

Hosea
Chapter Ten
11/15/20

David Levy, in his book, has titled this chapter, *The Wages of Sin*. He talks about sin being like a moral cancer, infecting everything it touches. He says that when God confronted Israel about its spiritual and moral malignancy, the nation refused to deal with it.

In chapter 10 Hosea traced the pattern of sin ultimately resulting in the nations demise.

- Let's pause just a moment and remember the prophets.
- The Hebrew prophets were spokesmen for God. They wrote the books of history and the books of prophecy in the Old Testament.
- The prophetic books of history are followed in the Hebrew Bible by the prophetic books of prediction.
- While the prophet preached to his own generation, he also predicted events in the future.
- The twofold aspect of the prophet's ministry included declaring God's Message and foretelling God's actions.
- Their messages were not always well received. We've seen in Hosea that they literally wanted to lure him in and kill him. They did not like the message so they did not like the messenger.
- Yet in spite of the hostility shown them they continued to be the voice of God to the people.

Now, let's read chapter 10 and I will be using the New King James Version instead of the Holeman.

Verse 1 – *Israel empties his vine; He brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit He has increased the altars; according to the bounty of his land They have embellished his sacred pillars.*

- Hosea speaks of Israel's sin in agricultural terms, describing the nation as an empty vine. KJV.
- The Holeman says, lush vine; and the NJK says empties his vine. So, which is it, an empty vine or a full lush vine?
- Well, the word empty here has a couple of definitions. It can mean *luxuriant* which translates to "to be poured out" or "spread abroad"
- Dr. McGee says that during this time Israel was still being good to them, although he was warning them of coming judgement.
- So, the phrase actually means the vines were overflowing with abundance and that the vine was emptying itself. The fruit is literally falling off the vine.
- However, the Israelites attributed their prosperity to Baal rather than to Jehovah, and the more they prospered the more extensive and elaborate became the idols they made.

Verse 2 – *Their heart is divided; Now they are held guilty. He will break down their altars; He will ruin their sacred pillars.*

- Hosea called Israel double-minded. David Levy says the word divided means “smooth”, “tricky”, “treacherous”, “slippery”, “deceitful”, “unreliable speech”.
- He says that Israel’s approach to God was hypocritical, divided, and deceitful. The Israelites were guilty of trying to worship both God and Baal.
- Dr. McGee adds to that by saying many of them went down to Jerusalem for the feast days as they had done in former years and joined in the worship of God.
- However, they would come right back to the golden calves that had been set up, and there they worshiped Baal.
- Now we know that the reason the two golden calves were set up originally was to eliminate that very thing. Jeroboam did not want them to return to Jerusalem for feasts, he feared they would remain. Therefore, he set up one golden calf at each end of the Northern kingdom. So that no matter where you lived there was a golden calf close enough to visit.
- So, whether they returned to Jerusalem or not the verse says their hearts were divided and devious.

Verse 3 – *For now they say, “We have no king, because we did not fear the LORD. And as for a king, what would he do for us?”*

- The Israelites realized no one could deliver them. *We have no king because we did not fear the LORD.* They knew that even if they had a king it would not help. The Assyrian invasion destroyed Israel’s political power and removed its king.
- Too late, the Israelites realized that their lack of faithfulness and reverence to God caused Him to pour out judgement upon them.

Verse 4 – *They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant. Thus, judgement springs up like hemlock in the furrow of the field.*

- Their lack of faithfulness to God spilled over to a lack of regard for individual rights.
- The Israelites and their kings made legal agreements with no intention of honoring them. *They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant in the furrows of the field.*
- Their duplicity in regulating citizens right produced a breakdown in justice.
- Lawsuits were springing up in plenty, like hemlock (a poisonous herb) that grows in a fallow or idle field.
- Israel knew that judgement was imminent and feared the loss of its calf idol.

Verse 5-6 – ⁵ *The inhabitants of Samaria fear because of the calf of Beth Aven. For its people mourn for it, and its priests shriek for it. Because its glory has departed from it.* ⁶ *The idol also shall be carried to Assyria as a present for King Jareb. Ephraim shall receive shame and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.*

- Dr. McGee says, Beth Aven is a term of ridicule for Bethel, where one of the golden Calves was set up. He says the two cities (Bethel and Samaria) were jealous over who had the best calf.
- David Levy reminds us that it was customary for a conquering army to carry off the gods of its defeated foe. In this way they demonstrated their strength over the enemy. There is no record of an Assyrian King named Jareb. The phrase is a figure of speech and means “warrior king”

- Israel was disgraced and put to shame because it trusted in idols that were powerless to protect it in time of war.
- The conquerors showed no mercy and stripped the land of everything.

Verse 7-8- ⁷ *As for Samaria, her king is cut off like a twig on the water.* ⁸ *also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars; they shall say to the mountains, cover us! And to the hills, fall on us!*

- Samaria's King was swiftly carried away like a splinter of wood in the ocean.
- Everything was destroyed or removed. Idols, high places and the wicked monarch were removed or destroyed. Thorns and thistles grew up covering the site where the shrines and altars once stood.
- When Israel entered Canaan, they were instructed to destroy Idolatrous sites of worship. But Israel failed to obey God's command. So, God used a foreign army to destroy Idolatry in Canaan.
- In despair and anguish the Israelites cried for the mountains and hills to cover them. They preferred death to captivity in Assyria but this time God did not answer their cry for help.

