

HOSEA: LOOKING BEYOND JUDGMENT TO RESTORATION

VII: God's Punishment Of Israel For Her Wicked Rulers

(Hosea 5:1-14)

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 5:1-14 presents God's punishment of Israel for her wicked rulers, and we view it for our insight:

II. God's Punishment Of Israel For Her Wicked Rulers, Hosea 5:1-14.

- A. Though God announced His punishment on the people of Israel for idolatry (Hosea 5:1b), He focused on the priests and kings for being a snare on Mizpah and spreading a net to trap a bird on Mount Tabor, Hosea 5:1a,c.
- B. Tabor was in northwestern Israel, and Mizpah was either a site in Gilead east of the Jordan River or a site south in the territory of Benjamin, so God referred to the effect of the leaders in entrapping the people from west to east or north to south in idolatry, that is, causing the whole nation to sin, B. K. C., O. T., p. 1391.
- C. Staying with the Hosea 5:1 thought of the priests and kings having entrapped the people, the prophet in Hosea 5:2 claimed that the leaders or "revolters" against the Lord, had figuratively gone deep into slaughtering their prey in leading the people into idolatry, but God would discipline all of them, leaders and people alike, *Ibid.*
- D. Israel's kings, referred to here as Israel's tribe of Ephraim where its kings ruled, had functioned in the spiritual adultery of idolatry, becoming defiled to where their deeds were so evil, they did not permit them to return to the Lord, for the spirit of spiritual adultery in them had kept them from knowing the Lord, Hosea 5:3-4.
- E. On top of the spirit of spiritual adultery was pride, which itself testified of their sinfulness, so Israel as a nation and Ephraim with its kings of Israel would stumble in guilt, and their wicked influence had so affected the Southern Kingdom of Judah that it, too, would stumble with Israel in divine judgment, Hosea 5:5.
- F. Due to God's coming punishment, the rulers and the people of God in desperation would seek the Lord, bringing flocks and herds to sacrifice to Him, but they would not find the Lord, for He would have withdrawn His fellowship from them, Hosea 5:6. They had dealt faithlessly with the Lord, even giving birth to illegitimate children through their physical immorality in their pagan worship, so their participation in the festivals and New Moon celebrations of the Mosaic Law would not avert their destruction, but hasten it since their involvement in them arose from spiritually corrupt hearts, further angering the Lord, Hosea 5:7.
- G. Hosea warned of the coming sound of battle trumpets as Gentile invaders would pass through the land to Gibeah, Ramah and "Beth-aven," likely a sarcastic reference to "Bethel," a place of the golden calf worship in southern Israel (at that time), Hosea 5:8a. The last clause of Hosea 5:8b literally reads, "behind you, O Benjamin," and since Benjamin then typically went ahead of Ephraim into battle against northern Canaanites, in the coming Gentile invasion, Ephraim would be devastated and the territory of Benjamin that was located south of Ephraim would be pursued by the same invader, indicating traumatic defeat, Hos. 5:9; *Ibid.*, p. 1392.
- H. Since Judah's rulers likewise showed no respect for God's commands, being like those who move boundary stones, God would pour out His wrath like a flood of water upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Hosea 5:10.
- I. God's judgment had already begun: Ephraim was already oppressed and crushed in judgment for being determined to go after the filth of idolatry, so God was like a destructive moth to Ephraim, slowly eating away at the nation, and like dry rot slowly ruining the blessings of disobedient Judah, Hosea 5:11-12.
- J. When Ephraim and Judah recognized their lack of divine blessing, instead of turning back to the Lord, Ephraim sought Assyria's help, but Assyria's king could not cure Israel of her divinely caused wound of a lack of blessing, Hosea 5:13. God would then become a lion to Ephraim and a young lion to Judah, making a sudden, severe attack, tearing the flesh and going away, carrying off His prey with none to rescue, Hosea 5:14.

Lesson: *Since Israel's kings and priests had promoted idolatry, involving physical immorality, adding to it pride, God had begun to withdraw His blessing, creating a thirst for that blessing in His people who were yet too far apostate to repent, so that God would eventually level sudden, severe punishment, utterly destroying the nations of Israel and of Judah who had both been affected by Israel's corruptive idolatry.*

Application: *(1) If we note a gradual withdrawal of God's blessing in our lives, may we truly repent lest God's turns to practice explosive punishment. (2) May we leaders of God's people see the accountability we have to guide God's flock aright, for what we do has a profound effect on what God's people do, and what then happens to them!*