

This morning I call your attention to the first of the Minor Prophets. These 12 books are called minor prophets, not because they are in any sense inferior to what we call the major prophets, but simply because they are on the whole considerably shorter. But I am afraid that the very term "minor" causes some people to fail to get much into the great treasures that are in these books. Another reason may perhaps be that the very first of them is one of the hardest to understand, at least after its first three chapters.

Now this book of Hosea has three chapters at the beginning of it which tell about Hosea's experience with his unfaithful wife -- how he was true to her despite her unfaithfulness, how he followed her with his love and brought her back, and showed such great compassion and love for her, and it is used as an illustration to show God's love for His erring people. These three chapters then are fairly easy to understand, but when we get beyond them to the next eleven chapters of the book it is hard, at least as we look at it causally to see much of a steady run of thought, or to see many clear division points that would divide it into main large sections. Very likely the reason for that is that it is not a presentation of a discussion by Hosea of particular ideas but rather a summary of a number of his sermons, giving the outstanding statements that he made in them. Years ago I puzzled much over these last eleven chapters of Hosea, and then I came to see that there is one word that occurs and recurs in it perhaps more often than in any other similar section of the prophetic books. And I believe that this word is sort of a key word to the Book of Hosea. This word is the Heb. word YADAH which means --- we translate as "to know". The word to know, YADAH, occurs 17 times in this little book of Hosea and the noun derived from it DAATH which we translated as "knowledge" occurs 4 times. So we have 21 occurrences of this root "to know". Now this word YADAH in Heb. is a bit broader than our word "to know" in English, but our word "to know" in English is a good deal broader than most of us tend to realize. Do you know something? Well, you've heard of it. It's somewhere in the back of your mind. I know it but I can't think of it, it's there but has very little effect on me. Do you know that person? Yes.