

(Verse 8-10)

Israel has become no more than the heathen Gentile nations, according to verse eight. God calls them “*a vessel wherein is no pleasure.*” At one time, Israel was the apple of God's eye. No other nation in history has had God's attention like Israel. Now, look at them. They are no longer the “apple of God's eye” for now He has no pleasure in them.

Verse nine works well with verse four of this chapter, as was discussed in the previous lesson. Verse 4 told us that Israel had set up kings and princes in place of the living God. They had made gold and silver idols, which offended God. Verse 9 speaks of how Israel went up to Assyria. But Assyria is a Gentile nation, a heathen nation that knows not God. Yet, it was they that Israel consulted in their time of need. For doing this, Hosea referred to Israel as a “*silly dove*” in chapter 7 verse 11. Like a dove, their judgment was void, and in that verse 11 they went to Egypt and to Assyria for consultation. Sin voids man's judgment. Sin makes men do unbelievable things. Assyria is the nation that would destroy Israel! Would you ask your enemies for advice?

Ephraim, the northern kingdom, is likened to “a wild ass.” The ass is a beast of burden. No one has ever accused a donkey of being smart, but they can carry heavy loads. Never send a wild ass alone to visit your enemy. What a foolish thing! In other words, Israel saw no need for God's help. They could manage alone. Thus, Hosea likens them to a “*wild ass alone to himself.*”

“*Ephraim hath hired lovers.*” How destitute are a people when they have to pay for love? I am thankful I know the true and living God. He loves me- free of charge.

(verse 11-14)

Just because Israel became sinful does not mean that they ceased to be religious. Today the world is more sinful than ever. Yet, the world is more religious than ever! To me, this points to the fact that man is made in the image of God. Therefore, man has an inherent nature to worship. When a man goes into sin away from God, he still tries to worship. He simply changes gods!

Altars are a place of worship. Israel had made altars for sinning. What would you think if someone built a church for sinning? They practiced strange rituals to strange gods on altars which should have been built in honor of God and for a place to worship God. Two sons of Aaron burned strange incense on the altar of God.

Not only were their altars corrupt and places of sin, but verse 12 tells us the Scriptures have become strange to them. The Bible is strange to the world today. The word “strange” means

“loathsome.” That is, Israel developed a hatred of rejection for God's word!

Verse 13 tells us their sacrifices were rejected by God. The sacrifices in the Bible were offerings to God. Some sacrifices were offerings for sin. Some were burnt offerings of praise. Israel's sacrifices were eaten by the people! They were cooking animals on the altar of God for their own consumption rather than as offerings to God. God rejected their sacrifices. Therefore, they have no forgiveness for their sin. When we can't call on God in prayer when we have sinned, we are a destitute people. And the Lord says I will *“visit their sins.”* Numbers 32:23 reads *“But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.”*

In verse 11 we found their altars had become sinful. In verse 12 Israel had developed a hatred for the Scriptures. In verse 13 their sacrifices were rejected by God. Things are not good with God and Israel. Yet, the condition spoken of in verse 14 may be the saddest of all- *“Israel hath forgotten His Maker.”* To forget the creator is to cease to be concerned about what God thinks of our lives. To forget the Maker is to rule God totally “off limits.” This is the idea of the word “forgotten.” Pharaoh said in Exodus 5:2 in, no doubt, a scornful manner: *“Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?”* Now, Israel has the same attitude toward God that the ol' devil Pharaoh had down in Egypt! I hope I never think toward God like the Devil does.

We haven't mentioned Judah, the southern kingdom, in a few verses, but here they are mentioned again in verse 14. While the northern kingdom was building temples, Judah was multiplying “fenced cities.” Neither kingdom, northern or southern, is in poverty. Is the world in poverty today? While there is poverty and always will be poverty, the world as a whole has more riches today than in any time. While the northern kingdom was becoming more religious, the southern kingdom was becoming more commercial. Cities were springing up. However, God wants us to remember we can build no city but what He can burn it down. We only need to look back to Sodom and Gomorrah to be reminded of this.

Chapter 9

(verse 1-5)

It seems the preaching of Hosea went in a cycle. He would preach of Israel's sin, then he would preach of the judgment of God for the sin. Verses 11 through 14 of the previous chapter 8 enumerated Israel's sins. Their altars had become sinful, they had developed a hatred for God's Word, their corrupt sacrifices God rejected, and they forgot their Maker. In chapter 9 we look once again at God's hand of judgment that awaits them.

Verses one and two refer to the threshing floor and the winepress. Both these places produced nourishment for Israel. Now, because of their sin, there will not be enough food produced on the threshing floor and in the winepress to feed the people.

Not only a loss of food and starvation awaits Israel, but they will lose their homes, as noted in verse three. They may run, but they will be taken into captivity. The place of their captivity is referred to as “Egypt” only as a reminder that they were once prisoners there. The actual place of their captivity will be Assyria. In Assyria they will be forced to eat that which is “unclean.” The law of Moses gave Israel specific instructions regarding food. Food must be selected and prepared according to the law Moses and must be sanctified by presenting the firstfruits to the Lord. As prisoners, the Assyrians would feed them filth.

Verse four speaks of the polluted bread which the Assyrians would feed Israel. This verse refers to “the bread of mourners.” By the law of Moses, a person or food in the presence of a corpse was defiled (Numbers 19:14). The bread the Assyrians would feed Israel would be defiled as if it had been in the presence of a dead body. Because Israel had eaten polluted bread fed to them by the Assyrians, verse 5 says they could no longer enter into worship and feasts in the presence of God. Even though, in the midst of judgment, they desired to return to worshipping God, they were defiled and disqualified! If you choose to sin against the God of heaven, don’t think you will return to Him at your convenience. In their suffering due to Assyrian imprisonment, they seek to worship God, but He rejects them.

(Verse six)

“Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them.” Though Israel seeks to flee from their captors, they will not be successful. They will be captured. Egypt will gather them up. Memphis was an ancient capital of Egypt and a famous, celebrated *place of burial*. Thus, we have the remark “Memphis shall bury them.” The Assyrians buried thousands of the Israelis.

“Nettles” refers to a plant that has jagged leaves with stinging hairs. Folk keep their silver in a safe, pleasant place. A safe is a commonplace to store valuables. A bank is a safe place to store valuables. So, Hosea is prophesying that the weeds shall consume the treasure of the people, and thorns shall take over their houses. Don't mess with God! You may say “I have plenty of money. I don't need God. I can get by on my own.” This is a tragic attitude. Before sundown tonight, God can take all that you have that is valuable to you. Look to Job as an example of what can happen to a man, if God permits, in one single day. Your riches God can cover with biting plants, and your house God can engulf in pricking thornes.

Because of their sin, Israel is now a picture of waste and barrenness. Matthew 6:19-20 reads *“lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust both corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”*