

### Prophecies of Judgment on the Northern Kingdom

#### Hosea 7

Hosea 7:1-7 - *“When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria, for they have committed fraud. A thief comes in; a band of robbers takes spoil outside. <sup>2</sup> They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness. Now their own deeds have surrounded them; they are before My face. <sup>3</sup> They make a king glad with their wickedness, and princes with their lies. <sup>4</sup> “They are all adulterers. Like an oven heated by a baker— he ceases stirring the fire after kneading the dough, until it is leavened. <sup>5</sup> In the day of our king princes have made him sick, inflamed with wine. He stretched out his hand with scoffers. <sup>6</sup> They prepare their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait. Their baker sleeps all night; in the morning it burns like a flaming fire. <sup>7</sup> They are all hot, like an oven, and have devoured their judges. All their kings have fallen. None among them calls upon Me.”*

#### Background Notes

The nation of Israel was united during the reigns of Kings Saul, David, and Solomon, but after Solomon’s death the nation split into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel had nineteen kings, and all of them were bad kings. The southern kingdom of Judah had twenty kings – twelve of them were bad, and eight of them are described in the Bible as good kings. (Can you name all the kings of Israel and Judah - in chronological order?!)

In verse 5, Hosea wrote, *“In the day of our king.”* His description of *“our king”* in verses 3, 5 and 7 is a good indication that Hosea lived in the northern kingdom of Israel. There were no good kings in the north, and a number of them were assassinated: *“All their kings have fallen. None among them calls upon Me” (v7).*

The northern kingdom is sometimes called “Ephraim,” because Ephraim was the most prominent tribe in the northern kingdom. This is especially true in the book of Hosea (see verses 1, 8, and 11).

Hosea was one of the very few good, true prophets in the north, and during his ministry the king was one of those bad kings of the northern kingdom. Both Amos and Hosea pronounced judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel for her sins. Hosea 7 gives us more excerpts of Hosea’s sermons of judgment.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God keeps a record of mankind's evil deeds.

Verses 1-7 tell us that God was well aware of all Israel's sins. *"They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness. Now their own deeds have surrounded them. They are before My face"* (v2). **Nothing** is hidden from God! All the iniquities of Ephraim and the wickedness of Samaria were an open book before Him (v1). God knew all about their fraud and robbery of the poor, as well as other social injustices. All their political lies were obvious to Him (v3). God knew all about the sexual sins of the people of Israel (v4). All their assassination plots were open before the Lord (v5-7).

And notice - God not only sees the evil acts and deeds - He sees the **evil motives** as well.

The image of an oven illustrates the various smoldering lusts of the people - lusts that could flame up at any time. God saw all their wicked lusts as well as their wicked acts and wicked deeds.

This is true today as well. God sees and knows every evil act, every evil deed, every evil word, every evil lust, every evil thought, and every evil motive of every person. There is no such thing as a cover-up with God. It's all an open book before Him. *"You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence"* (Psalm 90:8). God sees it all. God keeps a record of man's evil deeds.

And don't think that time will cover up your sin! Before God, everything is in the present. All the deeds of all mankind are known and seen before the face of God (v2).

There's only one solution for covering sin - it's the blood of Jesus Christ. And his blood is **not a cover up** of sin - it is a **removal** of sin. When you, as a sinner, put your faith in Christ as Savior, your sin is **removed** *"as far as the east is from the west"* (Psalm 103:12). And Hebrews 10:17 says, *"Their sins and lawless act I will remember no more."*

However, unless you trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, God will keep a record of your evil deeds. Not a pleasant thought - but it's true. God keeps a record of mankind's evil deeds.

### 2. God takes account of mankind's ignorant ways.

Hosea 7:8-16 - *"Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples. Ephraim is a cake unturned. <sup>9</sup> Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it; yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it.*

*<sup>10</sup> And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, but they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek Him for all this.*

*<sup>11</sup> "Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense— they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. <sup>12</sup> Wherever they go, I will spread My net on them. I will bring them down like birds of the air. I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard.*

<sup>13</sup> *“Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction to them, because they have transgressed against Me! Though I redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against Me. <sup>14</sup> They did not cry out to Me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds. “They assemble together for grain and new wine. They rebel against Me. <sup>15</sup> Though I disciplined and strengthened their arms, yet they devise evil against Me; <sup>16</sup> They return, but not to the Most High. They are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword for the cursing of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.”*

God takes account of mankind’s ignorant ways. Israel was ignorant – and we don’t mean that they were uninformed. We mean that they were *foolish*. God gave them every chance to turn around and come back to Him, but they would not. *“I would have healed Israel” (v1)*. God wanted to heal them, but they would not let God heal them. *“Though I redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against Me” (v13)*. How foolish and ignorant could they be, to turn away from God’s free offer of redemption and salvation? Yet, sadly, many people turn away from God’s free offer of salvation in Jesus Christ today.

