

Chapter 12

(12:1)

Let us once again be reminded Ephraim is the Northern Kingdom. Hosea accuses Ephraim of “feeding on wind.” This is to say, Ephraim is following vanity. The term “wind” is symbolic of that which is empty and vain and of no real substance or practical use. What can one do with wind? Fly a kite? To feed on wind is to take pleasure from that which cannot strengthen and cannot satisfy because it is empty. How many today are feeding on vanity and emptiness? Any effort to find strength outside the Lord will not satisfy a child of God.

Ephraim “*daily increaseth lies and desolation.*” Do you know what a lie demands? Another lie. Lies cannot satisfy the soul. Truth provides joy and happiness and removes emptiness in our life. A sinner who is wondering in the darkness of night and gets saved rejoices to be brought into the glorious light of God’s Word, the Bible. Ephraim lived a lie and ate vanity. Never was Israel content.

Verse one refers to the “East wind.” This is the Sirocco winds. This is a hot wind from north Africa blowing across the Mediterranean. These winds are ruthless and destructive. The wind is hot and burning. If you “eat wind,” that is, vanity, someday you will come in contact with the wind that burns. You cannot play with fire and not get burned. What a destructive, elusive, and fruitless life Israel is living. Their lives are wasted.

Israel is guilty of making a covenant with the Assyrians. The Assyrians are their enemies! America today is slowly climbing in bed with our enemies. We are sitting at the table with enemies who will, in time, stab us in the back and cut our throats. Those who pursue drugs and alcohol will find themselves helpless and bleeding. Why? They have trusted in that which is vain and cannot provide them comfort. In Luke 15:14, we find the account of the prodigal son “*and when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*” He ate the wind. One day he ran into the Sirocco wind and got burned. He became empty and depressed. Satan is a demanding and pitiful hostile master.

Israel was trading with Egypt- “oil is carried into Egypt.” The oil, whether a gift or for commerce, is not important. What is important is that they were dealing with an enemy. Israel is climbing in bed with another enemy! The Egyptians held them in captivity 400 years! Have they forgotten this? Eating wind leads to bad memory.

Note these important reference versus:

Ecclesiastes 5:10 *“he that loveeth silver shall not be satisfied with silver: nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.”*

Ecclesiastes 6:7 *“all the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.”*

What are you running after? What are you chasing? What are your goals in life? Does the Lord have a part in your plans?

(12:2-6)

These verses speak of God's displeasure with the Southern kingdom, Judah. From our study it seems the Northern kingdom, Ephraim, is far more wicked and idolatrous than the Southern kingdom, Judah. But, as neighbors to the Northern kingdom, the Southern kingdom was also involved in sin. Verse two says that God had a *“controversy with Judah.”* This is not good. No controversy is good with God. God has a dispute with Judah. They would be punished. They were involved in dishonesty and cheating. The Lord promises He will repay them *“according to his doings will he recompense him.”* God is an honest God. God is a fair God. He does not turn His head to sin. He deals with it. Corrupt living leads to chastisement. We reap what we sow.

In verses three through five, God recalls a lesson from the past for the benefit of Judah. God recalls to their memory the life of Jacob. Jacob had power with God. Jacob made God important in his life. Hosea reminds Judah that their roots came from this man and their heritage was based on him. We, too, need to be reminded from time to time of what God has done for us. This is especially true when we drift away from the Lord. I believe God is prone to remind a wayward child of the good things He has done in his life. We tend to be forgetful people. We need our memory jogged.

Verse three reminds us of the strength Jacob, that is, Israel once had. While an unborn babe in his mother's womb, he grabbed his twin brother's heel in an effort to exit the womb first. A great prize was bestowed on the firstborn male. In verse four we remember the time that Jacob did what probably no other man has done- he wrestled an angel. Not only did he wrestle the angel, but he lived to tell it. He walked away from the conflict, though he limped. In Bethel, he put those stones down and it serves as a memorial to the church. Verse five, God gave Jacob an honor I am not sure He ever placed on another man. He stated there was a reminder, a memorial, in the Lord of Jacob. What a powerful complement.

“Therefore turn thou to thy God.” This is a fair statement. Why would any child of God be offended when they have drifted and God gently, in love, reminds them He desires them to come back. That is God's love. God wants Judah to return as his firstborn son. He, Lord God Almighty, is our only source of “mercy and

judgment.”

