

HOSEA: LOOKING BEYOND JUDGMENT TO RESTORATION

XIII: God's Punishment For Israel's Spiritual Darkness

(Hosea 9:1-9)

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 9:1-9 describes God's punishment for Israel's spiritual darkness, so we view it for our insight:

II. God's Punishment For Israel's Spiritual Darkness, Hosea 9:1-9.

- A. God promised to punish Israel for her spiritual darkness in relation to the Lord, Hosea 9:1-6:
 1. Israel was not to rejoice in expecting a bountiful harvest, for she had forsaken God and loved paying a spiritual prostitute's wages of worshiping Baal gods for her harvests on all her threshing floors, Hosea 9:1.
 2. Her bountiful harvest would end when God, Israel's true divine Benefactor, would withdraw His agricultural blessing seen in the poor yields on threshing floor, wine vat and lack of new wine, Hosea 9:2.
 3. This punishment would be accomplished ultimately through Israel's defeat and captivity when she would be taken into captivity as in the Egyptian bondage of old by means this time of Assyria, Hosea 9:3; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1398.
 4. Once in exile in far off Assyria, the opportunity to worship the Lord would end: Israel there would no longer pour out drink offerings of wine unto the Lord, her sacrifices in Assyria would not please Him, but they would be like bread eaten by mourners who made everything they touched ceremonially unclean since they had touched an unclean dead body, Hosea 9:4a (cf. Num. 19:14-15, 22); *Ibid.* The bread would satisfy only their hunger, but not come into God's temple as an acceptable sacrifice, Hosea 9:4b; *Ibid.*
 5. In captivity, the people of Israel would not be able to celebrate their most cherished spiritual festivals and days (Hosea 9:5), for they would have been taken away from a destroyed land, and figurative Egypt (actually Assyria) would gather them and Memphis (famous as a burial place in Egypt) would bury them, meaning many in Israel would die in Assyrian captivity with nettles growing up around their precious things of silver and thorns growing in their tents in their land that lay destroyed, Hosea 9:6; *Ibid.*, p. 1399.
- B. God promised to punish Israel for her spiritual darkness in relation to God's prophets, Hosea 9:7-9:
 1. Typical of spiritual darkness relative to the Lord, the people of Israel would similarly be guilty of spiritual darkness toward God's messengers, His true prophets, resulting in God's judgment, Hosea 9:7a.
 2. God's prophets who warned Israel to repent of her false Baal worship so irritated her in her spiritual darkness that she viewed those prophets as fools and insane maniacs, Hosea 9:7b, *Ibid.*
 3. The depth of the people's sin in departing from the Lord and worshiping the Baals mixed with the critique of God's prophets of this sin caused the people of Israel to hate God's prophets, Hosea 9:7c.
 4. Those prophets were actually God's protective watchmen for Israel, men set up by God to warn Israel of impending judgment were she not to repent. However, the people had set a fowler's snare on all the ways of these prophets to entrap them so as to retaliate against them for their warnings of judgment, expressing hatred toward the prophets "in the temple," a figurative reference to the land of Israel, Hosea 9:8; *Ibid.*
 5. This wickedness in God's eyes was equal to the vile atrocity that had occurred in Gibeah of the tribal territory of Benjamin in the former era of the judges, Hosea 9:9a. There, some bisexual men had brutally raped and murdered a Levite's mistress to where the nation had responded, "Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt," Hosea 9:9b; *Ibid.* Hosea's point was that Israel's sins against God and His prophets had reached the same degree of wickedness as that atrocity.

Lesson: *In great spiritual darkness, the people of Israel worshiped false Baals instead of worshiping the Lord for their crops, so they would cease enjoying harvest bounties, but go into captivity where they would no longer have opportunity to worship God, but die in a foreign land away from a destroyed homeland. Indeed, the people were so spiritually dark that they had reacted to God's watchmen in His prophets by belittling, hating and mistreating them akin to the level of wickedness that had been practiced in the atrocity at Gibeah in the tribal territory of Benjamin.*

Application: *(1) May we heed God's Word to turn from spiritual darkness to avoid judgment and enjoy blessing. (2) If a messenger of God's Word warns us to repent in some way, may we heed Scripture's warning, viewing the messenger as God's watchman sent for our welfare. (3) If you are a watchman sent from God, fulfill your calling.*