

are plenty of loose women. They play the harlot continually. The indictment of the prophet is terrible to contemplate . . . "The rulers *dearly love* shame." They are like those described by Paul in II Thessalonians 2:9-12 who "refused to love the truth . . . but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

God will have them in derision. They shall be put to shame—the word *shame* means they will be confounded, caused to stumble. Literally, they will suddenly realize that they have been deceived by placing confidence in impotent idols. They will learn that their idols are powerless and feelingless. How shameful, how pitiful, how utterly helpless they will be when they realize all this. They will be led away into abject slavery, shamed and mocked by their heathen neighbors.

QUIZ

1. Why was Judah warned to leave Israel alone?
2. Is this a principle for believers today?
3. Why does the prophet say Israel acted like a stubborn heifer?
4. What is the terrible indictment of the rulers by Hosea?
5. How will God put the people of Israel "to shame?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— REBELLION AND TRANSGRESSION

TEXT: 5:1-7

- 1 Hear this, O ye priests, and hearken, O house of Israel, and give ear, O house of the king; for unto you pertaineth the judgment; for ye have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.
- 2 And the revolvers are gone deep in making slaughter; but I am a rebuker of them all.
- 3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me; for now, O Ephraim, thou hast played the harlot, Israel is defiled.
- 4 Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God; for the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not Jehovah.
- 5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in their iniquity; Judah also shall stumble with them.
- 6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek Jehovah; but they shall not find him: he hath withdrawn himself from them.

7 They have dealt treacherously against Jehovah; for they have borne strange children: now shall the new moon devour them with their fields.

QUERIES

- a. Why did Hosea direct his prophecy to the priests and king?
- b. How did their "doings" keep them from turning to God?
- c. Why did God withdraw from them when they sought Him? v. 6

PARAPHRASE

Listen to this, you priests and members of the royal family who "dearly love shame;" you are doomed! You have enticed the whole nation, east and west of the Jordan, and they have been trapped like birds in your net of sin. These rebellious people are deeply sunken in excesses; but I, Jehovah, will punish them all because their idolatrous conduct is fully known to me. The demoniacal power of idolatry and its consequent immoral excesses has taken complete possession of their thoughts and actions, and stifled every vestige of knowledge of God. The spirit of promiscuity and anarchy is in their hearts and they refuse to know Jehovah. Israel's arrogance and pride will soon be shown to be vain when God brings her to shame. And because Judah has consorted with her, she too will be brought to shame. The offering of sacrifices will be no help to them. God has withdrawn Himself from hearing their prayers. Their sacrifices are not offered with penitent hearts. This is evident from the rebellion and idolatry of this generation of Israelites. Therefore their hypocritical sacrifices, instead of bringing salvation, will bring upon them ruin and destruction.

SUMMARY

The leaders have enmeshed the people in a net of moral excesses and rebellion. The people are pleased to have it so and refuse to have God in their knowledge. Pride and hypocritical worship testifies that their destruction by God is inevitable.

COMMENT

v. 1 HEAR THIS, O YE PRIESTS . . . AND . . . HOUSE OF THE KING . . . UNTO YOU PERTAINETH . . . JUDGMENT . . . When the light of truth begins to flicker and fade, invariably the social and religious leadership is at fault. Men who propose to lead others

face an awesome responsibility toward truth and morality. They are charged not only with proclaiming the dogmas of truth but with practicing them! (cf. James 3:1ff; Rom. 2:1ff). But not only this, both priest and king were charged with enforcing certain moral standards according to law. This, to certain degrees, is still the responsibility of civil government today. Since their responsibility is so great and their sin of trapping the populace in excess so heinous, the wrath of God is directed at these leaders first and foremost.

