

The Judgments of God that Would Come Upon Israel

Hosea 9

Hosea 9 - *"Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples, for you have played the harlot against your God. You have made love for hire on every threshing floor. ² The threshing floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her. ³ They shall not dwell in the Lord's land, But Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and shall eat unclean things in Assyria. ⁴ They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord, nor shall their sacrifices be pleasing to Him. It shall be like bread of mourners to them. All who eat it shall be defiled. For their bread shall be for their own life; it shall not come into the house of the Lord.*

⁵ What will you do in the appointed day, and in the day of the feast of the Lord? ⁶ For indeed they are gone because of destruction. Egypt shall gather them up; Memphis shall bury them. Nettles shall possess their valuables of silver; thorns shall be in their tents. ⁷ The days of punishment have come; the days of recompense have come. Israel knows! The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is insane, because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity.

⁸ The watchman of Ephraim is with my God; but the prophet is a fowler's snare in all his ways— enmity in the house of his God. ⁹ They are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity; He will punish their sins."

Background Notes

A brief outline of the prophecy of Hosea is:

Chapters 1-3 – unfaithful wife.

Chapters 4-14 – unfaithful people.

Chapters 1-3 are a record of Hosea's marriage to Gomer, a woman who deserted Hosea and committed adultery. God used Hosea's marriage as an object lesson for the nation of Israel. Israel was in a covenant relationship with the Lord - but the people of Israel had committed spiritual adultery. They had turned away from the Lord to worship foreign gods and participate in pagan religions.

Chapters 4-14 are excerpts of Hosea's prophetic sermons given over more than forty years of ministry. Talk about God's patience towards Israel! God is patient and longsuffering (then and today), but eventually God's judgment must and will come, if there is no response of repentance. Old Testament Israel did not respond. I trust that you have responded to God's grace in Jesus Christ, and will not have to face God's judgment.

The threshing floors (v1-2) were places throughout the land of Israel where the wind could blow away the chaff of the threshed grain. But Israel was using these places for idolatry. In fact, they were using the threshing floors for the

fornication and sexual perversions that were part of the fertility rituals of Baal worship. So Israel's spiritual adultery included literal sexual immorality. How low Israel had sunk - morally and spiritually!

Verse 9: *"They are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Gibeah."* The phrase *"in the days of Gibeah"* refers to an event recorded in Judges 19. It is the horrible story of the violation and murder of a man's concubine. This account is included in the Bible to describe the degraded moral conditions, sexual perversion, and violence, in Israel during the dark days of the Judges. Hosea declared that the northern kingdom of Israel had sunk to a similar low moral level, and it was ripe for judgment.

Verse 3 says that *"Ephraim shall return to Egypt and shall eat unclean things in Assyria."* Ephraim was another name for the northern kingdom of Israel, because Ephraim was the largest tribe. The point is that the people of the northern kingdom would lose their freedom and become captives as were their ancestors in Egypt. This time, however, their captivity would be at the hands of the Assyrian Empire.

In 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 44 we read that at the time of the Babylonian captivity, some of the Jews (including some from the northern ten tribes of Israel) actually did migrate to Egypt to escape the Babylonians - but there they died. *"Egypt shall gather them up; Memphis shall bury them"* (v6). Memphis is in Egypt, twenty miles south of Cairo. *"Nettles shall possess their valuables of silver. Thorns shall be in their tents"* (v6). Their homes and possessions would be abandoned and nature would take over the land.

Notice that verse 3 refers to Israel as **the Lord's land**. That area of the world has a special place in God's plans and programs! ***It is still the Lord's land!***

Doctrinal Points

1. Wayward believers are defiling and disruptive.

"They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord, nor shall their sacrifices be pleasing to Him. It shall be like bread of mourners to them; all who eat it shall be defiled. For their bread shall be for their own life. It shall not come into the house of the Lord" (v4).

Under the Old Testament Law, the bread of mourners could not be given to the priests because people who were mourning the dead had possibly touched a dead body. The bread was therefore considered to be defiled and unclean, and it would defile anyone who ate it. Thus it was not acceptable at the house of the Lord. The Lord said the same was true of the sacrifices of His wayward people: they were defiled and not pleasing to Him.

