

**UNIT 8 H O S E A LESSON 8****HOSEA CHAPTER 10.****Hosea 10:1-8**

The dominating thought of this section is that the sin of trusting anyone or anything but Yahweh is punished by the sheer failure of that which is trusted. So verses 1 and 2 refer to this giving of credit to the Baals for the prosperity of the country. But the emptiness of this worship will be shown when the symbols of it, the altars and the pillars, are broken down.

Israel's sin is centred in the charge, "Their heart is false" (v.2). For the Hebrews the "heart" was not so much the centre of emotions as the seat of will and intellect, and the centre of volitional decisions. Israel's problem then was one of the will, of voluntary decision and commitment. Who has Israel's devotion, Yahweh or Baal? Because of her divided or false heart, now "they must suffer their sins", part of which punishment will be the destruction of altars and pillars so dear to them.

Verses 3 and 4 are concerned with the failure of the self-appointed monarchs to justify the people's trust. They are characterised by 'mere words' and 'empty oaths'. Jeroboam's calf at Bethel is equally a failure (verses 5 and 6) and will bring tragedy, shame and finally exile to its people and priests alike. The inhabitants of Samaria tremble for their golden calf. Instead of saving them, the calf becomes a source of anxiety to them - how can they save it? In the face of impending judgment people and priests mourn for its safety (and theirs). What can be so humiliating to a people as to have the god in whom they trust and whom they worship carried away captive? This will now happen to Israel. The god to which she brought offerings and rich gifts as tribute will in turn be offered as tribute to a greater and more powerful god, the king of Assyria (v.6). The calf at Beth-aven (Bethel) is unable to save itself. How can it save its worshippers? Israel will learn at last the futility and shame of setting up a dumb idol as protector of the nation.

The false kings (verse 7) and the false worship (verse 8) face destruction and those who trust in them will be forced to such a point of desperation that in the end they will seek escape in their own destruction.

Hosea 10:9 - 15.

Israel has never outgrown the kind of sin perpetrated at Gibeah (Judges 19) and referred to in the last lesson. However some scholars find in this reference to Gibeah the suggestion that Israel's present predicament actually originated with the initiation of kingship under Saul. Gibeah was Saul's place of residence during his kingship (see 1 Sam. 10:26; 11:14). In this view, kingship on Israel's part was an effort to guarantee her future apart from God. As such its establishment was evidence of a lack of faith in the sole leadership of Yahweh.

Double or very great sin like this cannot go unpunished and the punishment will come as God gathers the nations to fight against Israel. (Verses 9 & 10).

The picture changes in verse 11. God's love for Israel has been expressed in the past in giving her an easy task in life. She has been like a heifer required only to walk round and round the threshing floor and able to eat as much as she liked. But now she must learn the more demanding tasks of ploughing



and harrowing and must feel the harshness of the yoke, that is, she must be under someone's domination and direction. (Compare this with the picture in the Garden of Eden, where the ease, good fellowship and freedom from harsh commands are followed by the unremitting toil outside the garden, the struggle of birth and life, and the estrangement between God and man.)

Verse 12, coming as it does between verses 11 and 13 is like "a ray of sunlight through a cloudy sky". Verse 11 describes the heavy yoke that Israel's sin has brought upon her, while verse 13 amplifies and elaborates the tragic results of the nations continued disobedience. In between there is found a word of hope and comfort, a warm appeal to return to Yahweh before it is too late.

Verse 12 is a call to repentance but it is repentance at the cost of effort. It requires breaking up ground long left fallow and the sowing of new qualities of righteousness and covenant loyalty. Previous expressions of repentance (6:1-3) have been too shallow. Only a costly change of character can result in God's blessing. By contrast with the righteousness Israel needs to sow she has sown iniquity and must therefore reap the fruits of her seed (verse 13). She has chosen to put her trust in the weapons of war and will reap warfare and destruction (verses 13 and 14). (A grim warning to the dominant policy of the nations of today, including Australia). Prepare for war and trust in the power of your armies to ensure your security and the inevitable result will be the outbreak of war.

The reference to Shalman in verse 14 is most probably Shalmaneser V who besieged Samaria in 722 BC but the exact incident referred to here is difficult to identify. The Assyrians had a reputation for cruelty of which they boasted in their own inscriptions and no doubt the incident was well known to Hosea's hearers. The warning is clear enough. The Assyrians will destroy Israel and kill the king.

These chapters have included a series of short, somewhat disjointed sermons with the recurring theme of the inevitability of divine judgment as their unifying bond. Perhaps the highlight of what is necessarily grim reading would be found in 10:11 - 12 with its promise that God will "train righteousness on the truly penitent." (NRSV)

QUESTION 1:

How powerful was the Israelite's god in Hosea 10:5,6? Why? What does Isaiah 46:1-4 say about our God?

QUESTION 2:

What two things did the people wrongfully put their trust in in Hosea 10:7 and 8? Are we Australians nationally putting our trust in the wrong things? How may this also be true of the individual Christian and non-Christian?

QUESTION 3:

What is a possible second meaning of the "sin at Gibeah". (Hosea 10:9)?

QUESTION 4:

What does Hosea 10:11 mean and what connection does it have with Deut. 25:4?



QUESTION 5:

Why is Hosea 10:12 called "a ray of sunlight"? What commitment is required of the people?

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:

In what did Israel choose to put her trust in Hosea 10:13 and 14? What was the result?

Is this happening in our world and our nation today? Can you suggest any answer to this very real problem for the future of our nation and our world?