out of shape. How could a mother bash her five month old's head in with a pitchfork and throw it in the garbage? Why did so and so murder a nice young lady and stick her body in the wall? That's what everyone focuses on. When was the last time you saw the 10 o'clock news focus on v 1b evil? Well, today we had no loyalty to God over on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. You never heard that. Nobody wants to talk about that. But as long as you avoid that kind of talk you never can solve v 2 social problems because the Bible insists that the v 2 social problems are breaking out of the v 1b theological problems. In other words, one is the root and the other is the fruit. Man is a nasty and messed up son of a gun. If you avoid the mess man is in in v 1b, and you don't want to talk theology and solve spiritual issues then you can forget about solving the v 2 problems. They will just continue and continue and continue to break out in society and they will get more and more bizarre and society will go completely into chaos. And since we are so bombarded with v 2 social evils by every source of media, we as Christians have to train ourselves to keep the focus on v 1b evil or else we're not thinking the way the Bible thinks and we're not understanding the root of the problem. And then we rush headlong into a social crusade to fix all the social problems and when you've done that you're going from crusade to crusade to crusade and in the end it doesn't amount to anything more than a molehill. Why? Because you never got to the root of the problem. You're just treating symptoms. I agree the social stuff is terrible. I hate it, I hate every time I hear about another terrible crime in society. But the answer isn't a crusade against the crime. The answer is to solve the theological problems underneath the crime by orienting society to the word of God. So we train to focus on v 1b theological issues and the v 2 stuff will stop breaking out. Finally we said v 3 is the pronouncement of judgment. It comes on man and nature. Why? Because God placed nature under man so when man is judged nature is judged. It's that simple. The environmentalists are right in one respect, man is a hazard to nature but the reason man is a hazard to nature is because man is rebelling against God. So if you want to fix the environment fine, just know that the only way to do it is to stop rebelling against God and go positive to His word.

Now verses 4-14 we have God refusing to listen to any counter argument in the case because of their idolatry. God is saying at this point I'm just going to let your sin nature loose. And the reason that God is going to let them go is because of something called idolatry. And as we study Hos 4 we will have to study a thing called idolatry and what that is all about. We'll have to take some time because people get it in there head, well I don't have a little statute of Buddha in my closet so I'm not in idolatry. That's not the issue. You can be an idolater and not have one physical idol anywhere on your property. Idolatry is a little deeper than little statues so we'll get into it.

Beginning verse 4 - here is a nation that God has a case against, He has just pronounced doom on the nation. They're going to certainly be destroyed, it's no longer maybe you're going to be destroyed, it's you are going to be destroyed so He announces, **let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof; For your people are like those who contend with the priest.** Now what's going on here? It will help you if you think of this as a court setting. And the prosecution finishes his closing remarks by turning to the defense and saying, **let no one find fault**, that's the word *rib* again, here we'd translate "contend," In other words, don't try to contend with the charges, it's so clear your guilty don't even try to build a counter-case. You're guilty as charged. And then **let none offer reproof**, and that means don't try to find any little nitpicky thing to correct. You have no room to correct a thing. Everything I've accused you of is exactly what you're guilty of so just shut up.

And a little thing that will help you here is when God shines the light on your sin don't try to argue back that it's not sin. 1 John 1 warns against doing that. Trust me, I know it's natural to try to defend yourself. But God says don't try in your flesh to justify your sin. Just shut up. And that's what He's telling the nation here. I don't want to hear your excuses. I've heard them all and I've decided to judge you. And Hosea is saying this somewhere around 740BC and by 721BC the northern kingdom is going to be decimated by Assyria. They're going to suffer terrible things, starvation, bodies in the street, mothers eating their own children. Why? Because of their sin. Sin devastates and God is going to judge nations that sin and sin and sin, especially a nation like Israel that had so much light. They had the word of God, they had prophets to reveal the word of God and give divine analysis, they had priests and the sacrificial system, they had all that light and they