The king of Hosea's day was either Zechariah or Menahem; possibly both, since Hosea prophesied in both reigns. However, Hosea's reference to making a military alliance with Assyria (5:13) refers to Menahem (II Ki. 15:19-20). Both of these were wicked kings. Mizpah (Ramah-Mizpah of Gilead) and Tabor are both wooded mountains representing east and west of the Jordan, respectively, thus typifying the whole populace of the nation of Israel. The fact that they were wooded hills makes them noted as places peculiarly adapted for bird-trapping.

v. 2 AND THE REVOLTERS ARE GONE DEEP IN MAKING SLAUGHTER . . . Ephraim (Israel) is deeply sunken in excesses. Delitzsch translates the phrase literally, "they understand from the very foundation how to spread out transgressions." In other words, they have "studied" or "gone to great lengths" to learn how to become more indulgent, more lascivious, (cf. Isa. 31:6). God rebuked them time and time again, through His law, through the prophets, through natural catastrophes, but their revolt was deeply embeded in their hearts, and they were deeply sunken in the mire of their immoralities. There is nothing left now for God to do but to give them up to total destruction and ruin.

v. 3 I KNOW EPHRAIM . . . THOU HAST PLAYED THE HARLOT . . . God was all too well aware of the unfaithfulness of Israel. His heart was broken; their rottenness sickened Him. Be sure your sin will find you out (Num. 32:23)!

v. 4 THEIR DOINGS WILL NOT SUFFER THEM TO TURN UNTO THEIR GOD . . . What they were doing took possession of them. When a man yields the mind and the members of his body to sin, he becomes a slave to that to which he has yielded (cf. Rom. 6:12-23). When one allows himself to be enslaved to falsehood and immoral deeds he at the same time, permits himself to be blinded to truth and goodness. Men love darkness because their deeds are evil (Jn. 3:18-21) and they refuse to come to the light of truth lest their evil deeds be exposed for what they really are—vain, useless, degrading,

etc. It was the same spirit of harlotry that possessed them as is referred to in Hos. 4:12 (see our comments there).

v. 5 AND THE PRIDE OF ISRAEL DOTH TESTIFY TO HIS FACE . . . K & D interpret "the pride of Israel" as "the glory of Israel—Jehovah God." Thus they make God testify to the face of Israel. Lange and Pussey both interpret the phrase simply—Israel's arrogant pride. We prefer the last for it seems to suit the context better. Israel is like those of whom Paul wrote, "claiming to be wise, they became fools . . ." "they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened . . ." "haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil . . ." (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). "Pride goeth before a fall." Pride was the very snare of the devil (I Tim. 3:6-7). Amos 6:8 shows how "the excellency (pride) of Jacob" was the cause of her sin and how abhorrent such pride was to God. Remember that God told Edom "the pride of thine heart hath deceived thee," (Obadiah v. 3). So, Israel, will soon know how foolish her pride and haughtiness was. Soon Israel's insolence will be changed to shame and regret when God's wrath is poured out. Then will her pride testify to her face that all her arrogance was futile, vain and shameful.

Judah, too, will be brought to the same shame. Hosea warned Judah (4:15) not to take part in Ephraim's idolatry. Evidently Judah did not heed the warning and became a partaker in Israel's guilt (cf. Jer. 3:6-11).

The Russian communist Zinovieff boasted: "We shall grapple with the Lord God. In due time we shall vanquish him from the highest Heaven, and where he seeks refuge, we shall subdue him forever." What arrogance, what insolence! American theologians, however, have gone him one better! They have declared God is dead; they have held requiem chorales in honor of his death! This, if anything, is worse than insolence! How longsuffering the mercy of the Omnipotent God! It is a marvel of love and grace that He has not consumed such proud and boastful men with fire as He did of old.

v. 6 THEY SHALL GO WITH THEIR FLOCKS . . . TO SEEK JEHOVAH; BUT THEY SHALL NOT FIND HIM . . . These hypocrites, when disaster seems ready to strike, will bring thousands of lambs to the places of sacrifices, and gallons of oil (cf. Micah 6:6-8), but they will have left off the weightier matters of the law, mercy, righteousness and justice. Their sacrifices will not be offered with penitent hearts, or in faith. Their worship will be ritualistic, from hearts sunken

deep in sin, wishing only to be saved *in* their sins, not saved *from* their sins. God will not honor such worship for the simple reason such worship does not honor Him. He will not hear their prayers for the simple reason such prayers are not directed to Him. Isaiah had a great deal to say about such sham worship (cf. Isa. 1:10-20). It is not the "trampling of the courts" of God that counts with Him so much as "willingness and obedience" (Isa. 1:19). These were a people who honored God with their lips but their hearts were far from Him (cf. Isa. 29:13-16; Matt. 15:1-20).

