

Hosea 13 - Relentless Judgment on Israel; Death of a Nation

II. Wayward nation and faithful God (Hosea 4:1—14:9)

- (3) Israel's restoration due to God's faithfulness (Hosea 11:1—14:9)
 - (B) Israel's unfaithfulness and resulting discipline (Hosea 11:12—13:16)
 - (b) Present unfaithfulness and discipline (13:1-16)

Hosea 13

(b) Present unfaithfulness and discipline (13:1-16)

1 When **Ephraim** spoke, *there was trembling*. He exalted himself in Israel, But through Baal he incurred guilt and died.

1 When Ephraim spoke, *there was trembling*. He exalted himself in Israel, But through Baal he did wrong and died.

1 "When the tribe of Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; and it was exalted within Israel. But when they offended God by Baal, they died,

1 When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.

— "...Ephraim" - when members of the tribe of Ephraim spoke, the other Israelites trembled because they looked to Ephraim for leadership (Cf. Judges 8:1-3; 12:1-6)

— Jacob prophesied that Ephraim would lead (Gen 48:13-20); the first king of the northern kingdom (Jeroboam I) came from the tribe of Ephraim (1 Kings 11:26; 12:25)

— Ephraim was also the leaders in Baal worship; thus they were as good as dead since God would judge idolaters

2 And now they sin more and more, And make for themselves cast metal images, Idols **skillfully made** from their silver, All of them the work of craftsmen. They say of them, "Let the people who sacrifice **kiss the calves!**"

2 And now they sin more and more, And make for themselves molten images, Idols skillfully made from their silver, All of them the work of craftsmen. They say of them, "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!"

2 but now they are sinning more and more, crafting idols from melted silver. Their idols are made with the most exacting skill, all of it the work of craftsmen. People say about them, 'They offer human sacrifice, and kiss calf-shaped idols.'

2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of

them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

- The Ephraimites, and the other Israelites, had continued to sin more and more by making molten images and carved idols of silver (Cf. Ex 20:4-5; 34:17; Deut 5:8-9)
- "...skillfully made" - the idolaters took great pains to make beautiful idols by employing skilled craftsmen to construct them
- "...kiss the calves" - to pay homage to the idols (Cf. Ps 2:12)
- As the Ephraimites (and the other Israelites they represent here) multiplied their idols and images, they added to their guilt
- They debased themselves even further by kissing the calf-idols in conjunction with their many sacrificial rites (1 Kings 19:18; Cf. "calf-idol" in 8:4-5; 10:5)

3 Therefore they will be like the morning cloud And like dew which soon disappears, Like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor, And like smoke from a chimney.

3 Therefore they will be like the morning cloud And like dew which soon disappears, Like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor And like smoke from a chimney.

3 Therefore they will be like morning clouds, like early morning dew that evaporates, like chaff blown away from the threshing floor, or like smoke from a chimney."

3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

- Because they were so committed to idolatry, they would soon vanish from their land, like fog or dew in the morning or smoke from a chimney

— Judgment would come swiftly and surely...

The Seven Principle Steps in Israel's Downfall

- (1) Lack of knowledge (4:6)
- (2) Pride (5:5)
- (3) Instability (6:4)
- (4) Worldliness (7:8)
- (5) Corruption (9:9)
- (6) Backsliding (11:7)
- (7) Idolatry (13:2)

The Perversity of Israel's Idolatry

4 Yet I have been the LORD your God Since the land of Egypt; And you were not to know any god except Me, For there is no savior besides Me.

4 Yet I have been the LORD your God Since the land of Egypt; And you were not to know any god except Me, For there is no savior besides Me.

4 "I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt, and you have known no god except for me, because except for me there is no savior.

4 Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.

- Yahweh had been Israel's God since the Israelites had lived in Egypt

— They grew to become a nation in Egypt; before that, they were just a large family (Gen 46:3)

- *Yahweh* had commanded the Israelites not to acknowledge any other gods besides Himself, because He was the only God who could save them (Cf. Deut 11:28; 32:17; Jer 9:2; 31:34)

— For them, becoming idolaters would only be frustrating and futile. To abandon the only Savior is to doom oneself to no salvation.