still rebelled against God so they're going to suffer severe divine judgment. There's nothing they can do to stop it. It doesn't matter if they get with the program and they all repent and start obeying the word of God. It's too late by this point. Judgment is coming. It's like the kid that you parents had that you told to do x and he didn't do x and you said get over here I'm going to wallop your behind and the kid says oh now I'll do x daddy if you won't wallop me but it's too late. He's going to get walloped. See, there's this principle called grace and everyone loves grace, boy we just wish grace would go on and on and on forever and ever and ever. Why do we wish that? Because as long as there's grace there's no judgment and I can sin and sin and sin to my little heart's delight. So everyone loves grace. But finally in the Bible grace runs out and it's time for judgment. That's what God is saying to the nation. You can pray all you want, you can do jumping jacks in the pews, it doesn't matter, and I'm still going to judge you.

And now we come to the reason, a very strange phrase, **For your people are like those who contend with the priest.** And notice it's not My people, it's **your people.** He doesn't even claim them. Why not? Because they don't act like His people. It's like when a son or daughter is acting up in the grocery store and one parent says to the other, your son is doing his thing again. And it's a claim that I don't acknowledge that kid as my kid. Why? Because they don't act like my kid. He's your kid. That's the kind of thing going on in v 4. **For your people are like those who contend with the priest.**

To see what he is talking about when He says **your people are like those who contend with the priest** we have to understand the priest. The priest had three functions. The priests, first, conducted worship services in the Temple, that is, he supervised the sacrifices, they exchanged the showbread, they dealt with putting oil in the menorah, they kept incense on the altar and so on. All the tasks that related to the worship service at the Temple. The second thing the priests did was that they were the Bible teachers and in particular they focused on the Torah, the first five books, and they instructed the people in what the Torah said and they were to live their lives in accordance with Torah to show forth an example to the people. The third thing they did is what we have referred to here (turn to Deut 17:8) which is they judged. Since they knew the Torah better than anyone else they were the best people for judging and giving counsel. So when people had a hard question they would come to the priests to find out the divine view point on

their question and the priests who knew the Torah better than anyone else would then give an analysis based on what they knew of the Torah and that would solve the question.

So here is what explains what Hosea means when he says **those who contend with the priest**. Obviously it's a negative text; it isn't a good thing to argue with the priest. The priest is just trying to give this person the word of God. And when Hosea says you're arguing with him, he has this passage in Deut 17 in mind and it's a situation involving courts and in particular appeals. So, to know what he means we have to know the Law. Deut 17:8, "If any case is too difficult for you to decide, between one kind of homicide or another, between one kind of lawsuit or another, and between one kind of assault or another, being cases of dispute in your courts, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses." It turned out centuries later that he chose Jerusalem. We're talking about the Temple in Jerusalem which is where the priests served. So if someone has a difficult case then v 9, "So you shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge, who is *in office* in those days, and you shall inquire *of them* and they will declare to you the verdict in the case." So here's the situation: you're up in your district and you have a case and you take it to the leaders of the town and it's a very complicated case, it involves a lot of complicated evidences and they can't decide your case. They didn't do like they do in America and make a decision and then someone appeals and it goes to a higher court. They just said we can't make a decision and you're going to have to go to the Temple for this one, that's where the experts are, that's the Supreme Court. And so v 9 they'd go up to the "Levitical priest or the judge," and whoever was in office in those days was the guy who knew Torah inside and out, he was the top lawyer and you'd share your case with all it's complications and he'd explain, now Torah says this about complication A and it says this about complication B and it says this about complication C all the way to complication X, Y, Z in your case and they'd put it all together with logic and say, alright, here's the verdict, this is the only way to follow all of Torah, this is what God says. That would be the final verdict.

And therefore v 10, "You shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the LORD chooses; and you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you. <sup>11</sup>"According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which

they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left. <sup>12</sup>“The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the LORD your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. <sup>13</sup>“Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.”