v. 7 THEY HAVE DEALT TREACHEROUSLY AGAINST JEHOVAH . . . The word translated "treacherously" is *bagad* which means to act faithlessly and is frequently applied to the infidelity of a wife towards her husband. We are not surprised that Hosea would use such a word. Gomer acted treacherously toward Hosea when she deserted him for her paramours. Israel acted like that toward her husband, God, when she went off after her idols. Such idolatry, from the very beginning of the nation under Jeroboam, has produced generation after generation of "strange" children (idolators).

Israel should have produced generation after generation of children worshipping the Lord God in spirit and truth. Quite to the contrary, however, each generation became more idolatrous and immoral than the next. They retained just enough of the Mosaic forms of worship to ease their hypocritical hearts and salve their conscience. But, says God, your hypocritical worship is not going to save you—no, it is going to bring about your destruction. This is the meaning of the phrase, "now shall the new moon devour them . . ."

QUIZ

1. Why do those who propose to be leaders of God's people face an awesome task?
2. How deeply were the people involved in their sin?
3. Why were these Israelites not able to turn to God?
4. Why is pride dangerous? How does it bring men to shame?
5. Why would Israel's sacrifices not be noticed by God?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— REBELLION AND TRANSGRESSION

TEXT: 5:8-15

- 8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: sound an alarm at Beth-aven, behind thee, O Benjamin.

- 9 Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.
- 10 The princes of Judah are like them that remove the landmark: I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.
- 11 Ephraim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgment; because he was content to walk after man's command.
- 12 Therefore am I unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.
- 13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to Assyria, and sent to king Jareb: but he is not able to heal you, neither will he cure you of your wound.
- 14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver.
- 15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly.

QUERIES

- a. Why is Benjamin to "sound an alarm" behind himself?
- b. How are the princes of Judah like those who remove landmarks?
- c. Who is king Jareb?

PARAPHRASE

Sound the invasion alarm on the far-sounding horn and let it ring from the lofty citadels of Gibeah and Ramah. Sound the warning, O Benjamin, that the judgment announced by God is knocking already on your rear door. The northern kingdom has been completely destroyed, and made desolate. The princes of Judah, by indulging in idolatry, have transgressed the spiritual boundaries God made, and have become like those who remove the land-marks of fields. Therefore, My wrath will be like a downpour, a cloudburst, and a deluge, upon these people. The northern kingdom is conquered and oppressed because it fulfilled its unholy desire to keep the commandment of Jeroboam to worship the idols he set up for it. On account of this the destruction prophesied in My word, which is intended to call Israel and Judah to repentance, is going to slowly, but surely, be fulfilled and these two nations will be destroyed because they have not repented but hardened their hearts against the purpose of this word. When these two nations became aware of their predicament, instead of taking heed to My word and trusting in Me, they attempted to get help from that Warrior the king of Assyria who is, in reality,

their enemy! But he will be of no help to either of you when I, Jehovah, act to carry out promises of judgment. I will be like the king of beasts, the lion, toward Israel and Judah. I will attack them and tear them asunder and there will be none to stop Me. I will come against them when it pleases Me and I will withdraw when it pleases Me; I will carry them away into captivity when it pleases Me and no one will stop Me! I am going to withdraw My protecting, sustaining Presence from them until they come with dependence once again seeking Me. I know that the affliction they suffer in captivity is the only thing that will move them to earnestly seek Me.

SUMMARY

First Israel, then Judah, because they have broken spiritual boundaries of God's law, must be afflicted in captivity in order that they will repent and seek God's face.

