

The Book of Hosea

Chapter 7

In Hosea, chapter 7, the LORD continues to explain why He was forced to put away His unfaithful wife, Israel. He was forced to judge her because she was unrepentant.

Hosea 7:1 "When I would have healed Israel, Then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, And the wickedness of Samaria. For they have committed fraud; A thief comes in; A band of robbers takes spoil outside." (NKJ)

God would have acted as the Great Physician to heal Israel. Yet, remember that we learned in Hosea chapter 6 that God had "hewn them by the prophets" and employed His Word as a sword (6:5). Israel's wickedness was so great that she could not be healed.

Samaria was the capital and chief seat of government of the northern kingdom of Israel. The LORD declared that the northern kingdom was guilty of fraud. The people and priests practiced deceit and dealt falsely with one another. The whole land was marked by lawlessness, crime, and corruption.

2 They do not consider in their hearts *That* I remember all their wickedness; Now their own deeds have surrounded them; They are before My face.

The Israelites had advanced to the highest level of wickedness, for they had convinced themselves that they would never have to give an account to God for their wicked deeds.

Yet, God is omniscient (all-seeing and all-knowing), and He would hold them to an account for their every sinful deed. "They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness. Now their own deeds have surrounded them; they are before My face."

So God also is aware of all the sins we commit—in thought, word, and deed. On the day of Judgment, every sin we have ever committed will be set before God's face. Unless we are clothed with the perfect righteousness of Christ, what a horrifying day that will be.

The Israelites displayed utter contempt for God. They pretended that God was far off, perhaps asleep in heaven. They didn't like to think of God as a Judge, so they pretended that He was not.

It is as if God said, "They so audaciously mock me, as though I were not the judge of the world; they consider not that all things are in my sight and that nothing is hidden from me. They consider me to be like a dead idol. They have no fear of me. Rather, they abandon themselves to every wickedness. Although the people flatter themselves, all their evil works are set before me. They are trapped by their own sins, and no escape will be open to them."

Let us recognize that God is indeed Judge of the world. Let us live each day knowing that we walk before the face of God, in His sight. Let us acknowledge that our sins cannot be washed away, unless Christ buries them by His pardon.

3 They make a king glad with their wickedness, And princes with their lies.

How was it that as soon as Jeroboam formed the calves and built the temples of false worship, the people instantly went along with him? It is because the people were just as wicked and hypocritical as their king. So when the occasion was offered, the people gladly obeyed their king and offered themselves as ready to obey. The people could not transfer the blame to their leaders, for the people themselves were wicked and liars.

4 "They are all adulterers. Like an oven heated by a baker -- He ceases stirring the fire after kneading the dough, Until it is leavened.

They are all adulterers because they had committed spiritual adultery against God. God expects spiritual chastity of His people, which is seen in true faith and sincerity of heart. When men become corrupt in their whole life and degenerate from the pure worship of God, they become "adulterers" in God's eyes.

The comparison of the people to an oven teaches that the people were not corrupted by some outward influence but by their own inclinations and propensity of mind; they had a mad and furious desire to act wickedly. They were set on fire by an inward sinful instinct and were like a hot oven. When given the opportunity to sin with impunity, the people vented their sinful desires and no longer restrained themselves.

The people of Israel had been like an oven, which the baker, after having lighted up, allows to grow quite hot even to the highest degree, for he waits while the dough is becoming leavened. So the people's wicked hearts had grown in their wickedness degree-by-degree.

5 In the day of our king Princes have made *him* sick, inflamed with wine; He stretched out his hand with scoffers.

The prophet Hosea here reproves especially the king and his advisors. Having condemned the whole people, he now turns his attention to the nation's rulers. The king himself became sick through too much drinking. The members of the government in the kingdom of Israel had become so corrupt that in the hall or the palace of the king there was no regard for decency and no shame.

On the annual day of coronation, instead of giving thanks to God for preserving his kingdom safe and asking God for wisdom and guidance, the king became drunk and held forth his hand to "scoffers." Instead of seeking godly wisdom, the king showed himself to be a fool. The princes led and encouraged the king in throwing off all decency and dignity.

6 They prepare their heart like an oven, While they lie in wait; Their baker sleeps all night; In the morning it burns like a flaming fire.

The Israelites secretly prepared their hearts for evil deeds. The lesson of the oven here is somewhat different than before. The baker puts fire in his oven at night and then rests until morning when his oven will have attained sufficient heat to bake bread. As the oven is ignited or heated during the night before the bread is prepared, so the people at first had not made evident their wickedness, yet they have previously prepared their hearts. Although all do not perceive their wickedness, they have nevertheless heated

their hearts like an oven. In other words, their evil deeds have by degrees and during a long period of time been conceived by them, and they have fed and nourished them. Now they have broken forth openly in open acts of wickedness.

7 They are all hot, like an oven, And have devoured their judges; All their kings have fallen. None among them calls upon Me.

The whole people were carried away by a mad zeal into superstitious and wicked practices. The Israelites were deprived of just rulers and good and wise governors. In the midst of God's chastisement, none of the people would call on Him. They were unrepentant.

8 "Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned.

Ephraim, like all of God's children, was called to be holy, even as God is holy. Yet, he had "mixed himself among the peoples." He had polluted himself and defiled himself with the sinful ways of the Gentiles. He had entangled himself with their false worship practices.

"Ephraim is a cake unturned." This means that Ephraim was in no way fixed but was inconstant and changeable. He was insincere and inconsistent. He is like a pancake that is put on the frying pan but never flipped over. It is burnt on one side and doughy on the other. Both sides were ruined; neither side was good.

