The Book of Hosea

Zanesville, OH | Sunday AM Bible Study

**Chapter 12**

* **11:12-12:6– Israel and Judah are guilty**
* **Verse 11:12**– Ephraim is said to surround or encompass God with lies and deceit. In Psalm 3, David describes God surrounding Him as a shield (Psa. 3: The point is that God has always surrounded His people with protection, provision and preservation and the reciprocate this by surrounding Him with lies (Hos. 4:2; 7:3). The very essence of God is that He cannot lie and in Him there is nothing but truth (2 Tim. 2:13; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18), yet the people He cares for reflect a nature of all lies and no truth (Psa. 78:36; Isa. 29:13).
* Judah who is still ruling and hanging on to life at this point, is not learning from the ways of her sister. She too has been manifesting unholiness and unruliness against God (Jer. 3:6-8). Judah is on the brink of destruction herself is she doesn’t repent and learn from Israel. God is the most Holy one and He is faithful (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Hos. 11:9; 2 Tim. 2:13).
* **Verse 1**– Ephraim is constantly seeking after vanity (wind; cf. Ecc. 1:12-17; 2:4-17; Hos. 8:7) and they chase after destruction (east wind; cf. Ezek. 19:12; Jon. 4:8). Lies and violence is what they practice continually while increasing them more and more.
* In hopes of some restoration to its previous economic and political stability, they turn to Assyria and Egypt for help and deliverance in the form of making covenants (2 Kings 15:19; 17:4-6; Hos. 5:13). With depraved minds and reasoning like irrational creatures, they turn to their enemies instead of the one who can truly help.
* **Verse 2**– God has a dispute (court case) against Judah. Throughout the book, Judah has been warned or told not to follow in the steps of Israel since she is about to be destroyed (4:15; 5:5, 10; 6:4). The term “Jacob” is used for the first time in this book as a reference to Israel and possibly Judah as well.
* “Isaac” was used in Amos 7:9 as a clear reference to the northern kingdom and here “Jacob” is being used in the same way. Jacob, however, is more pertinent since his name was changed to Israel by God (Gen. 32:28; 35:10).
* **Verses 3-4**– The point of the historical examples mentioned in vv. 3-4 is to stress Jacob’s pursuit of God in those passages. It’s use here in Hosea is likely a negative one highlighting Israel’s constant pursuit of sin instead of God. They have followed in all the wrong ways (followed in Jacob’s bad ways?) and they have not maintained the faith of the patriarchs.
* The first part of v. 3 calls to mind the story told of Jacob and Esau in Gen. 25:23-34. Jacob is pictured there as clinging to the heel of Esau or striving with his brother. He effectively bargains the birthright for himself and later acquires his father’s firstborn blessing through deception (Gen. 27:1-29).
* The latter part of v. 3 leading into v. 4 recalls the scene in Gen. 32:24-32 where Jacob wrested with a man (angel or divine being?) after which his name was changed to Israel and God pronounced His blessings upon Jacob and His descendants.
* This is a difficult passage for some to understand and reconcile. Is it saying Jacob wrested with an angel or with God and he won? I do not think the account in Genesis allows us to interpret it that way but yet Hosea says Jacob prevailed. The most likely solution is that Hosea is calling our attention to Jacob’s relentless attituded in seeking God’s blessings.
* He would not let go or give up in Genesis unless God blessed Him. God saw his zeal and granted his plea. The point in mentioning these historical circumstances in the life of Jacob is that if Israel would only seek God with the same zeal and effort they are putting forth in sin, then He would bless them and forgive them as He did with Jacob.
* God wants Israel to weep and seek His favor as Jacob did. This language is associated with earnest and genuine repentance (Matt. 5:4). Jacob made quite a few mistakes in his lifetime but he sought the grace of God and wept for His favor. His descendants, however, have not done the same up until now.
* The significance of Bethel is once more touched upon. God established and reaffirmed His covenant with Jacob here and spoke to Him intimately (face to face; Gen. 28:11-19). Jacob worshipped God here but it later became a place of sin and idolatry (Hos. 10:15; Amos 3:14; 4:4).
* **Verse 5**– God’s name is emphasized here in this verse as a seal to all His promises. This was the same description in Ex. 3:14 and so used throughout the OT as that associated with the all-powerful, living God. His name alone is high above all and He deserves to be glorified and sought in all matters pertaining to our lives.
* **Verse 6**– Now that this excursus concerning Jacob has been made, the call is one to repent. This further solidifies the point of making mention of the two previous examples. The word return is usually associated with humility and desperation in seeking God for the forgiveness of sins (Isa. 31:6; 55:6-7; Acts 2:38).
* The qualities they are called to keep and practice are those always mentioned with following God intimately (Prov. 21:3; Hos. 2:19-20; Amos 5:24; Mic. 6:8). True faithfulness in God is tested by waiting on Him (Psa. 27:14; 130:5-7; Isa. 40:31).
* **12:7-11– Ephraim’s Self-Deception**
* **Verse 7**– Once again the cheating and deception and oppression of the poor and needy of Israel is called to mind. This sin is historically one of the most repeated besides that of idolatry (Lev. 19:35-36; Prov. 11:1; 16:11; Amos 8:5-6). In conjunction with the previous verses, they are following all the wrong ways of Jacob.
* **Verse 8**­– Ephraim believes he is well-off, blessed, righteous and lacking in nothing (Psa. 62:10; Lk. 12:19; 1 Tim. 6:9-10; Rev. 3:17). He believes he is free from sin and all wrong. Can one become so deluded and deceived to the point they do not recognize their sin and the extent of their problems?
* **Verse 9**– God declares that He has been the source of all their blessings and sustenance since Egypt. He simply says that He is the LORD inciting His powerful hand in all that they have including their very lives (Lev. 26:13; Psa. 81:10). This is paralleled with the mention of living in the tents (Lev. 23:42).
* This was connected to the Feast of Tabernacles and God’s blessing for His people. It was a time for rejoicing but it was also a time of “hanging in the balance.” Israel was not yet in the promised land. Thus this verse may be speaking of God’s power to remove them from their land and send them back to “hanging in the balance.”
* **Verse 10**– God sought to move the hearts of His people through various prophets in various different ways (2 Kings 17:13). This is a phrase that has been repeated multiple times before in this book to refers to the depth and height God went to try and get Israel to see their sin and repent. There is nothing that God would not do for us. Sin is so destructive and He wants us to see that.
* **Verse 11**– The iniquity and worthlessness that takes place in Gilead is remembered here again (cf. Hos. 6:8). Their altars in Gilgal (Hos. 4:15; 9:15) are as meaningless to God as stones gathered by a farmer and thrown to the edges of the field.
* **12:12-14– Reproach on Israel**
* **Verses 12-13**– There is a stark contrast between these two verses. Jacob, having already been used earlier as an example, is here used again to speak of the hardships he endured in his life to obtain his blessings. In v. 12, Jacob fled to Paddan-Aram (Gen. 28:5) to escape the wrath of his brother Esau. There he met Laban and he worked 7 years for a wife (14 for 2 of them; Gen. 29:18-30). These were not easy times but Jacob did what he had to do for what he wanted.
* The contrast in v. 13, is that the people in Egypt did not have to do any of these things as their father did. God did all the heavy lifting and the tough labor for them and He provided Moses and all the prophets to guide them. He went above and beyond to ensure His people were taken care of. They had a lot more help than Jacob yet they did not love Him nor serve Him faithfully.
* **Verse 14**– Because of this sin and his repeated breaking of the covenant, God will bring them to judgment. There is blood on their hands and He has warned them to clean it but they will not listen. God will bring reproach on a people He has cared for, loved, and done everything for since their days in Egypt (2 Kings 17:7-18).