

HOSEA

Chapter Nine

10/18/20

Chapter eight ended with the reminder of Moses' prophecy that If Israel forgot God, it would perish. The warning included Judah as well. The final reminder was to the church. *We also reap what we sow and sometimes we reap more than we sow.*

Read chapter Nine

Opening notes: David Levy speaks of one of the greatest paintings of all time. Michelangelo's *The Last Judgement*. This magnificent painting adorns the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel and reflects the despair of people who are marked for judgement.

David Levy points out that while some elements of the painting are unbiblical, its message reminds us that God's judgement on those who reject His saving grace is inescapable.

What's the significance? When the 16th century painting was unveiled, storms of conviction swept through the people who viewed it for the first time.

The picture really was worth a thousand words and it brought people to their knees before God to seek forgiveness of their sin.

And that's exactly what Hosea was trying to do. He tried to vividly depict Israel's sinful condition. But unlike the people who saw *The Last Judgement*, the Israelites neither repented nor trembled at the message. In their arrogance, they seemed oblivious to Hosea's warnings. Israel's degrading practices resulted in the withdrawal of God's presence and the announcement of the nation's demise.

Verse 1 – *Israel, do not rejoice jubilantly as the nations do, for you have acted promiscuously, leaving your God. You have loved the wages of a prostitute on every grain threshing floor.*

- It was customary and right for people to rejoice at harvest time. In days of old the people would shout for joy for "God had Blessed", "The abundance was full" "they would survive the winter" "all is well and praise the Lord" But that was in the days of old; long gone now. Now they gave their praise to false gods and as a result Israel was commanded not to rejoice, because she attributed the abundance, she experienced on the corn floor or threshing floor to the idols she worshipped, instead of God who sent it. (a corn floor or a threshing floor is a place where the harvest grain was processed)
- Pagan harvest festivals were accompanied by shameful fertility acts. Hosea sternly reprimanded Israel for making the Feast of Tabernacles Pagan. The verse says, *Do not rejoice O Israel...for you have played the harlot.*
- During the Feast of Tabernacles, Israel attributed its plentiful harvest not to God but to Baal and participated in all that entails.
- Prostitutes frequented threshing floors during harvest times to sell their "wares" and we know what their "wares" were. The men who guarded the grain at night had company.
- Because of Israel's immorality and idolatry God would withhold future harvests as well.

Verse 2 – *Threshing floor and wine vat will not sustain them, and the new wine will fail them.*

- This judgment is a direct fulfillment of Moses' prophecy of Duet 28 that we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Verse 3 – *They will not stay in the land of the LORD. Instead, Ephraim will return to Egypt, and they will eat unclean food in Assyria.*

- As we said last week, Israel will not literally return to Egypt. The word is being used to remind them of conditions of exile, bondage, slavery, oppression, toil and sorrow.
- They would be forced to eat unclean things. They had dedicated their harvest to Baal; therefore, God would take away their Kosher, sanctified food and make them eat food that had been offered to Idols which made it unclean in God's eyes.
- They would dwell in the defiled country of Assyria without a sanctuary, sacrifice or sanctified food.

Verse 4 – *They will not pour out their wine offerings to the LORD, and their sacrifices will not please Him. Their food will be like the bread of mourners; all who eat it become defiled. For their bread will be for their appetites alone; it will not enter the house of the LORD.*

- While they were in captivity to Assyria all their means of worship according to Levitical law would be cut off.
- The wine offerings would cease and should they even try to offer sacrifices in Assyria, such sacrifices would be like *the bread of mourners to them; all who eat it shall be defiled*. Everything mourners touched became unclean because they had touched a dead body (Num 19). Therefore, mourner's bread was unclean and unfit for sacrifice. Likewise, anyone who ate the bread was also unclean or polluted and unfit for worship. The verse says...*for their bread will be for their appetite lone; it will not enter the house of the LORD*. Hosea sees a time when Israel will long to sacrifice to the LORD but will no longer be able to.