Now, the fact this involved an execution file gives you the impression God took this pretty seriously. You didn't go against the priest's verdict because the priest's verdict was the word of God. Now it's not that the priests have this kind of authority in and of themselves, it's simply that the priests are telling them what Torah says. And Torah is God's word and God does have this kind of authority. So to rebel against the priest who simply told you what God's word said was to rebel against God Himself and that's why if you did it the punishment was execution (cf Mal 2:7). What would happen if they didn't execute you? Why was it so important to execute? Because if we don't then next week we'll have five people rebelling against the word of God and the next week we'll have twenty-five and the next week we'll have 5,005 and so it breeds rebellion in the camp of Israel against God. They were to capitally punish this crime in order to purge the evil out before it ruined the whole nation. And obviously they didn't capitally punish for this crime because by this time in the nation Israel rebellion had bred in the camp and it was descending rapidly into chaos. And obviously if they had followed this statute it would have secured freedom and stability in the nation.

Now it's the same thing today. Someone has a situation, they come in for counseling and they want to know what God says about X, so you tell them God says this about X. Now the person has just been exposed to the word of God, and after hearing what God says about X they walk out and say well I don't like that too much, maybe that's just your interpretation, I'll think about it, or I'll decide after I try some other stuff if I'm going to get with God's program or not. At this point they've heard the word of God, it's not that they don't know, they know very well what the word of God says, it's just that they don't like what the word of God says so they rebel. That's the sin of presumption here, they knew exactly what the word of God says and they still say no, I'm not going to do it. That's contending with the word of God, and that's what Hosea is talking about in his day. There were a lot of people

contending with the word of God. It means they knew exactly what God had said in Torah and still they said no, I defy the word of God.

Therefore verse 5, **So you will stumble by day**, that is, the nation will stumble in a time of prosperity. Now the day is the time when you can see things, you say I have no problems in the day, I don't stumble in the day. If there's something in my way I just avoid it. We have confidence in the day we're not going to stumble. And God says to this kind of believer who is in compound carnality, just when you think you can never stumble, then you will stumble. **So you will stumble by day.**

And then the next part **and the prophet also will stumble with you by night**; and this is the situation where you have a believer in compound carnality and he has a crisis in life, he doesn't know what to do and so he frantically goes to the prophet to find out. And this time it's at night, he doesn't see the way clearly. And when he can't see the way clearly in life he says I'll go to the prophet and he'll tell me. But God is saying here, I'm going to have the prophet give you bad advice and you and the prophet are going to stumble at night. This is sort of a shock to some of you. Here's a believer down and out and he can't see his way out of a problem and he wants divine guidance and God says, uh, uh, I'm not going to give you divine guidance. Don't come asking me for that while you are still in deep carnality and idolatry in your heart. The issue with a person in deep carnality and idolatry is not divine guidance; what job do I take, who do I marry, what school do I go to, whatever the issue. This person has no right to divine guidance at that point; he has to get back in fellowship and get straightened out before divine guidance once again becomes a resource. You forfeit resources when you're out of fellowship. There are simply things you don't have access to and divine guidance is one of them. Answered prayer is another one. God's not going to answer your prayers when you're out of it. I give you 1 Pet 3:7. God's not interested in your prayers until you get the fellowship issue straightened out.

So here, even if he goes to the prophets, the prophets shall **stumble**. God will cause the prophet to give bad advice. **And I will destroy your mother**, meaning I will destroy the entire northern kingdom, the **mother** is the nation.



Now, we come to verse 6 and verse 6 gets into the reason God is so angry at His nation and it has to do with idolatry. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Now the nation is having a problem in the area of idolatry and the first area their having a problem is in the area of knowledge so we have to go into the doctrine of knowledge to understand it.

