The Book of Hosea

Zanesville, OH | Sunday AM Bible Study

**Chapter 10**

* **10:1-10– God’s punishment of Israel**
* **Verse 1**– The message in verse 1 is abundantly clear and directly related to the previous section of 9:10-17. It is difficult to know what is being meant by the Hebrew word for “luxuriant” in v. 1. It could mean “empty” as some translations suggest or it could mean “running luxuriantly.”
* To understand what is being meant by the use of the word, Israel’s history as the “vine” must be investigated. Israel has been previously described as grapes and figs (Hos. 9:10) but the OT repeatedly speaks of Israel as a vine planted by God (Psa. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15:1-8; 17:5-10).
* The vine metaphor used of Israel was such that God expected its roots to be firm and to spread out bearing fruit associated with being children of God obeying His commandments and keeping His statutes all the days of their lives.
* This fruit was to be the spiritual growth and discerning of God’s law to the end that they would lack nothing in terms of the righteousness, faithfulness and love they were to have towards God and their neighbor. Israel, however, never lived up to this purpose.
* This is why Jesus says of Himself that He is the true vine (Jn. 15:1-8)). The verse may be misleading saying that Israel “produced fruit.” This is not the fruit God expected of her but this was the sin and evil they continued to multiply.
* That is clearly seen in the illustration that the more the fruit, the more altars (associated with sin and idolatry) and the richer the land the stronger their pillars (associated with idol worship). From this standpoint, one could say Israel was indeed an “empty vine” producing nothing of worth.
* On the other hand, one could say Israel was a “luxuriant” vine in that they kept multiplying their sin and idolatrous practices so meticulously and flawlessly it reflected somewhat of a luxurious lifestyle of sin.
* The overall point of this verse is that God gave Israel everything that they had and instead of producing spiritual fruit they brought forth evil and sin and thus Israel has not fulfilled its purpose (Deut. 8:11-20).
* **Verse 2**– They are a faithless people (sums up their history and entire book) and they will bear their guilt. The word for faithless (chalaq) can be translated smooth, slippery, divided or deceiving. This word has been used often to describe Israel’s perpetual straddling of their faith (1 Kings 18:21; Hos. 7:8; Matt. 6:24; Jam. 4:4; Rev. 3:15-16).
* They will not escape God and He will break down the very things they have devoted their time, faith and attention to (altars, pillars). The blessings God bestowed on Israel they used for sin. God will remove them and punish an ungrateful, degenerate people.
* **Verse 3**– Because of all the horrors, destructions, chaos and confusion that will come upon them, the prophet suggests with hope that perhaps now they will understand there is no unity and binding force in the land. Why? Because they refused to fear God (1 Sam. 8).
* They will recognize that their king cannot do anything for them (Hos. 8:3-4). Their trust in man will be their downfall and as they fall they will recognize who they should have put their trust in.
* **Verse 4**– Whether this verse is speaking concerning the king in particular or the nation as whole is not the point at large. Either way, Israel was not known for keeping its word/agreements and they constantly swore falsely (2 Kings 17:3-4; Jer. 5:2; 9:5-9).
* They turn right into wrong. Judgment and justice are completely reversed into bitterness and poison (Amos 5:7; 6:12). Sin reverses God’s natural order and His good creation. It turns that which is moral into immorality.
* **Verses 5-6**– The capital of the northern kingdom will be in disarray for all the wrong reasons. Their trust and hope in a mere statue will shortly be shattered as God removes their idol from their midst. This calf was set up by Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28-33) and it became a center for all forms of wickedness (Beth-aven; Hos. 4:15; 8:5-6; Amos 5:5).
* Notice that the people are mourning, crying and fearing for a calf-idol, a statue they formed and built. What a pitiful sight! If it indeed was a true god and deity, then its glory could not be removed. It could not be taken away. Thus, God is emphasizing the folly and inadequacy of idolatry (Psa. 115:4-8).
* Notice the pronouns and descriptions used in vv. 5-6 to describe the idol (“it” 3x, “thing”). It is no more than a mere object than men have sought to exalt to the position of YHWH. Thus, it was be carried away to Assyria and it will become an item of collection for the king of Assyria (2 Kings 18:33-35).
