

Hosea 6:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

Analysis

The exhortation 'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD' emphasizes progressive knowledge through devoted pursuit. The Hebrew 'follow on' (נִרְדָּפָה, nirdepah) means to pursue eagerly, chase after—active, intentional seeking rather than passive waiting. 'To know' (לָדַעַת, lada'at) signifies intimate, experiential knowledge, not merely intellectual information. This is covenant knowledge—personal relationship, not abstract theology. The verse continues with beautiful imagery: 'his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.' God's self-revelation is certain as sunrise—predictable, inevitable, life-giving. Morning (שָׁחַר, shachar) speaks of new beginnings, fresh mercies (Lamentations 3:22-23). The rain metaphor references Israel's agricultural dependence on seasonal rains—the 'former rain' (יֹרֶה, yoreh) in autumn softened ground for planting; the 'latter rain' (מַלְקוֹשׁ, malkosh) in spring brought crops to harvest. Both were essential for survival in Palestine's climate. God's presence is similarly essential and reliable for spiritual life and fruitfulness. This verse teaches that knowing God deepens through persistent pursuit—spiritual growth isn't passive but requires disciplined seeking. Jesus embodies this promise—the 'Sun of righteousness' rising 'with healing in his wings' (Malachi 4:2) and the one who pours out the Spirit like rain (Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:17-18). True Christianity isn't merely initial conversion but lifelong pursuit of deeper Christ-knowledge (Philippians 3:10).

Historical Context

This verse appears in a passage urging Israel's repentance (Hosea 6:1-3), yet God's response questions the genuineness of their contrition (6:4-6). The context is crucial: Israel's repentance was superficial, motivated by desire to escape judgment rather than grief over sin. Their 'goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew' (6:4)—quickly vanishing rather than permanent. This exposes the danger of shallow repentance focused on benefits rather than relationship. The promise that God comes 'as the rain' would have resonated powerfully in an agrarian society utterly dependent on rainfall. Unlike Baal, whom Canaanites believed controlled weather and fertility, Yahweh actually governs nature and provides for His people. The 'former and latter rain' pattern was unique to Israel's climate—two rainy seasons separated by dry months. This agricultural dependence created a natural parable for spiritual dependence on God. The historical tragedy is that Israel abandoned the true Provider for impotent idols. Within decades, Assyria would conquer and exile them (722 BC), demonstrating that forsaking God leads to destruction. Yet God's promise remains—those who genuinely seek Him will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does your pursuit of knowing God differ from merely seeking His benefits or avoiding His discipline?
2. What spiritual disciplines help you 'follow on to know the LORD' more deeply?
3. In what ways is God's faithfulness as certain and regular as sunrise in your experience?

Interlinear Text

לֵד עַת	נִדְבָּה ה	לֵד עַת	אֶת ה	יְהוָה
Then shall we know	if we follow	Then shall we know	H853	the LORD
H3045	H7291	H3045		H3068
כֶּשׂ חַר	נָכּוֹן	מֵצֵא ו	וְיָבֹא	כֶּן שָׁמַיִם
as the morning	is prepared	his going forth	and he shall come	unto us as the rain
H7837	H3559	H4161	H935	H1653
לְנוֹ	י וְהָא	אֶרֶץ:		
H0	as the latter	H3138	unto the earth	
	H4456		H776	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 72:6 (Parallel theme): He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

Hosea 14:5 (Parallel theme): I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

Jeremiah 24:7 (References Lord): And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

Revelation 22:16 (Parallel theme): I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

Zechariah 10:1 (References Lord): Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

Matthew 13:11 (Parallel theme): He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

2 Peter 1:19 (Parallel theme): We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Luke 1:78 (Parallel theme): Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

Malachi 4:2 (Parallel theme): But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Micah 4:2 (References Lord): And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

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