Verse 6, **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.** The verb destroyed is the perfect tense. They have been destroyed, they're already destroyed. Reason: **Because you have rejected knowledge,** another perfect tense, they already rejected knowledge. Conclusion: **I also will reject you from being My priest.** Now when you first read v 6 your tempted to say **knowledge** here refers to Bible teaching. **My people are destroyed for lack of** Bible teaching. But that creates a problem because the next phrase would be saying they rejected Bible teaching. So obviously they had Bible teaching and at some point they rejected Bible teaching and therefore the problem must be somewhere else. What is it? The problem lies in that they **rejected knowledge** and this is something we want to get into. What is it that constitutes rejection of knowledge and what is the knowledge they rejected? To answer this question we have to talk about the biblical view of knowledge because Hosea is wrapping up the whole biblical concept of knowledge in this word.

We're going to have to do this through a set of propositions and hopefully this will clear up for you why we are so insistent on the literal reading of the creation narrative and what we mean by knowledge and then we can know what Hosea means.

Now the first thing we say by proposition about knowledge comes from Gen 1 and that is that *God has all knowledge.* This is the Creator quality or attribute called omniscience. There simply is nothing God does not know. Put another way, God never learned anything. If God learned something that would mean He had a limited set of data, say  $n$ , and tomorrow He might add one piece of knowledge to the set and so it would be  $n+1$  in an ever expanding data set. But the Bible is teaching that God has an infinite data set of knowledge. Now Gen 1 shows us what an infinite knowledge base can do. An infinite knowledge base can create the whole universe in six days. Obviously He could have done it in six seconds but the point is that if you have the knowledge then you can quickly create. God, so to speak, put the blueprint in

His mind and into reality by speaking it out of nothing. That rapidity is a function of knowledge. Now think about it. Isn't the same thing true of us. If I have all the parts of an engine lying in my garage but I don't know anything about the engine I'm going to have to learn about the engine before I can put it together. And learning takes time so it's going to take me a long time to put together the engine. But if you come over to my garage and you know all there is to know about the engine then you can put it together very quickly. Why? Because you don't have to learn about the engine. And therefore, functionally, knowledge and time are related. So the first thing we're saying from Gen 1 is simply that God has all knowledge and this gives Him certain capacities we don't have.

Now the second thing about knowledge that logically follows the first and that is that *all human knowledge is derivative of God and is revelatory of Him*. When God created us He created us in His image and set us in His environment. And so it follows that He designed us to know Him through His environment. It's just part and parcel of the doctrine of creation. And therefore if we know anything truly we know it because God revealed it to us. All our knowledge comes from Him. ALL of it, not some of it, all human knowledge comes from God and is revelatory of Him, including  $1+1=2$ . And if that indeed is the case then no one can escape God, everyone has data about God and knows God to some degree. Some know more, some know less but man can expand his knowledge set. So here we're saying God made us to know Him, He created the environment and He created man with intellectual machinery that enables him to grow in knowledge and this means ultimately there's a right way to learn and a wrong way to learn. For example, take Adam. Adam was created on the sixth day. God had already created the environment on days 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and most of 6. Adam is created the crowning glory of God's creation. Now the things God made on days 1-3 God named. He called the light "day," He called the darkness "night," He called the expanse between the waters "sky," He named the land "earth." And then He stops naming and when He creates man on the sixth day He says to the man, name this animal, name that animal. So when God brings these animals before Adam he sizes the animal up and names the animal. It wasn't some kind of an abstract activity where Adam just pasted a name on the thing. Adam investigated the creature, sized it up and gave it a name that corresponded to the animal's distinct characteristics. It was a scientific activity. And at that point Adam is being creative, he's naming, his knowledge is growing, but, and

here's the important point, he's only doing that because God gave him the intellectual machinery to do that, if he was different he couldn't do that. And then we have the final observation, a very important one, man was naming underneath God's supervision, underneath God's authority. He's not doing it autonomously. The basic categories were already set by God at creation. Adam, this is an animal now I want you to name it; this is a bird, I want you to name it. And as long as we're respecting the basic categories God has created we are functioning under His authority and we can name things and build categories within His categories. And as we're doing that He's showing us more and we're growing in knowledge. So our second point to knowledge is *all human knowledge is revealed by God and is revelatory of Him.*

The implications of this point are vast and we don't have time to go into all of them but let's break the knowledge down into two parts. There are two mechanisms in which God reveals Himself to man; there is general revelation and special revelation. Special revelation is the Bible; so general revelation is outside the Bible. That's the basic difference. But let's go into it a bit more so we see how we get knowledge.

