

## (Verse 12)

Beginning with verse 12 we have a very sad commentary in regard to the sin of Israel. We remember from previous studies in this book that Hosea's wife Gomer has gone the way of the harlot. We know from previous studies that Hosea's marriage was a picture of the spiritual state of Israel and their relationship to Jehovah God. Just as Hosea's wife Gomer has gone astray into harlotry, Israel has strayed from God and is living a life of harlotry.

Verse 12 shows how irrational men can become when they get involved in sin. Israel's actions are silly and quite stupid. In verse 12 Israel has begun to ask counsel "*at their stocks.*" "Stocks" refers to sticks or engraved wooden idols. So, Israel is walking up to a stick and asking the stick for spiritual guidance. One may as well be talking to a broom handle. You may say "this sounds silly." You are correct. Yes, men become silly, senseless, and stupid when sin gets a grip on their life. Men behave in irrational ways when sin takes over their life. Romans 1:28 reads "*and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.*" We use this verse in Romans to describe the actions of the homosexual and lesbian, for their actions are indeed reprobate. However, this verse can also be used to describe people who have become reprobate spiritually. A person who worships the true and living God and then allows their life to get into the grip of sin is reprobate spiritually.

"*Their staff declareth unto them.*" The Romans practiced divination by rods, sticks, arrows, and staves. There are several ways in which they would look to the "staff" for answers. Sometimes it would be by placing arrows or staves into a closed case having the names written on them of what they were divining. Then, they would pull from the box, selecting a stick at random, to get an answer. Sometimes they would cast staves or arrows into the air and, according to the manner in which they fell, they would get answers from their gods. A third way was to peel the bark off some portion of the stick and then cast it up and divine according to which part of the stick appeared first when it fell. Specifically, this method of using rods, sticks, arrows, and staves for divining was for the purpose of forecasting the future. Man has always had a keen desire to know what lies ahead. I'm glad I have the Bible. That doesn't make me the smartest man in the world, but the Bible certainly is the smartest book in the world.

Verse 12 further explains that Israel has taken on "spirit of whoredoms." Many times the word "whoredom" is used in the Old Testament to speak of spiritual backsliding. Do you believe in

backsliding? Do you believe a person can develop a distant relationship with God after they are saved? This is what we refer to as “backsliding.” Now, Hosea pronounces that the spirit of whoredom has seized upon Israel. They have “gone a whoring from under their God.” This was not only sexual whoredom but spiritual whoredom as well.

The word “err” in verse 12 means not only to commit an error, but to mislead or stray or wander or stagger like a drunken man.” When Christians drift away from God, they become unstable, unbalanced, unreasonable, and uncontrollable like a drunk man. King David got into such a mess with his neighbor’s wife, he no longer seemed as himself. Samson lay his head in the lap of Delilah and a different Samson arose. These two men are just examples of how sin can cause men to act in a drunken fashion. Drunks don’t act like themselves.

(Verse 13-14)

Israel chose to sacrifice upon the tops of mountains and to burn incense upon the hills. Perhaps it was cooler on the mountain tops and upon hills. Perhaps they felt a little closer to their gods being at a higher elevation. They committed their acts under trees. The oak and popular and elm trees are mentioned in this verse 13. No doubt these trees offered shade from the scorching sun, but most of all they probably felt they were in a place of secrecy. Men have always sought to sin under cover. The Bible tells us that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Man seeks a closet in which to commit sin. Israel sought to hide beneath the trees hoping perhaps that the true and living God would not see them. Beware, it takes more than the leaves on the tree to block the vision of an all-seeing God.

The religious state of Israel at this dreadful moment leads to the *degradation of women*. It is seen in verse 13 that their daughters and even their spouses would go into harlotry. Cult practices generally degrade women. False religions lower the esteem of the woman in society. Gather you some information about Hindu practices. There is widespread “bride burning.” If the in-laws feel that the dowry of the bride’s family is not enough, sometimes the bride is burned to death. Thousands of brides die each year for not bringing large enough dowry. Wife beating and amputation of limbs, ears, noses and other body parts are common punishment of wives for petty wrong-doing. I’m glad I’m not a part on these blasphemous Eastern religions! Look at the religion of Islam. The Islam religion treats women as dogs. Christianity elevates the status of women, teaching the husband to love his wife even as himself. Christianity does not allow women to be treated as property or as carpet on the floor. There is an old saying that goes “behind every good man, there is a good woman.” I have yet

another saying- “behind every sorry woman there is a sorry man.”