Verse 5 – *What will you do on festival day, on the day of the LORD'S feast?*

- Hosea asks a rhetorical question concerning its ability to celebrate the feast while in exile.
- Israel's religious calendar ceased to have significance in Assyria who would of course have their own calendar and feast days. In exile they would be unable to worship. Think how they must have felt when Israel's Feast days came and went without worship, sacrifice or celebration.
- Eventually Israel's spiritual life diminished altogether.

Verse 6 – *For even if they flee from devastation, Egypt will gather them, and Memphis will bury them. Thistles will take possession of their precious silver; thorns will invade their tents.*

- Hosea envisioned the great destruction that was soon to fall on Israel. The prophet knew that those who escaped death and captivity during the Assyrian siege would flee to Egypt for refuge.
- Remember we read last week or so that they were under siege for three years by King Tiglath-Pileser. This ended the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC.
- So, verse 6 is referring to anyone who managed to escape Israel during that three-year siege and fled to Egypt for refuge; Hosea said, *Egypt shall gather them up; Memphis shall bury them*.
- That is to say, despite their escape to Egypt, they would still experience death and be buried in Memphis.

- Memphis Egypt, not Tennessee, was the ancient capital of Egypt on the western bank of the Nile, south of old Cairo, where Egypt buried its kings.
- It was, in fact, in Memphis where the Egyptians buried the Israelites when they died.
- Hosea prophesied that any who returned to the land after the siege would only find wasted cities. Those who escaped to Egypt and then returned after the Israelites were taken captive found the remnants of their homes covered in thistles and thorns.
- All their precious possessions of silver (including their idols) were confiscated by the enemy, leaving their cities, homes and places of worship overgrown with weeds, thorns and thistles.

Verse 7 – *The days of punishment have come; the days of retribution have come. Let Israel recognize it! The prophet is a fool, and the inspired man is insane, because of the magnitude of your guilt and hostility.*

- *The prophet is a fool; the spiritual man is insane.* What strong words; what do they mean?
- Some believe the prophecy expresses the people’s response to Hosea and his ministry.
- Others believe it is Hosea’s condemnation of Israel’s false prophets.
- Commentators present strong arguments for both interpretations.
- The context, however, would indicate that it is Hosea’s prophecy against the false prophets of Israel.
- The word “fool” means “insane”, and the word “spiritual” can be interpreted as “wind”.
- So, in essence what he is saying is that the words of the false prophet lack substance and are like the wind which blows away and is gone. Such a one is mad or insane.
- The people harbored extreme bitterness toward Hosea for denouncing their sins and their prophets. Their bitterness stirred them to hostility and to hold grudges against Hosea and God.

Verse 8 – *Ephraim’s watchman is with my God. The prophet encounters a fowler’s snare on all his ways. Hostility is in the house of his God!*

- In contrast to Israel’s false prophets, Hosea said, *the watchman of Ephraim is with my God.* Some believe Ephraim is being identified as God’s watchman but the watchman is Hosea, not Ephraim.
- Hosea claimed to be the watchman with God, standing on the watchtower and faithfully predicting the nations coming judgement.
- But, the people said, *...the prophet is a fowler’s snare in all his ways-enmity in the house of his God.* What this is saying is that Israel, called the *House of God*, treated Hosea like a wild beast and continually set a trap in hopes of killing him. A fowler is a person who traps birds.

Verse 9 – *They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their guilt; He will punish their sins.*

- God compared Ephraim's sin to the brutal gang rape and murder of a Levite's concubine at Gibeah. The story is in Joshua chapter 19.
- The sin was considered the worst act committed since Israel left Egypt (Josh. 19:30).
- God did not fail to bring judgement then; nor will He forget now.
- Hosea shows us a quick flash-back. God recalls Israel's early history and reflects on the sadness He felt over what the Israelites had become.