First, we have general revelation and this is God revealing Himself through creation. In general we just mean it is available to all men. And general revelation fits into two categories. We always divide the creation into man and nature so first let's take man. Man is a creation and even from ourselves we know about God. Turn to Rom 1 to see this. We'll start with what man knows from inside himself and then we'll move to what man knows from outside of himself, from nature. We'll start in v 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" (present tense), it is now being revealed "from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness," (also present tense), men continually suppress the truth in unrighteousness. So God continuously reveals His wrath because men continuously suppress the truth, that's the general tenor of v 18. Now from v 18 do all men know truth? Yes, they do. If you're suppressing something you're pretty sure it's there. All men know truth. What's truth here? It's not the gospel. All men don't know the gospel, the gospel is special revelation. What's the truth they know? V 19. "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them." It's truth about God. And the word "evident" is only used of the inner man, this isn't knowledge gained by observing nature. This isn't by looking out at the stars. This is

knowledge that God put inside man, knowledge that is inserted directly into the mind of man. Now this is why there really are no atheists. God, so to speak, downloaded a set of knowledge about Himself in every human mind. So if they are atheists either they're lying or something has happened to their mind. Both are possibilities.

The second branch of general revelation is nature and that's covered in v 20, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been" how seen? "clearly seen, being understood" how? "through what has been made," that's nature, concluding clause, "so that they are without excuse." And so vv 19-20 answer the question, "What about those who never heard? What about the tribe in Africa?" The answer is they didn't need to hear the gospel to be held responsible. They understood very well about God simply from the knowledge He put directly in their mind, v 19, and the knowledge they attained through nature, v 20. So we have these two ways God generally reveals Himself to all men. One is direct, that's v 19, one is indirect, that's v 20. Conclusion; all men know God and all men are responsible for this knowledge.

The second kind of revelation we have is special revelation and that's the Bible. Not all people have this. It's verbal revelation. God speaks in propositions and tells us certain things about Himself, about man, about nature that otherwise couldn't be known. He tells us about salvation, about sanctification, about His plan for world history and so forth. All this kind of thing is special revelation.

Alright let's think about what we've said, the first point is that God has all knowledge. He's omniscient and out of His omniscience He generated the universe including man and nature. Man is made to know and all men do know some things. All men know that God exists and that God is all powerful and eternal. They know that because God put that knowledge in their mind and because they can see Him through creation. The second thing is that all human knowledge is derivative of God and is revelatory of Him. So this means that  $2+2=4$  is revealed knowledge. All mathematical knowledge is revealed knowledge. You didn't think math was just there did you. Math is a linguistic description of the universe. The universe is a very tidy place, it's very organized. What is it that people ask when they walk into a museum and look at a piece of artwork? Who's the artist? What do you ask when you

listen to a piece of music? Who composed it? What do you ask when you walk up to a new house? Who built it? So when we walk into the universe why don't we ask who built it? We don't avoid the question in any other area. Why when we walk into the universe do we avoid the question? And the answer is we haven't avoided the question. We've answered the question alright. We've had to in order to precede one way or the other. But we can only teach one answer in the classroom, we have to be religiously neutral. Baloney. In every other area of life when I step into it and I see design and order I attribute it to an intelligent being, then I step back and look at the universe and attribute it to the properties of physics? C'mon, you've only pushed the problem back one step further. Where did the properties of physics come from? Oh, they've always been. Well now we're talking religion, so don't give me this we've got to be religiously neutral in the classroom. You're not being religiously neutral at all, you're being religiously biased.