* Israel will be put to shame when they realize their idols cannot help them and their counsel of building idols and worshipping idols will live on in memory as the cause of their destruction and punishment (Jer. 7:24).
* **Verse 7­**– The stronghold capital along with its king will be sacked and taken away to destruction (2 Kings 17:1-6). The king is taken away like a little stick/splinter on the surface of the water is taken away by the torrents. Assyria’s powerful attack will sweep Israel away with nothing left behind.
* **Verse 8**– The places of wickedness and vanity where Israel gathered so often to do sin will be destroyed and abandoned. The thorn and thistle will take it over (Gen. 3:18; Isa. 34:13; Hos. 9:6; Amos 8:14).
* As they themselves helplessly look on at the destruction of their city, possessions and altars, they will cry out in desperation for their pain and punishment to cease but it will not happen (Isa. 2:19; Lk. 23:30; Rev. 6:15-17; Rev. 9:6). Their punishment seems overwhelming but it fits their crimes.
* **Verse 9**– Gibeah is here mentioned again in speaking of the nature of Israel’s sin and evil (Judg. 19-20; Hos. 9:9). They have remained in same kinds of sin since the days of Gibeah even though God destroyed those people.
* The point of the verse is to say that just as God took care of sin then, even so now He will make sure they are held accountable for their actions. They have not learned from the mistakes of others before them but have instead remained in the same predicament (Gen. 6:5).
* **Verse 10**– God’s punishment of the wicked may at times seem too slow for some but nevertheless, it will come (2 Pet. 3:3-9; Rev. 6:9-11). If anything, this shows God’s great longsuffering with these people. God is never quick to destroy without granting opportunities to repent.
* The peoples referred to here are the Assyrians (Isa. 10:5-11) and God will use them as the rod of His anger. Their guilt is complete and God will ensure they are punished accordingly for their sin.
* **10:11-15– Israel is cut off**
* **Verse 11**– The point of this verse is Israel’s demise in captivity. In the beginning, they were as a heifer who threshed without a yoke (Deut. 25:4) and they enjoyed all the material blessings without doing much hard labor. However, God will now put a yoke on them (indicating captivity) and He will harness them as one does to a horse.
* The latter part of this verse can be read as a warning and foreshadowing of what shall come upon the southern kingdom if they fall into the same tragedies as their sister did. It may be indicating that God is giving them time to do what is right before it’s too late.
* **Verse 12**­– Israel’s punishment is certain and they cannot avoid the onslaught that is coming via Assyria. However, it seems that God is pleading with them to repent so that they may not die in their sins. The agricultural terms continue in this verse.
* They are encouraged to sow towards righteousness and in due time they would reap kindness. The fallow ground here may be referring to their hard hearts (Jer. 4:3-4) and as such they need to get rid of their stubbornness and seek the LORD (Isa. 55:6-7). There is never a better time to seek God than now! His blessing is pictured in the form of rain (Isa. 44:3).
* **Verses 13-14**– The opposite of what they have just been called to do is what they were accustomed to doing. They sowed wickedness and reaped injustice and they loved lies instead of the truth (Prov. 12:19). Their trust was in their numerous soldiers and military might (Psa. 33:16) and for these reasons they will fall.
* They will see a great tumult come upon them and their mighty fortresses will crumble as if they were nothing. “Shalman” may be referring to Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, who came against Hoshea (2 Kings 17:3-6).
* Whoever “Shalman” is, we are told he brutally destroyed Beth-arbel (somewhere near Galilee ?) and slaughtered the mothers along with their children. The same fate will befall Israel because of her sin. The consequences of sin and brutal and overwhelming.
* **Verse 15**– Having said that, Israel is told to expect a similar situation of destruction. Perhaps the only thing worse than the destruction and punishment itself, is knowing that it will come and how bad it will be, but there is nothing no one will be able to do about it. Bethel (house of God) had become a sight of great wickedness! Israel made sure that whatever good they had around them was quickly turned into evil. On the day this sudden and swift attack comes upon them, the king of Israel will be cut off leaving no leader or soldier to defend the people. They will all be at the mercy of their enemy (Hos. 10:3, 7).