What's the obvious application for us today? Wayward believers are defiling. These verses make it clear that as a believer, you can't be involved in a life of sin, but expect your worship and praise to be acceptable to the Lord. That worship is "defiled sacrifice."

And as those around you see the hypocrisy in your life, your defiled sacrifices can affect others. No wonder 1 Corinthians 11:28 says that we are to examine ourselves before we partake of the Lord's Supper. Unconfessed sin has a defiling effect on us and on others, and it will bring judgment upon us. Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-32.

Wayward believers are not only defiling - they are also disruptive. Verse 8 is difficult to translate, but the idea seems to be that the wayward people of Israel did everything they could to disrupt the work of the Lord. They were very disruptive, and yet they still called themselves God's people.

That's always the way with wayward believers. They badmouth God's servants, and they cause disruption and division among God's people. This kind of behavior may even be an indication that the professing believers are not true believers. I trust you are not a wayward believer! Wayward believers are defiling and disruptive.

2. Wayward believers are fruitless and aimless.

Hosea 9:10-17 - *"I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first fruits on the fig tree in its first season. but they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves to that shame. They became an abomination like the thing they loved. ¹¹ As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird— no birth, no pregnancy, and no conception! ¹² Though they bring up their children, yet I will bereave them to the last man. Yes, woe to them when I depart from them!*

¹³ *Just as I saw Ephraim like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place, so Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer."*

¹⁴ *Give them, O Lord - what will You give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts! ¹⁵ "All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them. Because of the evil of their deeds I will drive them from My house. I will love them no more. All their princes are rebellious. ¹⁶ Ephraim is stricken. Their root is dried up. They shall bear no fruit. Yes, were they to bear children, I would kill the darlings of their womb."*

If you think verse 16 describes God as cruel, then you probably also think that the fact of an eternal hell makes God cruel. That kind of thinking shows you don't properly understand God's perfect righteousness and His wrath against sin.

Verse 10 says that Israel was God's chosen people, and they were to bear spiritual fruit. When God brought them out of Israel, He saw them as grapes in the wilderness, and as first fruits on a fig tree. But Israel was taken in by the idolatry and immorality of the Moabites at Baal Peor (v10). Read about that in Numbers 25.

Gilgal (v15) was the place where Israel crossed the Jordan and set up the stones of testimony – but by this time in Israel's history Gilgal had become an idolatrous shrine. Therefore Ephraim, whose name means "fruitful," would be both

spiritually and physically fruitless. *“Ephraim is stricken, the root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit (v16).”* The result of the Assyrian takeover meant no conception, pregnancy or birth (v11). Israel would be bereaved of her children (v12). It would be better to miscarry than for the wayward people to have children (v14).

Wayward Israel would not only be fruitless, but they would also be aimless. They would be driven from God’s house (v15), and they would become wanderers among the nations (v17). What a description of Israel over the past 2000 years!

Do you see the obvious lesson that God is teaching us here? Wayward believers, then and now, are fruitless and aimless. Many believers today wander in the wilderness of Christian experience. They bear little fruit for the Lord. They are unproductive and they live without purpose. Why? Because they are wayward believers. They murmur and complain, they do their own thing, and their lives are unproductive. I trust you are not in that category, because wayward believers are fruitless and aimless.

Practical Application

Don’t be surprised if you are labeled a fool!

Look again at verse 7: *“The prophet is a fool. The spiritual man is insane, because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity.”*

Israel had gone so far downhill spiritually and morally that they considered the true prophet of God to be insane. And this is where our culture is today. Christians are laughed at, mocked, and considered gullible. Some people even consider that Christians have lost their minds - especially Christians who are outspoken for the Lord.

Has this ever happened to you - in your family, in your workplace, in your neighborhood, or on your campus? We shouldn’t be surprised. *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).*

Of course we don’t try to be tactless or offensive, and as a result be labeled fools. But it will happen to us if we’re standing up for the Lord and His Word - because the message of the cross is foolishness to unbelievers – *“those who are perishing.”*

And the more our culture departs from biblical standards, the more often it will happen. So - don’t be surprised if you’re labeled a fool!