Now the third point about knowledge is Gen 3, this is the Fall and here we're moving closer to Hosea. Let me remind you we're only introducing the background for the doctrine of idolatry tonight, we'll get back to Hosea after the background. This is all set up for what's coming. In Gen 3 we have the serpent come to Eve and he says to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" Now let's ask the question "What's going on here?" The serpent is casting doubt on what God said is he not? He's also twisting what God had said, that's not what God said. Then v 2, "The woman said...from the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat..." and you know how it goes. The next time the serpent speaks in v 4 it's an outright lie and he gets the woman in a position where she thinks she has to decide and so in v 6 she decides.

Now this event is basically a question of how we know something's true, but it's linked closely with another question and that's the question of authority and trust. Who decides what is true? The serpent was challenging that basic issue. Satan was challenging whether God really knew what He was talking about when it came down to interpreting the trees in that garden. Eve up until that point had trusted God's word about the trees. But Satan challenges God's word about the trees. What's he doing? He's creating doubt in that woman's mind. How's he doing it? By attacking God's character. Has God said? See Eve, God's really lying to you, you're not going to die. God is a big bad meanie and He just doesn't want you to be like Him. And so now she's in

a position, she thinks at least, where she's got two statements, there's only two ways to go; either God's word is true or Satan's word is true. Who am I going to trust? And what Satan has done to that woman is a very clever thing. What has he got her to do? To think that she must decide whose word is true. That right there is the fatal mistake. Just the fact she thinks she has to decide the question is where she got it all wrong. But he's got her in that position and now where does she place her trust? In herself, and there is born autonomy. There is born a woman who says I will decide whether God is trustworthy or not. I will decide whether God's word is true or not, I will not accept what God says as true on the basis of His authority. I'm the authority and I will decide myself. And so we have born intellectual autonomy. And that's the essence of where this knowledge thing is going. The moment Satan gets you in that position he's wrecked you. Why? You can't trust God. You'll have to trust yourself. And at that point you can't learn another thing; the whole learning process has just come to a screeching halt. Your interpretation of reality is radically going to veer off in another direction and very shortly you're idolatrous.

Our third point is that *knowing depends on trusting an authority*. If you doubt God then you trust something else. Autonomy means you don't trust God and so you have to start with yourself to decide where to place it. And so I place my trust in the universe; the universe controls all things, the universe brings forth life, the universe is sufficient, and once you've done that, that's beyond autonomy, that's idolatry.

Why is it that man must always transfer his allegiance? It's because of the way he's made. It's because of Eccl 3:11. God set eternity in our hearts, yet so that we should not find out what God has done from beginning to end. See man has built into him the desire to know. I want to know what's going on. But the Bible says you may want to know but if you start with your little finite self you're never going to know. I won't allow it. You have to come to Me. You have to trust Me. It's My universe and I reveal what I want to reveal to whom I want to reveal it. And if you're going to sit over there in autonomy and rebel against Me I'm not going to show you a thing. I'm going to darken your mind and you're going to veer off down a path of speculation and you're going to write textbooks about how the universe is so great and the universe brings forth life and the universe is 15 billion years old and all the rest of it. Its all idolatry, it's all futility. You couldn't be farther from knowledge.

This is what is so tortuous about autonomous rebellion; there is no neutrality on anything, everything, your whole way of thinking and your whole way of living will be completely wrong. And you say well how could the academic elite from all over the world be wrong. Imagine the shock when people realize that millions and millions of people were wrong. Can millions and millions of people be wrong? ...yes they can. Autonomy breeds darkness of mind, intellectual blindness and finally idolatry. Every one of God's attributes is somewhere moved over to the creation and that's what we'll be looking at more and more as we see how rebellion destroys the soul and re-creates God in its own image.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2009