

HOSEA: LOOKING BEYOND JUDGMENT TO RESTORATION

XIV: God's Condemnation Of Israel's Defection For Fertility Gods

(Hosea 9:10-17)

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 9:10-17 describes God's condemnation of Israel's defection for fertility gods, so we view it for insight:

II. God's Condemnation Of Israel's Defection For Fertility Gods, Hosea 9:10-17.

- A. One of the great lures toward idolatry for ancient Israel was the temptation the pagan fertility religions gave, for it mixed the powerful drive of human sexuality with the powerful drive for food as the fertility religions were utilized for obtaining rain for crops and fertility for producing livestock and crops.
- B. God thus condemned Israel's defection from Him for false fertility gods in Hosea 9:10-17 (as follows):
 1. In her beginning as a nation when she was in the wilderness and headed for the Promised Land, God viewed Israel as the delightful find of a luxurious bunch of grapes in the wilderness or like a delicious and highly desired first fruit on the fig tree, Hosea 9:10a; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1399.
 2. However, when Israel came to Baal-peor in the land of Midian just before crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land (Numbers 25:1-18), the people engaged in sexual immorality with Moabite and Midianite cult prostitutes as part of fertility rites associated with the worship of Baal Peor, apparently a local manifestation of the Canaanite fertility god Baal, Hosea 9:10b; Ibid.
 3. This activity "set the pattern for Israel's subsequent history, characterized by unfaithfulness" in Israel's long-running involvement with "fertility rites" of pagan fertility religions, Ibid.
 4. In fitting punishment, God announced that the glory of Israel would fly away like a bird, with no birth, no pregnancy and no conception due to involvement in the fertility cults, Hosea 9:11.
 5. Even were the people of Israel to bring up children, God would take them away, causing great grief until none of her beloved children were left, for she would be bereft of God's blessing, Hosea 9:12.
 6. Hosea 9:13 is difficult to translate, but it appears that an error occurred in the vowel vocalization of the consonants: the consonants were first written without vowels, so the words were possibly misunderstood when the vowels were later added by later copyists. A better translation would thus be, "Ephraim, as I have seen, shall bind together those planted in a field (i. e., his own people), yea, Ephraim shall hand over his sons to the murderer," Hosea 9:13. (A. R. Hurst, O. T. Translation Problems, 1960, p. 234-235) Thus, Hosea 9:13 is parallel in thought to Hosea 9:12, highlighting Ephraim's loss of her children in an invasion.
 7. The Lord would also give the women who were involved in fertility cult worship miscarrying wombs and dry breasts, what would occur when they would have no infants to nurse, Hos. 9:14; Ibid., B. K. C., O. T.
 8. A notorious fertility cult was located at Gilgal, the place where Israel had initially circumcised the sexual organs of the men of the generation that had not been circumcised in the wilderness. With practicing that rite, God had rolled away the reproach of the nation's past Egyptian bondage, cf. Joshua 5:1-9. However, the men of Israel had since then departed from their initial commitment to holiness before the Lord seen in their national circumcision by using their sexual organs to get involved in immorality at that very same place of Gilgal. That in turn led God to become angry and decide to drive them out of His land, Hos. 9:15.
 9. Because of Ephraim's future sterility and infant mortality, the nation that was once a symbol of fruitfulness like grapes in the wilderness would become like a withered plant, unable even to bear fruit, Hosea 9:16a. If the people were to bear children, God would put their beloved children to death, Hosea 9:16b.
 10. The punishment fit the sin: for not listening to God, He would reject Israel, and for straying from their covenant relationship with Him, they would be punished to wander among other nations, Hosea 9:17.

Lesson: *For defecting from the Lord to practice fertility cult worship that involved indulging in the lust of sexual immorality and the drive for food, Israel would suffer divine punishment related to problems in reproduction.*

Application: *(1) Though we do not face pagan fertility cults today, we DO face temptations of immorality, so may we like Joseph of old flee from such a powerful temptation, 1 Corinthians 6:18 with Genesis 39:7-12. (2) However, may we also realize that human sexuality was created by God as meant to be expressed within the bond of marriage as a blessing (Hebrews 13:4), and thus treat it as honorable and undefiled in the context of marriage.*