COMMENT

v. 8 BLOW YE THE CORNET IN GIBEAH . . . AT BETH-AVEN; BEHIND THEE . . . BENJAMIN. The "cornet" here is the *shophar*, "far-sounding horn" used to warn of war (cf. Joel 2:1; Amos 3:6). It signaled invasion by enemies or attack by foes. Gibeah and Ramah were cities, about 3 and 8 miles north of Jerusalem, situated on higher terrain than Jerusalem and thus well adapted for sounding such signals to the countryside. Furthermore, since they are near the southern borders of the northern kingdom, Israel, we may infer that the enemy (Assyria) has already conquered the northern kingdom or is at least pressing upon its border. The phrase, "behind thee, O Benjamin," means that Assyria is knocking on the rear doors of Benjamin (northern most territory of Judah). The judgment of God (to be administered through Assyria—cf. Isa. 10) has already broken out in the rear of Benjamin.

v. 9-10 EPHRAIM SHALL BECOME A DESOLATION . . . THE PRINCES OF JUDAH ARE LIKE THEM THAT REMOVE THE LANDMARK . . . The Hebrew word which is here translated "desolation" is the same word found in Deut. 28:59 where it is translated "afflictions severe and lasting . . ." Some commentators say the word means literally, "lasting, enduring." Others (Lange, esp.) say it means . . . true, what will surely be fulfilled, certain. God's judgment upon Israel is certain and complete. The kingdom of Israel will disappear forever. And this sentence of God has been abundantly advertised and preached by one prophet of God after another.

The cause for this severe and lasting judgment upon both Israel and Judah, is that Judah, like Israel before her, is ruled by princes and kings who are like "those who remove the landmark . . ." For the Mosaic legislation against removing landmarks see Deut. 27:17. God set the boundaries of the tribes in the land of promise—they were not to be moved. But the princes of Judah are *like* those who remove boundaries. Evidently the princes of Judah were violating the spiritual, moral boundaries of God's law. By going after idols (like Israel had) they transgressed, broke and set-aside the boundaries or marks of spiritual relationship to Jehovah-God. There is no saving relationship or covenant relationship when God's revealed boundaries are set aside. Those today who would set aside the boundaries of New Testament covenant relationship are as guilty as the princes of Judah. "There is salvation in none other . . ." (Acts 4:12); ". . . no one comes unto the Father except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6); ". . . whoever abides not in the doctrine of Christ but goes beyond it . . ." (II Jn. 9-10) is a boundary-breaker. Any attempt to syncretize Christianity with all the other "isms" of the world religions, or any attempt to built an ecumenical church by taking away the revealed and absolute boundaries of God is judged by God! God will empty the "bowls of His wrath" upon such boundary-breakers—He will pour out his wrath like a cloudburst and they will be drowned in the flood of His vengeance.

v. 11-12 EPHRAIM IS OPPRESSED . . . BECAUSE HE WAS CONTENT TO WALK AFTER MAN'S COMMAND . . . I AM TO EPHRAIM AS A MOTH . . . TO JUDAH . . . AS ROTTENNESS. Moth and rottenness are symbols of destroying influences. Those influences are, of course, the absolute Promises of God which pronounce either blessing or curse depending upon the free-willed response of His creatures. If man responds to the Word of God by obedience and faith, God becomes to man a blessing, a glory, a hope; but if man responds to the warnings of God by rebellion, God becomes to man a destroyer, avenger and judge. So, God directs the oppression and destruction of Israel and Judah because they were content to fulfill their desires and worship the idols Jeroboam and his successors commanded should be worshipped. The people "exchanged the truth of God for the commandment of lying kings and priests," and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. They taught for the commandments of God the traditions of men (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8-9). How shall peoples and nations today escape the judgment of God when their leaders lead them to

be content to walk after man's commandment and set aside the boundaries of God!?

v. 13 WHEN EPHRAIM SAW HIS SICKNESS . . . THEN WENT EPHRAIM TO ASSYRIA . . . Both Israel and Judah are denounced for making alliances with Assyria. It is not so much that alliances or agreements among nations, per se, are displeasing to God, but the motive which prompts them. In the case of Israel and Judah the alliances were an affront to God because they were motivated by an almost complete rejection of Him. Israel and Judah, having enjoyed special revelation, privilege, protection and sustenance from God, now spurned and haughtily disregarded any notion of dependence upon Jehovah. They persuaded themselves that protection, economic prosperity and cultural development could not be found by international cooperation in commerce, politics and, most ruinous of all, religion. See Special Study Five of this commentary for a history of the politics of the divided kingdoms.