Verse 9 – *O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah; there they stood. The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.*

- Hosea brings up Gibeah again; remember the story? In the days of the judges, Israel almost destroyed the entire tribe of Benjamin for sheltering the wicked men of Gibeah who brutally raped a Levite's concubine. (Judges 20:1-8).
- Israel experienced the same fate when the Assyrians invaded the country.

Verse 10 – *When it is My desire, I will chasten them. Peoples shall be gathered against them when I bind them for their two transgressions.*

- God said, at His discretion, at His desire, He will punish them.
- Th Holeman says for their *two crimes*. The King James says *in their two furrows*. And the NKJ says, *for their two transgressions*.
- So, what are the two crimes or transgressions or the two furrows?
- As usual, several ideas are presented.
- Some believe it refers to Judah and Israel yoked together in evil (like plowing oxen) before God's eyes.
- Others interpret it to mean Israel is yoked to the two golden calves in Dan and Bethel.
- Still others believe the phrase refers to Israel's former sin at Gibeah and the priest's idolatry.
- The King James Study Bible says the two sins are rejection of God both as God and as King. That has a very familiar ring to it. The kingdoms only started because the people wanted a king like all the other nations around them. When Samuel would have rebuked them, God said they have rejected me. Later when they came into the land God had promised them, they did not obey his commands, took on the pagan ways of the former inhabitants of the land and now look where they are; being driven into captivity in a foreign land. So, yes, they rejected Him as God and as King.
- Ephraim (Israel) deprived of its calf idol, is compared to a heifer.

Verse 11 – *Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh grain; but I harnessed her fair neck, I will make Ephraim pull a plow. Judah shall plow; Jacob shall break his clods.*

- A young cow was trained to do easy work and allowed to be unmuzzled, so she could eat while threshing grain. In like manner, Israel lived in a comfortable land of plenty, able to indulge itself because of the prosperity God provided.
- Ephraim, however, failed to appreciate its situation under God's covenant relationship and became yoked to immorality and idolatry.
- Therefore, God would place Israel under a harsh yoke that would chafe its fair neck.
- Both Israel and Judah would be yoked to their enemies and forced to perform harsh labor.
- Plowing and harrowing were backbreaking tasks in a land like Israel with rocky, thin soil.
- This prophecy was fulfilled when the Assyrians destroyed Israel (NK) in 722 BC and Babylon took Judah in 586 BC.
- Although destruction hung over Israel, God still announced that judgement could be averted. Look at verse 12.

Verse 12 – *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.*

- Fallow ground is land that has been plowed but left unseeded.
- During the growing season, it becomes hard and full of weeds.
- If Israel broke up the fallow ground of its hard heart, it would receive loving kindness and mercy from God.
- Hosea is saying that if they would sow in righteousness, they would reap in mercy.
- We cannot live by the devil's standards and expect to reap reward from God!
- Hosea reminds Israel of all the evil it had plowed.

Verse 13 – *You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity, you have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men.*

- But Hosea's reminder of Israel's sin did not bring conviction nor did his call to repentance. Israel turned a deaf ear to the prophet.
- As a result of Israel's failure to respond to the prophet's warnings, he had no choice but to pronounce judgement.

Verse 14 – *Therefore tumult shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be plundered as Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle; a mother dashed in pieces upon her children.*

- In the three-year siege before the Assyrians captured the Northern Kingdom, people could hear the noise of war and confusion.
- The inhumane cruelty of the Assyrian army would be unleashed, and no one would be spared.
- Mothers would bend over their children to protect them, but both would be unmercifully slaughtered.
- Israel's destruction is compared to Shalman's devastation of Beth Arbel. Most scholars believe that Shalman is a shorter form of Shalmaneser, the name of a number of kings of Assyria.

- Shalmaneser V, son of Tiglath Pileser 111, is the king who attacked Israel in 725 BC and make King Hoshea of Israel a vassal.
- That kicked off the three-year siege and in 722 BC, and it was all over. (Look at 2 Kings 17:7-18) as a reminder of the sins of the Northern Kingdom.
- Beth Arbel was probably a city in Galilee that was cruelly destroyed by Shalmaneser.

Verse 15 – *thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great wickedness at dawn the king of Israel shall be cut off utterly.*

- The Assyrians came, and overnight Israel was being transported to Assyria and a life of slavery.
- Bethel, the center of all wickedness, representing every city in Israel, would be destroyed like Beth Arbel.
- When the soldiers assembled for battle, at dawn, King Hoshea would be cut off thus ending the Kingship within Israel.
- Israel's misplaced confidence in its military, rather than in God's power, was the nations downfall.
- God's chastisement of Israel is an example and warning to each nation in every generation that forgets God.