On the one hand, Ephraim boasted that they were a sacred people, God's holy people. Yet, the worship of God was corrupted, all the sacrifices were adulterated, and the whole of their religion was a confusing mixture of truth and falsehood. They mixed Gentile superstitions with something that resembled true and legitimate worship.

You may ask, "what is a superstition"? A working definition might be this: A superstition is something people have devised even with the best of intentions to worship God but which is not set forth in God's Word.

9 Aliens have devoured his strength, But he does not know *it*; Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, Yet he does not know *it*.

The people were blind to what was happening to them. God no longer was their defender. The people were visited with so many chastisements that they were becoming weak and aged, yet they did not know it. Their disease was incurable, for they could by no remedies be brought to repentance.

10 And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, But they do not return to the LORD their God, Nor seek Him for all this.

The people ought to have seen God's hand at work in their chastisement. They ought to have been humbled. They ought to have humbled themselves, and prayed, and sought God's face, and turned from their wicked ways. Yet, "they do not return to the LORD their God nor seek Him for all this."

The people rose up against God, treated His prophets with disrespect, and perversely rejected all teaching. They excused their own sins. Their pride testified against them.

They were running after their idols, but they had no regard for the one, true God. He was *their* God, who had brought them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Yet, they now rejected *their* God and ran after idols sealing their own destruction and rejecting any hope of salvation.

11 " Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense -- They call to Egypt, They go to Assyria. 12 Wherever they go, I will spread My net on them; I will bring them down like birds of the air; I will chastise them According to what their congregation has heard.

Ephraim was silly, stupid, and senseless. Instead of turning back to God and seeking His favor, Ephraim invited the Egyptians and sent to Assyria for help. They rejected sound doctrine, they rejected God's Word, and they trusted in human wisdom. Having thrown off God's Word and His law, they followed the delusions of Satan and the world.

God's law is unfailing, without error, and the perfect word of God Himself. Yet, the Israelites preferred to seek the counsel of men. Instead of fixing their feet on solid ground, they flew about like doves, looking to the pagan Egyptians and Assyrians as their source of wisdom and knowledge.

In Isaiah 30:1 we read, "Woe to the rebellious children," says the LORD, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin."

Let us be careful to seek counsel from the LORD. When we make plans or look for counsel, let us turn to God's Spirit and His Word.

God says that He will punish them. "Wherever they go, I will spread My net on them; I will bring them down like birds of the air; I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard."

Throughout the Old Testament, God warned His people of the curses that would come to them if they disobeyed His law. He warned them to keep His commandments carefully, with great care. Yet, the Israelites did not heed God's warnings. This congregation was relentlessly rebellious. They vainly convinced themselves that they were freed from God's law. How deceived they were!

The people of Israel had conspired against God and risen up against Him. They rejected His law. Now, He will chastise them severely.

13 " Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction to them, Because they have transgressed against Me! Though I redeemed them, Yet they have spoken lies against Me.

The hope of pardon is past. God has now resolved to destroy the people of Israel who have violated and rejected His law. They have fled from God. They have transgressed His law. Woe to them! Destruction to them!

Although God had often delivered the Israelites from death, they have not changed their ways. On the contrary, they have spoken lies against God. They have taken His name in vain—worshipping the false Baal gods. They have taught false teachings about God

and rejected parts of His Word. They have perverted His pure worship and created their own false, superstitious worship.

So also for us, if we have been the recipients of God's grace, God warns us that our judgment will be much greater if we turn away and flee from Him, willfully transgressing His moral law. If we speak lies against God and deny His truth, our judgment will be far greater than if we had never heard of God or His Word.

14 They did not cry out to Me with their heart When they wailed upon their beds. "They assemble together for grain and new wine, They rebel against Me;

The people were unrepentant. They cried and wailed, but they did not shed tears of repentance. They were tears of rebellion. They cried and wailed upon their beds, perhaps even praying, but they were not praying to the true God. The people did not cry out to God sincerely, from their hearts.

The people had no grief over their sin. Although there was ample proof of God's displeasure with them, they disregarded all the signs of God's chastisement upon them. As long as they enjoyed plenty of grain and wine, they were satisfied. They could care less whether God was for them or against them, pleased with them or angry with them.

They neglected God and did not desire His favor; all they desired was to have abundant food and material prosperity. They rebelled against God, turning away from Him.

15 Though I disciplined *and* strengthened their arms, Yet they devise evil against Me;

Israel had continued to prosper only because God was longsuffering and patient with them. God sustained them by His power, disciplining them and strengthening their arms. Yet, the Israelites were so far from being grateful to God and mindful of Him, that they were devising evil against Him. The more God blessed them, the more they boldly conspired against Him.

Under the pretense of good intentions, the people added more manmade inventions to their worship. They added more superstitions and continued to corrupt their worship. Their sinful pride, cruelty, and iniquity only increased.

16 They return, *but* not to the Most High; They are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword For the cursings of their tongue. This *shall* be their derision in the land of Egypt.

The people pretended to repent, but it was false repentance, for they did not turn back to the true God. Despite all their pretending to be contrite and forgiving, they were farther from God than ever.

Not even the princes would escape the judgment that God was sending upon Israel. Because they pridefully boasted of their strength and held in contempt all the prophecies God sent to them through His ordained prophets, because they dared to speak their blasphemies against God and to defend their own impious and depraved forms of worship, for these reasons God declares He will take revenge—"for the cursings of their tongue".

They boasted of the power of Egypt, with whom they had made a treaty; they vainly trusted in the Egyptians to come to their aid during their time of need. Yet, when God destroys them, their wicked friends, the Egyptians, will do little more than laugh at them. What more should they have expected from their godless friends?