When any nation exchanges trust in God for trust in man-made treaties, it only exhibits its ignorance and foolhardiness. In the first place, God's word condemns such misplaced trust (cf. Psa. 118:8-9; Hoes 7:11; Psa. 146:3; Prov. 14:34, etc.). In the second place, history proves that international treaties are hardly worth the paper they are written upon—and they will always be that way because of the unregenerate hearts of world leaders! General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur, a spiritually-minded man, perhaps the greatest American (both soldier and statesman) who ever lived, said, in his address before joint session of Congress, April 19, 1951:

"Men since the beginning of time have sought peace. Various methods through the ages have been attempted to devise an international process to prevent or settle disputes between nations. From the very start, workable methods were found insofar as individual citizens were concerned; but the mechanics of an instrumentality of larger international scope have never been successful. *Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed*, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at the door. *The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost*

matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past 2,000 years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.

"But once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory—not prolonged indecision. *In war, indeed, there can be no substitute for victory.*" (emphasis our).

This same God-fearing man, who served for over half a century, through three major world conflicts and scores of minor ones, who displayed a statesmanship as great as any the world has ever known in rebuilding the nation of Japan, allowed himself to be guided by this philosophy: ". . . men may be destroyed by what they have, and what they know, but they may be saved by what they are . . ."

America, so fond of boasting of her "economic and military strength—the greatest, most powerful nation on earth," needs to heed the word of God and learn from MacArthur, a great student of history, that greatness comes, "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zech. 4:6).

The word "Jareb" means literally, *contender* and was probably an epithet devised by Hosea to denote the warrior-like nature of the king of Assyria (see our Paraphrase).

v. 14-15 . . . I WILL BE UNTO EPHRAIM AS A LION . . . I WILL GO AND RETURN TO MY PLACE, TILL THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR OFFENCE, AND SEEK MY FACE . . . The figure of God behaving like a lion toward Israel is to depict His ferocity and invincibility. God will be irresistible—like the king of beasts. God rules the universe with an invincible hand. He goes and comes as He pleases—and there are none to gainsay Him or stop Him! He is preparing to carry both Israel and Judah into captivity and all the alliances in the world will not stop Him, (cf. Deut. 32:39; Hosea 13:7-11, etc.).

God is withdrawing His Presence (Shekinah-glory), His protecting, sustaining Presence, from the covenant people. In so doing it is His purpose to discipline them into a humble, penitent, faithful dependence upon Himself. Such action by God always has as its end His perfect love and blessing, in restoring man to his proper relation to God—of sweet communion, fellowship, dominion and glory (cf. Heb. 2:1-18; 12:1-29; 10:32-39; II Cor. 1:3-11; 4:16—5:21, etc.).

The prophet Ezekiel pictured the Presence of God departing from Judah. In Ezekiel chapters 8-10 we see God preparing to forsake the Temple because of the abominations being practiced there. Then, in Ezekiel 11:22-25, God forsakes the Temple, not to return until the Messianic kingdom (the church) is depicted in Ezekiel, chapters 40-48. *Ichabod* means "the glory has departed from Israel" (cf. I Sam. 4:21) and this might be the name emblazoned over the gates of Samaria, Jerusalem and the Temple in the days of Hosea. The condition upon which God promises His return is "acknowledge your offence, and seek my face," and the method by which God plans to bring about this condition is "in their affliction they will seek me earnestly." So, Christian, "Count it all joy . . . when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him." (James 1:2, 12.)

QUIZ

1. What does the "far-sounding" horn signal? Why warn Judah?
2. How were the princes of Judah breaking God's boundaries?
3. In what way was Israel "content to walk after man's command?"
4. What warning did Hosea give Israel and Judah about international alliances?
5. What have great leaders of our own country said about alliances?
6. How is God like a lion in His actions toward Israel and Judah?
7. When did God withdraw from Israel? When did His Presence return?
8. What are the conditions and what is the method God uses to restore His Presence?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— HER INCONSTANCY

TEXT: 6:1-11

- 1 Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.
- 2 After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him.
- 3 And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.