5 I cared for you in the wilderness, In the land of drought.

5 I cared for you in the wilderness, In the land of drought.

5 I took care of you in the wilderness, in a waterless land.

5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

- Once more the LORD reminded Israel of His gracious deeds at the beginning of their history (Cf. 12:9a,10,12-13)

— He led them from Egypt (Cf. 11:1; 12:9,13); cared for ("knew") them in the wilderness, and allowed them to feed in the Promised Land (v6)

6 As *they had* their pasture, they became satisfied, *And as they became satisfied*, their heart became proud; Therefore they forgot Me.

6 As *they had* their pasture, they became satisfied, And being satisfied, their heart became proud; Therefore they forgot Me.

6 As their pastures flourished, all their desires were met. As they were satiated, they became arrogant and therefore ignored me.

6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.

- When the Israelites entered the Promised Land and began to enjoy rich pastures, they soon became self-satisfied and proud, and forgot the Lord

— Prosperity is often a greater temptation to depart from conscious dependance upon God than adversity

7 So I will be like a lion to them; Like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside.

7 So I will be like a lion to them; Like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside.

7 "So I will be like a lion to them. Like a leopard I will stalk them along the road.

7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them:

- Because of their behavior, the Lord would be an enemy to them, like a lion or leopard laying in wait to attack a grazing sheep

8 I will confront them like a bear deprived of her cubs, And I will tear open their chests; I will also devour them there like a lioness, As a wild animal would tear them to pieces.

8 I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs, And I will tear open their chests; There I will also devour them like a lioness, As a wild beast would tear them.

8 I will confront them like a bear deprived of her cubs; I will tear open their ribs. I will devour them like a lion— the wild beasts will rip them apart.

8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

- Like a vicious and powerful wild beast (lion, leopard, or bear) the Lord would attack His people (still viewed here as a helpless flock or herd) (Cf. 13:7-8; Cf. 5:14)

Israel's Misplaced Confidence

9 It is to your own destruction, Israel, That you are against Me, against your help.

9 *It is* your destruction, O Israel, That you are against Me, against your help.

9 "You have destroyed yourself, Israel, although I remain your help.

9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.

- Ironically the Helper of Israel would become the Destroyer of Israel because she was against Him and His help

— By turning against the Lord, who only desired to help them, the Israelites had done something that would result in her own destruction

We often blame God for what happens to us. When you feel like that, v9 is a good verse to turn to. You have destroyed yourself, and you are responsible for your condition. But you can get help from God; He will furnish help to you.

10 Where then is your king, That he might save you in all your cities; And your judges, to whom you said, "Give me a king and princes"?

10 Where now is your king That he may save you in all your cities, And your judges of whom you requested, "Give me a king and princes"?

10 Now where is your king? Will he save you in all your cities? And where are your judges, about whom you demanded, 'Give me a king and officials!?

10 I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

- When the Lord would come to destroy (v9), no one would be able to save the people, not even the political leaders they had demanded from the Lord (Cf. 10:3,7,15)

- The kings of Israel, who were not of David's line but were kings of the people's own choosing (1 Kings 12:16-20), had proven ineffective in saving the Israelites

11 I gave you a king in My anger, And took him away in My wrath.

11 I gave you a king in My anger And took him away in My wrath.

11 I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my fury."

11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.

- This probably refers to the Northern tribes' part in crowning Saul (1 Sam 8:6-9; Hosea 12:12), as well as their secession under Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:16)

— This probably also refers to the cessation of Israel's kingship with Hoshea (2 Kings 17:1-6)

Israel's Stubbornness and the Consequences

12 The guilt of Ephraim is wrapped up; His sin is stored up.

12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; His sin is stored up.

12 "Ephraim's guilt is on record; his sin is stored away.

12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.