(12:7)

Israel, at the time of Hosea’s preaching, was callously corrupt. One sin leads to another. One lie desires another. The only friend sin has is another sin. Amos spoke to us repeatedly about how Israel defrauded the poor. God accuses Israel in verse seven of using false balances. Israel used dishonest scales and loved to cheat. If you were purchasing 1 pound, perhaps you were fortunate to get 15 ounces. Generally speaking, rich people still defraud poor people. This is not always the case but is widespread. Many rich people are rich because they defrauded other people. If that’s what it takes to get rich, I’ll just be content to be poor. I treat everybody I know with respect when it comes to money. I only wish I could give God more money.

The Hebrew word for “oppress” is much akin to the word “blackmail.” The fraud Israel practiced was intentional and meant for their betterment and the harm of the poor. Proverbs 14:31 reads *“he that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his maker: but he that honoreth him hath mercy on the poor.”*

Verse eight says Ephraim boasted of their fraudulent actions. Ephraim said *“yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance.”* This is a boast. “I have gotten it all by myself!” Israel boasted that their record was spotless, and that no one could say they cheated. “I did nothing that was sinful” said Ephraim. What a flimflam artist! The Bible teaches that the prosperity of fools is destructive. Because Israel had prospered, they felt justified in their sin. Money deceives most people. Financial success is not always an indication that God is blessing you. The Psalmist said *“fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way; for evildoers shall be cut off.”* Character is still more important to God than the pocketbook or a checkbook.

(12:8-9)

There is an old saying that goes “easy come, easy go.” Israel’s flimflam ways will catch up with them. No person, family, nation or church can outsmart God. Israel lived in fine homes. They were not an impoverished people at the time of Hosea’s preaching. Once a year for a week, Israel lived in tents during the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast was to commemorate God’s protection in times past as they wandered in the desert for 40 years. Here in this verse nine, because of their sin, God would cause them to live once again in tents. This time, they will dwell in tents, not as part of a festival, but in actual bondage. If America does not return to God, her citizens are going to lose their houses and will dwell in tents.

God reminds Israel in verse nine that it was He who brought them from the land of Egypt. Who can forget that dreadful 400 years of captivity that came to an end when, in the 10th plague, the

blood of the lamb was placed upon the door lintel and side post?

(12:10-14)

Again, God chose to take Israel back to the past and remind them of the good things He has done for them. Not only did He bring them out of Egyptian bondage, verse nine, but in verse 10 God reminds them that He has preached to them by the prophets. You can think whatever you wish about the preaching of God's Word. My advice, be very careful how you hear the Gospel. I believe you and I will give account of every message we have heard in this life. That thought challenges my heart. I can encourage you to do right until I'm blue in the face, but in this age people do what they want to do. Yet, such an attitude does not change the fact that I'm going to tell you what is right from God's Word.

Amidst all their sin, rest assured that Israel is *religious*. The most vile, heathen people in the world today are also some of the most religious. Religious people destroyed the towers of the World Trade Center. Gilead is in the east of the Northern Kingdom. Gilgal is in the west of the kingdom. So, from east to west, Israel had many altars. Altars were so plentiful they were as rocks sticking up in plowed fields. Problem was, the altars were to false gods.

Verse 12 speaks of Jacob when he went for his bride. This verse speaks of how Jacob, Israel, served for a wife. He kept sheep for a wife. He worked 14 years for his bride. Through his loins came the 12 sons of Jacob who would father the 12 tribes of Israel. Just as for you and for me, a great price has been paid by our forefathers that we may have the good things we have.

Precious is verse 13, for who can forget the prophet Moses. I love the character Moses in God's word. What a wonderful man of God! God used him to lead his nation from Egypt over to Canaan land. He served as their leader, their judge, and their voice from God. Like you and me, God has been good to Israel.

Yet, for all God's goodness unto Ephraim, he still chose to provoke God to anger, verse 14. God has no choice but to draw blood. God said to them in verse 14, "the reproach you have placed on me, the living God, I shall return to you." This is not a threat. This is a promise. Oh, how we love God's promises when they include a benefit for us. But God also promises judgment for sin. Israel did not like God's promise of judgment for sin. Never forget, though, Israel is God's SON.