*“Though I disciplined and strengthened their arms, yet they devise evil against Me” (v15)*. Under King Jeroboam II, God had strengthened Israel’s military, and He had made the nation prosperous - but they didn’t thank the Lord, or even recognize that their prosperity was from the Lord! Instead they thought only evil against Him, and in their idolatry they gave credit for their prosperity to their false gods of wood and stone! How ignorant and foolish could they be? For this willful ignorance they would be judged.

Verse 16: *“Their princes shall fall by the sword for the cursings of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.”* Israel had turned to Egypt for help instead of to the Lord, but Hosea predicted that Egypt would mock them when the Assyrian Empire attacked and overran the northern kingdom. This took place not too many years after Hosea preached this prophecy. God takes account of man’s foolish ways.

Throughout this section of the chapter, several illustrations demonstrate the foolish and ignorant moral condition of Israel. All these illustrations have their application for today.

- In verse 8, Ephraim was likened to *“a cake unturned.”* Picture a pancake. What happens when you cook a pancake on one side only? It falls apart. It has no structure. It can’t support itself. Like a half-cooked pancake, Israel had no moral structure. The nation was weak and unstable, like *“a cake unturned.”*

If the Lord were to picture *your life* as a pancake right now, would it look mushy and unappetizing? If the Lord were to picture *your church* as a stack of pancakes, how would it look? Would it be a strong, well-balanced stack – or would it be unstable and unattractive?

- In verse 11, Ephraim was likened to a *“silly dove”* - a bird with no sense. Israel had no moral compass. Rather than flying straight and returning to the Lord, the nation was looking for help by fluttering between Egypt and Assyria. But they would not find help in either nation. Instead, they would be brought down! How ignorant could they be, flying from one to

another like a silly dove, looking for help in all the wrong places? When Assyria conquered Israel, Egypt laughed. When we look to world for support rather than to the Lord, we too are like silly doves – with no true moral compass.

- In verse 16, Israel was likened to a *"deceitful bow"* – a bow that's crooked, untrue and not dependable. Have you ever tried to hit a target with a crooked bow? You'll miss the mark every time. That's the point. Israel was undependable. They missed the mark.

How about us? Are we walking in line with God's Word? Are we on target - or are we missing the mark? Let's not be morally ignorant and foolish, as ancient Israel was. God takes account of mankind's ignorant ways.

## Practical Application

### Is it possible to be *unspiritual* - and not realize it?

Verse 9: *"Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it. Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it."*

Have you ever known someone who's getting older but doesn't seem to realize it, so they think and behave as if they're still young and vibrant? Well, there's only one thing that's more pathetic, and that's to be going over the hill *yourself* - and it's obvious to everyone but *you*! I've had that experience on the racquetball court. It finally dawned on me that I was losing to my students - even to rookie players - because I was getting older!

In verse 9, Israel was likened to people who don't notice the *"gray hairs."* Israel chose to ignore the obvious symptoms of spiritual decline. The people were ignorant of their sad moral condition: *"Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it."*

Israel seemed to think they were doing fine morally and spiritually, but how wrong they were! Their "gray hairs" – the symptoms of their moral decline - were visible to anyone with true discernment, but they were unaware of their sad moral and spiritual condition.

Is it possible for us to be unspiritual - and not realize it? We think we're doing just fine, but the symptoms of spiritual decline are actually quite apparent? Maybe you only *think* you're a Christian, and you *think* you're doing okay with God? Or maybe you're a believer who thinks a lax and neglectful spiritual life is acceptable to the Lord?

We all need to do spiritual reality checks, don't we? Here's a helpful question for a quick spirituality checkup: How much time do you spend in prayer each day?

It's possible to be unspiritual - and not realize it!