

**UNIT 8 H O S E A LESSON 7****HOSEA CHAPTERS 8 - 10.**

These two chapters are concerned with the inevitable judgment which must come to Israel for her national idolatry and covenant breaking. This judgment will be expressed in warfare and finally exile.

Hosea 8: 1-3.

In ancient times the trumpet blast was a sound of warning given by command of one of high authority. (cf. 2 Sam. 2:28; 18:16; 20:22). In verse 1 the trumpet sounds a clear note of warning to Israel and does so at the command of the highest authority, Yahweh himself.

Israel's basic sin has been the breaking of the covenant, that special bond which had existed between her and God since the wilderness (Ex. 10:5-6; 24:7-8). The primary breach of the covenant consisted in the substitution of the Canaanite religion for that of Yahweh.

The idea of the covenant relationship dominates both Old and New Testament thinking. Israel's rejection of the covenant forces God to act in judgment expressed in the approach of an invading army (described as a vulture about to swoop; v 1). Israel's pathetic attempt to renew her relationship with God (verse 2) is useless since the lives of the people (verse 3) reveal the shallowness of their professed knowledge of God.

The prophet Hosea next points out four areas of Israel's life in which she has proven false to Yahweh, thereby making His judgment certain. They are: false governments, gods, allies and altars.

1. False Governments (Hosea 8:4)

The setting up of kings as a substitute for God's rule may go back as far as the early establishment of the monarchy (1 Sam 8:4-7). To say the least, this initial arrangement was not pleasing to God.

Verse 4 refers to the rapid changes in Israel's ruling houses. In 200 years nineteen kings, representing nine separate dynasties ruled. In the final 25 years (when Hosea was preaching) six kings from five separate dynasties ruled and four of the six were murdered by their successors.

2. False gods (Hosea 8:5-7)

The references to the calf of Samaria in verses 5 and 6 is no doubt a reflection of the bull pedestals erected by Jeroboam I about 920 BC at Bethel and Dan (I Kings 12:25-33). Though originally these might not have been intended as objects of worship they became so in later Israelite practice and are continually condemned throughout the book of Kings. No doubt there were other idols used in Canaanite worship in Samaria also. For Old Testament thinking about idols read Isaiah 40:18-20; 41; 47:1-2, 5-7. Paul views idolatry as the basic sin of the pagan world which led to every other form of sin. (Romans 1:20-32).



"Sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind". This proverbial saying is quoted to remind the Israelites that the judgment on them is the result of their own actions. In worshipping the calf and courting other nations, Israel has sown that which is "illusivive and elusive" (wind) and so shall reap a harvest of destruction (whirlwind).

The second part of verse 7 is difficult. Following NRSV it means the grain standing in Israel's fields at the moment will not reach maturity but even if it did Israel would not enjoy it, for foreigners would devour it. In fact, already other nations have gobbled up Israel.

3. **False Allies (Hosea 8:8-10)**

Israel's appeals to the nations will prove futile. Already she is being "swallowed up" among the nations. Everything distinctive in her way of life is gone. Her standing among them is no better than cheap useless pottery (verse 8). Her foreign alliances have robbed her of independence (verses 9 and 10) and soon she will lose all independence through being taken into exile (verse 10).

4. **False Altars (Hosea 8:11-14)**

Even those things designed originally to bring Israel nearer to God have the opposite effect. Altars, the symbol of devotion to God, have become the cause of sin either because they have been devoted to pagan sacrifice or to insincere worship (verse 11). The true meaning of God's laws has been completely lost (verse 12). The people had shared their sacrificial meals and other forms of worship and had thoroughly enjoyed themselves but the enjoyment had stopped there. Thus Hosea condemns priest and people for forgetting Yahweh and his moral requirements while they were zealously attending to every detail of their sacrificial worship. God's response was quite different (verse 13).

God will punish Israel for this false worship. They will return to Egypt (verse 13) in the sense of a return to bondage. All the effort they have put into erection of elaborate buildings and fortifications will be wasted for these will be destroyed (verse 16). They ought to have remembered their Maker and trusted in Him.

Hosea 9:1 - 6.

This is apparently part of a sermon preached at some great harvest festival occasion. The prophet's message is a warning that people ought to refrain from the usual expressions of joy at such a festival because their pagan worship and immorality have brought God's judgment and their rejoicing will be turned to mourning. Verses 1 & 2 may refer to immorality and drunkenness at the festivals or may be metaphorical descriptions of the apostasy of the people and the failure of their new ways to satisfy them. Verses 3-6 are developments of the thought of 8:13 where Egypt represents bondage, the actual exile being in Assyria.

Verses 4 and 5 emphasise the idea first expressed in 3:4 that in exile there will be no opportunity for festivals or sacrifice. Instead they will eat mourners' bread, that is food that is unclean and has not



been blessed by involvement in sacrifice. Myers comments on verse 4 that "those who sought material benefits will have their desires satisfied, only to discover that man cannot live by bread alone". (Deut. 8:3, Matt. 4:4).

Hosea 9:7-9.

The reaction of the people to Hosea's warning of judgment is to declare him to be a fool and a madman but despite the opposition he encounters, even in the temple (verse 8), he reiterates his warning of coming judgment. The reference to Gibeah in verse 9 is an accusation that the disgraceful conduct of the Benjamites in the story of Judges 19 is typical of the standards existing in Israel in the days in which he was preaching.

Hosea 9:10-17.

When God found Israel at first He was as delighted as a hungry traveller who discovers a well-laden grape vine in a desert oasis or a farmer who finds the first fig of the season on his trees. But even in the wilderness Israel had started to worship a Moabite version of the Baal cult (the story is told in Numbers 25:1-5). They have since continued in the worship of Baal until they have become as shameful as the thing they worship. (The text uses the word 'boset', shame, instead of the hated name of Baal, thereby showing how bad the people's apostasy from Yahweh was). The worst punishment God can bring on them is the extinction of the nation in the loss of country, home and family (verses 11-14). The glory of the Easterner was the number of his children, and this was especially significant in the light of the sexual fertility rites of Baal worship.

Gilgal, condemned elsewhere (Amos 4:4; 5:5; Hosea 4:15; 12:11), is chosen as a shrine representative of all forms of evil. This whole passage repeatedly plays on the meaning of Ephraim as 'fruitful' and this is strongly brought out in verse 16. Israel is condemned again to a life of exile (verses 15 and 17).

QUESTION 1:

From Hosea's words in this lesson and also Is. 40:18-20 and Romans 1:20-32, why does God detest idol worship?

QUESTION 2:

What does the proverb in Hosea 8:7a mean? What is the connection for Christians in Romans 6:23?

QUESTION 3:

Why is God unhappy with the people's worship in 8:13?

Consider the possibility of 'enjoying' worship, prayer or preaching but not being brought nearer to God in our participation. Is it true to say that all forms of religious expression, including personal self-denial, are in danger of being for the sake of the individual and not God? (Read Isaiah 58:1-9)



QUESTION 4:

In Hosea 9:9 Gibeah is referred to. What dreadful thing happened here? (Summarize briefly Judges 19).

QUESTION 5:

Why did God's delight in Israel cease at Peor (9:10)? Refer to Numbers 25:1-5.

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:

With reference to the proverb in Hosea 8:7a to what extent does the Christian idea of forgiveness cancel out the law of inevitable cause and effect. e.g., Does forgiveness cancel out the effect of our past sins on other people?