

HOSEA: LOOKING BEYOND JUDGMENT TO RESTORATION

XV: God's Judgment For Israel's Compromise With Idolatry

(Hosea 10:1-15)

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 10:1-15 describes God's judgment for Israel's compromise with idolatry, so we view it for our insight:

II. God's Judgment For Israel's Compromise With Idolatry, Hosea 10:1-15.

- A. Departing from the Lord usually occurs over a period of time in a series of steps, not in one quick action.
- B. Similarly, the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom of Israel occurred in stages, described as follows:
 - 1. God likened Israel to a luxuriant vine that yielded fruit by His blessing, but the more it produced, the more altars to the Lord Israel built along with more sacred pillars to idols, Hosea 10:1; **B. K. C., O. T.**, p. 1400.
 - 2. This sin violated Deuteronomy 12:1-8: Moses had told Israel not to worship the Lord in many places like the pagans would, but to worship Him in the one place He chose, all to keep the nation far from pagan inclinations. However, when Israel broke away from Judah, instead of continuing to worship the Lord in the Jerusalem temple in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Jeroboam I of the Northern Kingdom of Israel led them to worship in Dan and Bethel in a syncretism of golden calves and the worship of God, 1 Kings 12. That opened the door to compromise with paganism, to worship God **along with** worshipping idols.
 - 3. This hypocritical, half-hearted devotion to the Lord was deceitful, so Israel was guilty of sin and would face God's punishment of destroying her altars to Him along with her pillars to false gods, Hosea 10:2.
 - 4. God's punishment in the form of a Gentile nation's invasion would so shatter the nation's political structure and remove her king that the people would realize that their failure to revere the Lord had led to a hopeless national crisis where even a human king could not remedy their tragic situation, Hosea 10:3; *Ibid.*
 - 5. Israel's lack of respect for God was reflected in the people's lack of respect for one another, seen in their lack of regard for legal agreements they had made with each other, Hosea 10:4; *Ibid.*
 - 6. The people would tremble for the golden calf at Beth-el, meaning "house of God," here derisively called by God as Beth-aven, "house of wickedness," for the worshipers and false priests who had been devoted to the calf would be taken from them by the invading Gentile army, Hosea 10:5; *Ibid.*
 - 7. The gold calf would be taken to Assyria as tribute to that nation's king, so Israel would be ashamed of her false counsel (ESV margin) in seeking Assyria's aid for national defense, Hos. 10:6; *Ibid.*, p. 1400-1401.
 - 8. Like a twig floating on the surface of a swift-moving river, Israel's king would be destroyed and the nation be brought to overwhelming ruin in the Assyrian invasion, Hosea 10:7; *Ibid.*, p. 1401.
 - 9. The high places of "Aven," a derogatory referene to the golden calf worship center at "Beth-Aven" (really Beth-el) would be destroyed, with thorns and thistles growing on its altars, and the people would be so desperate in their loss that they would beg the mountains and hills to cover them in response to the terror of God's wrath on them, Hos. 10:8. This event is similar to the events of the Great Tribulation, Rev. 6:16.
 - 10. Ironically, Israel failed to destroy all the Canaanite high places as God had ordered in Deuteronomy 12:2-3, and that had led to Israel's turning those places into worship areas of the Lord that led to syncretism and idolatry. God would thus use Assyria to finish the destruction that Israel had failed to complete! (*Ibid.*)
 - 11. Once again, God likened Israel's sin to the atrocity that occurred in Gibeah in the Period of the Judges, so God would certainly punish Israel for her ongoing wickedness, Hosea 10:9-10 (with Hosea 9:9, 15).
 - 12. Israel like a calf had loved threshing wheat, an easy task where the calf could eat of the threshed grain, but in God's coming judgment, she would have to labor as if she had to plow, Hosea 10:11.
 - 13. Though Israel was doomed for judgment, God graciously still urged her to repent for blessing, Hos. 10:12.
 - 14. Nevertheless, for relentless wickedness, the nation would face the trauma of an invasion with all of its dreadful atrocities and suffering, Hosea 10:13-15.

Lesson: For not destroying the Canaanite high places upon first entering the Promised Land, Israel shifted from giving full allegiance to God to compromising her worship of Him by using those Canaanite high places, and then mixing the worship of God with idols, infuriating the Lord. Accordingly, the nation would be severely punished.

Application: Since compromise is the first step of apostasy, may we be wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord.