

Hosea Chapter 8

Verses 1-2: Hosea prophesied that when Assyria came like an “eagle” to attack Israel, the people would say, “My God, we know thee,” despite having so divided their loyalties among other gods (4:1, 6).

Hosea 8:1 "[Set] the trumpet to thy mouth. [He shall come] as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law."

“As an eagle”: Literally a “vulture,” Assyria was ready to descend quickly upon Israel to devour her (Deut. 28:49).

“Trespassed against my law” (see note on 6:7).

The trumpet, in this case, would be the trumpet blowing to tell of impending doom. It would proclaim war in the land. It is Hosea who is to blow the trumpet to proclaim punishment upon these people. This is frightening to our generation, because the same apostasy, that was going on then, prevails in our society today. The people were unfaithful to God and His teachings.

Even though they had been separated out as God's people and were the keepers of His law, they left God and started worshipping demon spirits. They committed spiritual adultery with their worship of false gods. The eagle is a mighty bird that strikes swiftly.

Hosea 8:2 "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee."

“We know thee”: Israel’s syncretistic worship wherein she practiced idolatry while crying out to God.

They should have known Him, because they were entrusted with His law. They should have also known, that He would not tolerate the worship of false gods. They have brought this upon themselves through their unfaithfulness. Now, they cry out to God, as if He should help them. Their flimsy excuse for Him helping them is that they knew Him. I would prefer to say, they knew of Him. It reminds me very much of the following.

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Hosea 8:3 "Israel hath cast off [the thing that is] good: the enemy shall pursue him."

Jehovah’s reply to Israel’s hollow repentance. The word “cast off” means a scornful loathing of what is rotting or obscene. “The thing that is good” is the name of God, which is the salvation of Israel (Aben Ezra).

“The enemy shall pursue him”: Who is before compared to an eagle, which flies swiftly, and pursues its prey with eagerness and fierceness. Shalmaneser is meant, who should invade the land, come up to Samaria, besiege and take it. Nothing should stop him, nor should Israel escape from him, since they had cast off the Lord, and everything that was good. The Targum is, "the house of Israel has erred from my worship, for the sake of which I brought good things upon them; henceforward the enemy shall pursue them”.

They rejected the One true God and all the goodness that goes with Him. Now God has rejected them.

Verses 4-7: “Thy calf, O Samaria:” The heart of the idolatrous worship was Samaria, and the specific form was that of a calf.

“They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind:” They have sown the wind (Hebrew “ruach”), but will reap a hurricane (Hebrew “supah”). They will be swept away in the judgment of God, and any benefits that they desired would fall to the hands of the strangers to whom God would deliver them.

Verses 4-6: “The calf of Samaria” (Israel’s idols), would be “broken to pieces” for the people’s failure to trust and worship God alone. Even in their choice of “kings”, they did not acknowledge God.

Hosea 8:4 "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew [it] not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off."

God Himself foretold to Jeroboam by Ahijah the prophet, that He would "rend the kingdom out of the hands of Solomon, and give ten tribes" to him, "and" would "take" him, "and" he "should reign according to all that" his soul desired and" should "be king over Israel" (1 Kings 11:31; 1 Kings 11:37). And after the ten tribes had made Jeroboam king, God said by Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam and the two tribes, "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing is from Me" (1 Kings 12:22-24).

“Not by me”: Not with My sanction (1 Kings 11:31; 12:20). Israel set up Jeroboam and his successors, whereas God had appointed the house of David as the rightful kings of the whole nation.

And I knew it not”: He that will not approve any one evil, when his omniscience discerns all, is pleased to say he knew not what he did not approve.

“They made them idols”: Heathen like, they have made them gods, and set up idolatry, so have perverted all in church and state settled by me.

“That they may be cut off”: As if they were resolved to cut themselves off from being a people. By this they thought to establish themselves, but it will be quite contrary, these sins will be their ruin.

Israel was to be under the direction of God in their civil matters, as well as their religious matters. They have rebelled against God and done what was right in their own sight. They have even used the silver and gold, that God had blessed them with, to make false gods (idols), with. The worship of false gods is what has cut them off from God. They have been an unfaithful wife to God.

Hosea 8:5 “Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast [thee] off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long [will it be] ere they attain to innocency?”

Calf ... hath cast thee off”: Calf worship was the national religion of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 12:25-33; Exodus Chapter 32).

This is speaking of the calf they set up in the temple as a symbol of God. This is just plainly saying that their worship of idols had gotten them cut off from God. They must repent and turn back to God.

Hosea 8:6 "For from Israel [was] it also: the workman made it; therefore it [is] not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces."

“From Israel was it”: That is, the calf originated with them, not from Me. "It also," as well as their "kings set up" by them, "but not by Me" (Hosea 8:4).

“The workman”: The founder, silversmith, or goldsmith, “made it”, and fashioned the calf.

“Therefore it is not God”: You are drunken fools to think it is a god: if the making it will not convince you it is no god, yet I hope the destroying it will prove, whatever it was made for, or whatever thought to be, yet it was not, nor could it ever be, a god.

“But the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces”: But when the idol is broken into pieces, Samaria shall see it was but a calf, and confess their folly in worshipping it. However, the destruction of it will be a perpetual witness of Samaria’s sin, and God’s just displeasure in its ruin.

We have mentioned over and over in these lessons, that things you can see with your natural eye that have been made with human hands are not God. The Creator of it all is God, not His creation. God is Spirit.

John 4:24 "God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth."

He is the Great I Am. He is the self-existing One. The idol of the calf shall be destroyed.

Verses 7-14: These images illustrate Israel's neglect of God and futile reliance on idols and "fortified cities." Because of sinful sowing, they would reap the "whirlwind" of an Assyrian attack (Prov. 22:8).

Hosea 8:7 "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up."

"Sown the wind ... reap the whirlwind": This indicates the escalating uselessness of all their false religion.

When a man sows seed into the wind, it scatters and is not productive. We know that whatever we sow, that shall we reap. The Word of God is many times spoken of as seed. The problem with what they have done is that it will bring no good results. Their production from their lives does not bring good things, but bad.

Hosea 8:8 "Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein [is] no pleasure."

Not only their substance, but their persons also; the whole nation of them and their whole estate, civil and ecclesiastic. It notes the utter destruction of them by the Assyrians, so that nothing of them and theirs remained. Just as anyone is swallowed up and devoured by a breast of prey; the present is put for the future, because of the certainty of it.

"Now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure": When Shalmaneser took Samaria, and with it swallowed up the whole kingdom of Israel, he carried captive the inhabitants of it, and placed them among the nations, in "Halah, Habor, by the river Gozan", and in the cities of the Medes (2 Kings 17:6).

Where they lived poor, mean, and abject, and were treated with the utmost neglect and contempt. No more regarded than a broken useless vessel, or than a vessel of dishonor, that is made and used for the ease of nature, for which no more regard is had than for that service. Thus idolaters, who dishonor God by their idolatries, shall, sooner or later, be brought to disgrace and dishonor themselves.

This speaks of what most people think are the lost 10 tribes. They do not go back into the land as a whole, but are scattered in the Gentile nations around them. God does not completely shut the door to them however. They become part of the Gentile world.

Hosea 8:9 "For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers."

"They are gone up to Assyria": As the context notes, this is not a reference to the captivity, but to the alliance she made with Assyria. "Like a wild donkey," Israel has stubbornly pursued foreign assistance rather than depending on the Lord.

A wild ass is of a very independent nature. They have gone up on their own to Assyria, God did not send them. They were doing what was right in their own sight. God did not want them seeking help from the worldly nations around them. That is just what they did, and found themselves alienated from God because of it.

The "hiring of lovers" shows that God looks on this as if they have committed spiritual adultery. They are His wife, and yet they have left Him and played the harlot with these heathen nations.

Hosea 8:10 'Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.'

“Yea, though”: Or, Yea, because; they think this is the way to prevent their calamities, but it shall appear this was the ready way to bring their calamities upon them. And forasmuch as they have hired the aid of the nations to secure them against their God and his judgments.

“Gather them”: Bring Israel together by a secret and unfailing train. I will, saith God, assemble and herd them together, that they may be taken and destroyed together. Others say, God will gather the nations together against Israel.

“They shall sorrow a little”: For a while before their final captivity they shall complain and be grieved.

“For the burden of the king of princes”: The tribute laid on them by the king and princes, i.e. of Israel. But better as we read it, the king of Assyria, the great king who boasted of his princes.

We see from this, the Lord will allow all of this to happen, because they have broken His commandments. It is God that gathers them for their punishment. The kings and princes suffer with the people. They are all guilty. There will come a time when Jesus comes to the earth, that they are offered salvation through Him.

Verses 11-14: “Ephraim hath made many altars to sin:” Throughout Israel many sacrificial altars were built for the purpose of idolatrous rituals. Israel became addicted to its sin in spite of the clear and written revelation that God had given through Moses.

Hosea 8:11 "Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin."

Multiplication of altars was condemned in the law (Deut. 12:5). The narrative (in Joshua chapter 22), shows that unity of altar and sanctuary was essential to the unity of the nation. The last clause should be rendered, he had altars for sinning. The worship of God was degraded into the sensuous approaching Baal-worship. In the first clause sin equals transgression, in the last transgression plus guilt and peril.

It appears; the tribe of Ephraim led the way in the worship of false gods. Since he has built altars to false gods, all the altars he builds will be considered evil.

Hosea 8:12 "I have written to him the great things of my law, [but] they were counted as a strange thing."

Israel has been duly warned; she is without excuse (compare 6:7; 8:1).

God had chosen the whole house of Israel to reveal His Word to. They were married to God on the way to the Promised Land. They made covenant with God to keep His commandment, and receive His blessings in return. They knew the law, and the consequences of not keeping that law. Their idolatry was with full knowledge. They disregarded the law of God and His commandments, and began to worship false gods.

Hosea 8:13 "They sacrifice flesh [for] the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat [it; but] the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt."

“Shall return to Egypt”: Recalling the place of Israel’s former bondage, Hosea reminds them that Assyria will be their future “Egypt” (compare 9:3; 11:5; Deut. 28:68). A few Judean refugees actually did go to Egypt (2 Kings 25:26). Isaiah used “Sodom” in a similar representative fashion (Isa 1:9-10).

We mentioned in another lesson, that they were still going through the motion of worshipping God. They still sacrificed to God. Their sacrifices were unacceptable to God, because they were unfaithful to Him. Their hearts were not with God. Christians, be careful why you go to church. Do not go because you are obligated to go. You would be committing the same sin they are committing here. We must go to church because we love God and want to fellowship with Him.

The return to Egypt here, is symbolic of turning them back to the condition He found them in in Egypt. They were lost with no Redeemer. God sent Moses to bring them out of bondage from Egypt, now God is sending them back into bondage.

Hosea 8:14 "For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof."

The word here used for temple is used sixty times for Jehovah’s temple. The building of these temple-palaces was a distinct sin against the unity of the Godhead.

“Judah hath multiplied fenced cities”: Referred to by Sennacherib, in the inscription relating to the campaign of (701 B.C.). “Forty-six of his (Hezekiah’s), strong cities, fortresses . . . I besieged, I captured.” These were erected by Uzziah and Jotham (2 Chron. 26:10; 2 Chronicles 27:4). With the allusions to Israel’s temples (palaces; compare Amos 3:11; Amos 3:15).

“But I will send a fire upon his cities”: In the letter, the words relate to Judah; but in substance, the whole relates to both. Both had forgotten God; both had offended Him. In the doom of others, each sinner may read his own. Of the cities of Judah, Isaiah says, "your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire (Isaiah 1:7). And in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah," (some twelve years probably after the death of Hosea), "Sennacherib came up against all the cities of Judah and took them" (2 Kings 18:13).

And of Jerusalem it is related, that Nebuchadnezzar "burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house he burnt with fire" (2 Kings 25:8-9). Man set them on fire; God brought it to pass. And, in order to teach us that He doeth all things, giving all good, overruling all evil, saith that He was the doer of it.

We see now, that the making of these idols to worship was just an outward expression of the rebellion that was in their hearts.

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

God loved them and wanted them to love Him too. God had not abandoned them, they had abandoned God. God had loved Israel and provided a way for them to be His. They have now walked away from Him to worship false gods. The punishment that comes is of their own making. Reluctantly God sends the fire of punishment to devour them.

Hosea Chapter 8 Questions

1. What does God tell Hosea to do in verse 1?
2. Why is he to do this?
3. What would the trumpet proclaim?
4. What had they left the worship of God and began doing?
5. Why should they have known God better?
6. Did they know Him, or know of Him?
7. They rejected the _____.
8. Israel was to be under the direction of God in their _____ matters, as well as in their _____ matters.
9. What terrible thing had they done with their silver and gold?
10. What calf is verse 5 speaking of?

11. What makes us know definitely that an idol is not God?
12. God looks on this unfaithfulness to Him as _____.
13. Because _____ hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin?
14. Who had God revealed His Word to?
15. When had they become the wife of God?
16. Why were their sacrifices to God unacceptable?
17. Why should Christians go to church?
18. God sent _____ to free them from bondage in Egypt.
19. God had not _____ them.
20. _____, God sends the fire of punishment to devour them.