Verse 14 closes with these words “*therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall.*” What is the reason for falling? It is lack of understanding. When we leave the wisdom of God our lives are subject to ruin. When a nation leaves the wisdom of God the nation is subject to ruin. America is on the brink of ruin because she has forgotten God. Remember, one of the three indictments against Israel in the first verse of this chapter 4 was “*no knowledge of God in the land.*” You ought to be at the house of God every time the doors open. We learn about God at church. You ought to read your Bible every day. You should pray every day. In fact, no person has ever had too much knowledge of God.

(Verse 15-16)

It does matter where you worship. It does matter where you go to church. The company you keep *does* influence you. This verse 15 is a plea from Hosea unto Judah not to come near Israel. Remember, Israel is the northern kingdom under whom Hosea is preaching. Judah is the southern kingdom. At the time of Hosea's preaching the Hebrew people were divided into the northern and southern kingdoms. Hosea preaches primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel. Yet, God instructs him in this verse 15 to warn Judah to stay away from Israel. He raises a red flag for Judah, the southern kingdom. He warns Judah to stay away from Israel lest they get caught up in abominable worship. Gilgal had been a center for prophetic instruction. Bethaven (Bethel) was the place where Jacob had his famous dream and vision and was now apparently a center of false worship. Hosea said to Judah “stay away from Gilgal and Bethel.” When you start hanging around idol worshipers, you get the notion to worship an idol yourself. Simply stay away from any form of religion that is not preaching the gospel of the King James Bible. Especially beware of the Devil's Bible-the NIV.

Verse 16 describes Israel's condition as that of a “backsliding heifer.” Heifer is a female cow. Israel is referred to as female. Like a rebellious heifer, Israel could not be instructed by God. Israel refused to repent at the command of God. Israel refused to separate from the false gods as God commanded. Israel is a heifer stubbornly resisting God's leadership. Heifers and bulls alike were often used to plow. They were placed in a yoke. When instructed to go forward, Israel would go backwards. When instructed to go to the left she would go to the right. When instructed to speed up, she would slowdown. Is that your condition today? Are you in rebellion against God? Or, are you living under His leadership and direction? Does He have control of your life? What is your attitude toward the Bible? What is your attitude toward the church? What is your attitude toward the preaching of the Gospel? If you have a

problem with God's commands, you have a problem with God's Bible.

The latter part of verse 16 may be placed in question form—*“can the Lord feed them as a lamb in a large place?”* God's desire for His people is that they act as lambs, not “backsliding heifers.” God's desire for His people is to be in a pasture under His watchful eye, not upon mountain tops and hills committing spiritual idolatry. You cannot have the blessings of God upon your life while you are at odds with the will of God.

(verse 17)

*“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”* Ephraim is the dominant tribe of the northern kingdom. The word “joined” indicates being married. Do you have an idol in your life? Is there something or someone more important to you than the Lord? If so, you have an idol. In the Hebrew language this phrase “let him alone” means “give him rest.” How sad it is when God says of a people, a person, or a nation “let them go.” Israel is out of control totally and entirely. Is America out of control? Has God said to America “let America alone?” In I Timothy we read of a people who have a *seared* conscience. I Timothy 4:2 reads *“speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”* The word “seared” is the word from which our English word “cauterized” comes. Have you ever seen the hot iron placed to the cattle in the branding of cattle? The heat of the branding iron burns away the hair and places an image seared into the hide of the cattle. I'm told that the skin is dead from that point forward. The nerve endings within that region where the hot iron touched are destroyed. There is no feeling in the mark. Does America have a seared conscience? Are God's people becoming seared? Seared people cannot feel. Seared people cannot pray for sinners. Seared people do not care about the plight of the church of the living God. Seared people do not care for the fate of the Word of God, the King James Bible. Do you have a seared conscience?

(verse 18-19)

*“Their drink is sour.”* Sour indicates “gone bad.” Have you ever drunk soured milk? Men are sometimes drunken and walk momentarily in rebellion and sin. Yet, when sober they see the errors of their ways and repent. Such is not the case with Israel. Out of drink, they still do not “sober-up.” How drunk is a man who, even though his drink is gone, remains drunk? Very drunk indeed. So is Israel. They “committed whoredom continually.” Sin became a way of life.

The rulers approved of the sins of the people, for verse 18 tells us *“her rulers with shame do love.”* Not only did the rulers

approve of the sinful acts of the people, they sinned in the same fashion as the people.

Verse 19 points to the day the hammer of judgment will fall on Israel. About 20 years from the time of Hosea's warning, the Assyrians plundered Israel, killing and taking the people captive. Verse 19 warns that, even as Hosea speaks, the wind has wrapped Israel in her wings ready to blow her away.

The end of Israel will be the same end as for all sin- SHAME. Psalms 119:31 reads "*I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.*" If we do God's will, we can stand before Him unashamed. If we meet Him with sin in our life, shame will be the outcome.