Ver 10 – *I discovered Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your fathers like the first fruit of the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal-Peor, consecrated themselves to shame and became detestable like the thing they loved.*

- God compared His joy over Israel to that of a weary traveler who finds grapes growing in the desert; highly unlikely.
- Another metaphor compares the fathers of the nation to the first ripened figs' the sweetest of all the fruit.
- These metaphors express God's delight over Israel and His intent to do great things through the nation and for the nation.
- But Israel abused its privileged relationship with God and pursued shameful practices of Idolatry. The story of Baal-Peor occurs in Numbers 25:1-3. And basically, what happened was that the women of Moab lured the men of Israel into the groves where they participated in the Pagan worship and actually ate meat that was sacrificed to idols. God calls that abomination.
- Israel in their blind stubbornness believed that by practicing fertility rites as the pagans did, they would be guaranteed many children and abundant crops. But God said...

Verse 11-12 – ¹¹ *Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird: no birth, no gestation, no conception.* ¹² *Even if they raise children, I will bereave them of each one. Yes, woe to them when I depart from them!*

- The exact opposite of what they hoped for is that they would lose all their prosperity and become barren and sterile as quickly as a bird takes flight.
- Their vibrant, fruitful land would become desolate.
- Their women would conceive but their children would die through miscarriages, accidents and disease.

Verse 13 – *I have seen Ephraim like Tyre, planted in a meadow, so Ephraim will bring out his children to the executioner.*

- Ephraim's fate is compared to that of Tyre. A city that God judged and punished for their treatment of Israel in their time of need. A very pagan city.
- God had not yet judged Tyre, and at that time it was a great commercial center. Its prosperity was like a fever, and it had caught on in the Northern Kingdom which also became a commercial center. There was a false prosperity in the land and the people were deceived by it.

- You see, God had wanted Israel to become prosperous like the city of Tyre, but like Tyre, immorality and idolatry became its downfall.
- God would destroy it as He did Tyre, and Israel's children would be murdered during the Assyrian invasion.
- Knowing judgement was coming, Hosea prayed that God would withhold children from Israel. Look at verse 14.

Verse 14 – *Give them, LORD-What should You give? Give them a womb that miscarries and breasts that are dry!*

- Why would Hosea pray such a thing? Because he knew that hard times were ahead for the children of Israel. It would be a terrible time to try to raise children; in a strange land among strange people. Also, Hosea knew the children would grow up pagan so he prayed that God would shut up their wombs and bring no babies. This God did.
- God's tone toward Israel now turns angry.

Verse 15 – *All their evil appears at Gilgal, for there I came to hate them. I will drive them from My house because of their evil, wicked actions. I will no longer love them; all their leaders are rebellious.*

- In other words, God says to them, that because of their evil actions at Gilgal he judged and punished them even though He loved them. They should have taken that as a warning that their actions would bring about judgement and when that judgement falls on them, they will come to the conclusion that He does not love them.
- In anger God removed His protective care from the nation and drove it from His house (the land of Israel).
- There was no prince (leader) to guide the nation back to God; the leaders had all rebelled against Him.

Verse 16 – *Ephraim is blighted; their roots are withered; they cannot bear fruit. Even if they bear children, I will kill the precious offspring of their wombs.*

- Though Ephraim had a beautiful geographical situation, and experienced the abundant blessing of God, yet bareness of land and womb as well as near extinction, awaited them.
- God's judgement was to come not only upon the fruit of the ground, but also on the birth of children.

Verse 17 – *My god will reject them because they have not listened to Him; they will become wanderers among the nations.*

- God would cast them out of the land for a season. A time that we refer to as the Diaspora. Today that prophecy is 2700 years old, and it ends by saying they will be wonderers among the nations.
- We recently finished a year long study about the wondering Jew.

- It explains why the Jewish people are scattered around the globe and why they struggle to return to the land that rightfully belongs to them.
- God did not take the land away from them but He took them away from the land.
- What a great price this nation has paid for its infidelity.

Next week chapter 10.