

HOSEA: LOOKING BEYOND JUDGMENT TO RESTORATION

II: Israel's Punishment For Neglecting God For Baal

(Hosea 2:2-13)

I. Introduction

- A. God's punishment is very painful, but afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness, Hebrews 12:11.
- B. This was the theme of Hosea, the "death-bed prophet of Israel" and the last prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel before it fell to Assyria in divine judgment. (ESV Introduction to Hosea)
- C. Hosea 2:2-13 predicts God's punishment of Israel for neglecting Him for Baal, and we view it for our insight:

II. Israel's Punishment For Neglecting God For Baal, Hosea 2:2-13.

- A. Canaanite Baal worship was marked by gross immorality (Merrill F. Unger, *Archeology and the O. T.*, 1973, p. 175-177), so when Israel's people turned from the Lord to worship false local Canaanite Baal gods, from the human perspective, it was as if God as a husband had seen his wife leave to commit adultery with other men.
- B. Accordingly, Hosea 2:2-3 predicts the severe punishment of the Northern Kingdom of Israel for practicing spiritual adultery in exchanging her spiritual devotion to the Lord for devotion to false Baals (as follows):
 1. God charged Israel with no longer being His wife and He no longer being her Husband, Hosea 2:2a.
 2. Though some claim this was a statement of formal divorce, it seems unlikely in the context where God is evidently trying to heal His broken relationship with Israel, *Bible Know. Com., O. T.*, p. 1382-1383. Rather, this statement "was probably an acknowledgment that 'no reality remained in the relationship,'" that Israel had essentially severed her relationship with the Lord, her spiritual Husband, *Ibid.*, p. 1382.
 3. Thus, instead of "exercising His legal prerogative by having His wayward wife executed (cf. Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22)," God graciously called Israel to repent in abandoning her false lovers, Hosea 2:2b, *Ibid.*
 4. The Lord followed this appeal by a threat of severe punishment were Israel not to repent, Hosea 2:3-4:
 - a. First, God threatened to make Israel an object of shame and ridicule, Hosea 2:3. This would occur in the form of drought due to Israel's lust for the false local Baal gods, gods of rain and storms. (cf. Hosea 2:13a)
 - b. Second, the Lord would disown the people of Israel, here likened figuratively to the children of spiritually immoral Israel, Hosea 2:4. Instead of fellowship with God would be a broken rapport with Him.
 5. The Lord explained how Israel had turned from Him for the false Baals in spiritual adultery, Hosea 2:5: Israel had come to think that her lovers, the local Baals that had supposedly brought rain and thus caused the crops and herds to multiply and grow, had supplied her with bread, water, wool, flax, oil and wine.
 6. To counter this error, God promised to eliminate Israel's access to these gods so that she could only return to the Lord, her true Husband Who had been the One Who actually gave these things to her, Hosea 2:6-8.
 7. Explaining how God would achieve this change in Israel's behavior, God clarified that He would withdraw Israel's production of grain at the time of harvest, He would cut back on her production of wine and He would cut back on her production of wool and flax, exposing her to her false Baal lovers for the spiritual adulteress that she was, Hosea 2:9-10.
 8. The Lord would cause all of Israel's celebratory mirth to cease -- her joyful religious celebrations of the yearly festivals, monthly New Moons and weekly Sabbath observances, celebrations that had become corrupted by Israel's involvement with the false local Baals, Hosea 2:11; *Ibid.*, p. 1384.
 9. Israel had come to believe that the produce of her vines and fig trees had been the pay that her Baal lovers had given her for her devotion to them, so in judgment, God would make these plants subject to overgrowth of a jungle, and wild animals would eat from them, Hosea 2:12; *Ibid.*
 10. Since Israel had worshipped the false local Baals, burning incense to them while she decked herself with earrings and jewels in a figurative expression of seeking to allure the blessings of these false gods, the Lord would punish the nation for having forgotten Him, Hosea 2:13. The verb rendered "forgot" is *sakah*, not a memory lapse but "a refusal to acknowledge the Lord's goodness and authority" in disobedience to the prophet Moses' repeat calls that Israel not "forget" the Lord to worship false gods, *Ibid.*

Lesson: *God was very angry with Israel for shifting from relying on Him to relying on false Baal gods for blessing, for such idolatry was not only physically immoral, but spiritually immoral, a lack of faithfulness to the Lord. Thus, God's call that Israel repent is given with a warning of grave punishment were she not to repent.*

Application: *May we recognize that God strongly desires that we be devoted to Him as opposed to any other god, that idolatry is spiritual adultery, that we then cleave to Him alone for all we desire and need.*