- God had not forgotten Israel's sin (Cf. 10:2; 12:14; 13:16)

— Ephraim's sinful deeds were compared to a document which is bound up and a treasure which is stored up

— Through both figures Israel's sins were pictured as something guarded carefully till the day of retribution when they would be brought forth as testimony against the nation (Cf. Heb 8:12; 10:17)

— They were hard evidence that condemned the nation

13 The pains of childbirth come on him; He is not a wise son, For it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb.

13 The pains of childbirth come upon him; He is not a wise son, For it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb.

13 When the time of childbirth comes, he will be so foolish that he will refuse to be born."

13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.

- Any basis for hope had all but disappeared. Israel had not responded to God's call for repentance during the period of grace He had extended.

— The procrastinating nation was compared to a baby which does not come out of its mother's womb despite her strenuous efforts in labor

— Despite the mother's (God's) strenuous efforts to bring the child into freedom, Israel refused to repent, and was thus a foolish child ("not a wise son")

— She would rather die instead of leave her sins, apparently feeling that the proper time for repentance had not yet come

14 Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? Death, where are your thorns? Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

14 Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

14 "From the power of Sheol I will rescue them, from death I will redeem them. Death, where are your plagues? Sheol, where is your destruction? My eyes will remain closed to your pleas for compassion.

14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

- "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol?" - the Lord asked, rhetorically, if He should buy back the Israelites from death's hand

— Would He pay a price for their redemption? No, compassion would be hidden from His sight and He would have no pity on them

Paul quoted the famous couplet in this verse in 1 Cor 15:55, and applied it to the resulting effect of Christ's redemption on all of God's people. Death and the grave are not the final judgment and home of the believer, because God *did* provide a ransom and redeemed His people. God has a glorious future, beyond His punishment for sin, for His own people—both for Israelites and for Christians.

Paul's use of this passage does not support the view that the church fulfills God's promises concerning Israel. Here in Hosea, the promise is that Israel would indeed suffer death and the grave, not that she would escape it. Paul turned the passage around and showed that Jesus Christ's resurrection overcame the judgment and death that are inevitable for all sinners.

Covenant Unfaithfulness Punished

15 Though he flourishes among the reeds, An east wind will come, The wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness; And his fountain will become dry And his spring will dry up; It will plunder *his* treasury of every precious article.

15 Though he flourishes among the reeds, An east wind will come, The wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness; And his fountain will become dry And his spring will be dried up; It will plunder *his* treasury of every precious article.

15 Even though he is fruitful compared to his relatives, an east wind will come, the LORD's wind storm from the wilderness, and his spring will evaporate. His fountain will dry up, and the LORD's wind storm will plunder all the expensive vessels of the treasury.

15 Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

- With the Lord's compassion removed (v14; Cf. 1:6), Israel's prosperity would come to an end

— The LORD would come like a hot east wind which dries up everything in its path. Israel's prosperity would completely evaporate.

— The reality behind the figure is the Assyrian invasion, as the references to plundering and military atrocities make clear. The Assyrians would plunder everything valuable in the land.

[Hosea 13 ends here in Hebrew Bible]

16 Samaria will pay the penalty for her guilt, Because she has rebelled against her God.

They will fall by the sword, Their children will be slaughtered, And their pregnant women will be ripped open.

16 Samaria will be held guilty, For she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword, Their little ones will be dashed in pieces, And their pregnant women will be ripped open.

16 Samaria will be held guilty, because she has rebelled against her God. By the sword they will fall— with their infants dashed to pieces, and their pregnant women torn open."

16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

- Yahweh would hold Samaria (Israel) guilty for rebelling against Him

- "...They will fall by the sword" - Israel's soldiers would die in battle (Cf. Lev 26:25)

- "...Their children will be slaughtered" - the children would experience unmerciful executions (Cf. Deut 28:52-57; 32:25)

- "...their pregnant women will be ripped open" - the Assyrians would even cut open the pregnant women with their swords (Cf. 2 Kings 15:16; Amos 1:13)

— This gruesome form of execution killed both the mother and the unborn child, making it impossible for the coming generation to rise up eventually and rebel against the conqueror

— These were curses that the LORD warned would follow rebellion against the terms of His covenant (Cf. Lev 26:25; Deut 28:21; 32:24-25; Amos 4:10)