

HOSEA

People Who Forgot GOD

by S. Franklin Logsdon

"For Israel hath forgotten his maker." (Hosea 8:14)

"My people have forgotten me days without number." (Jeremiah 2:32)

Moody Colportage Library 386

COPYRIGHT @ 1959

by

THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE CHICAGO

CHAPTER THIRTEEN -

THE BALANCES OF DECEIT (Hosea 12)

MUCH LIKE THE CHURCH TODAY, GOD's ancient people were out of agreement with the divine purpose, out of line with the divine standard, and out of touch with divine power. When self-interest supersedes sovereign claims, there is a state of rebellion against the Most High. When our way fails to coincide with GOD's way, there is a state of broken fellowship. Then the last challenge comes. One day the last warning is given. Persistent backsliding had brought Israel to this point.

As another has pointed out, Jacob and Ephraim stand in noticeable contrast - the latter self-reliant and trusting the kings of Assyria and Egypt; the former weak and dependent and trusting JEHOVAH, the GOD of his father, Isaac.

Jeremiah reports that the people became so vain that they disrespectfully termed GOD's true prophets "**wind**" (Jeremiah 5:13). But GOD said, "**Ephraim feedeth on wind**" (v. 1). Since, in a real sense, we are what we eat, the people were unstable - unsound. The figure is supported by their alliances with idols and idolaters, and by their treaties with ungodly nations. And this lamentable condition was growing worse by the day. Their condition was pernicious. They attempted to buy Egypt's favor through gifts of oil instead of seeking divine blessing through obedience. Unbelief makes spurious moves.

Verse 2 would indicate that JEHOVAH could no longer commend Judah. He must now move to chasten. If the more conservative southern kingdom cannot be spared, what will be the end of the northern?

As Ephraim so frequently in this prophecy is used to denote the ten tribes, even so Jacob is used to designate the two; and the thumbnail sketch of this son of Isaac is, in a true sense, a

lamentation of JEHOVAH. In verse 3, we are reminded of GOD's favor toward Jacob from his birth to his adulthood. He had prevailed with GOD through his strength of faith. He had made supplication with earnestness (Genesis 32). GOD met him at Bethel where the patriarch vowed: **"If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go . . . then shall the Lord be my God"** (Genesis 28: 20, 21).

Now witness the vast spiritual difference between Jacob and his posterity. Their spiritual strength has been dissipated through compromise with the heathen and complicity with their pagan works. Instead of tenderness of heart there is impenitence and obduracy. Now rebellion has replaced the submission which made their forefather great. The LORD who met Jacob at Bethel also finds these descendants there, but how? Certainly not imitating their father in saying, **"Surely the Lord is in this place"** (Genesis 28:16). The conscious presence of GOD is unknown to them. Instead of the LORD of hosts being memorialized at Bethel (v. 5), their idols are the bleak monument to the forgotten GOD.

With the surging emotion expressed in this reminder of past blessing, there leaps from the heart of GOD another plea for their return. **"Turn thou to thy GOD . . . and wait on thy GOD continually"** (v. 6).

It must be pointed out that the word "wait" in this instance differs in meaning from the two other occurrences in the prophecy. In 6:9 it means "to tarry"; in 7:6, "to lurk" or "to ambush." Here in verse 6 it means "to wait for" or "to expect." This corresponds with the thought expressed in I Thessalonians 1:10, **"to wait for his Son from Heaven."**

In this ancient day, there was little or no evidence of a work of faith. Unbelief prevailed. There was no labor of love. Hearts were hardened. There was no patience of hope (in GOD) for they turned deceptively to both the Assyrians and the Egyptians for security.

"They shall find none iniquity in me that were sin" (v. 8) is a classic in self-justification. It is the apex of boastfulness. It is logic forced into a strange setting. Paraphrased, Ephraim asserts, "I am a successful businessman. I have been prosperous. After all the prophet's denunciation, nothing can be found wrong with my dealings."

It is the age-long custom of resting on personal pride to justify one's indifference toward GOD. It is the delusion of one **"that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God"** (Luke 12:21). It were better far to affirm with Paul: **"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing"** (Romans 7:18).

But what does the LORD say about this boaster? Bluntly this: **"He is a merchant, [all right, but] the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress [defraud, or get deceitfully]"** (v. 7).

Quite a conflict indeed between Ephraim's impression of himself and GOD's statement of fact. And let us remember that this symbolic illustration concerns not one man but a nation. **"The balances of deceit"** intimate the wrong kind of measuring rod - faulty perception. Not until we get to the last chapter of the prophecy do we have the least hint that they are willing to turn from the work of their hands, their idols. They displayed an utter lack of spiritual discernment.

And how could it be otherwise? "**Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**" (Romans 10:17). By the same means come instruction, direction, devotion, discernment. They turned from the message of GOD; and, in so doing, they turned from these necessary derivatives. They lived, moved and operated outside the orbit of divine illumination.

Why did not their leaders see the value of subscribing to divine precepts, of pursuing the godly way, of obeying GOD's Word from Heaven?

George Washington was not ashamed to affirm: "The world cannot be governed without this Book [the Bible]"

Ulysses S. Grant urged: "Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties; write its precepts on your hearts, and practice them in your lives."

Calvin Coolidge maintained "If American democracy is to remain the greatest hope of humanity, it must continue abundantly in the faith of the Bible."

John Wesley testified: "I am a Bible-bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small,"

Daniel Webster asserted: "The Bible is a Book of faith, and a Book of doctrine, and a Book of morals . . . of special revelation from GOD."

Ephraim, forgetting his Maker (8:14), became estranged from GOD's wonderful Word. He walked on dangerous territory. The abyss of disaster was just before him. He pressed blindly onward. And so go the masses of humanity today.

Again, we have the outpoured heart of GOD. First, we have His further reminder of the fact that it was He who intervened in behalf of their fathers in Egypt. It was He who delivered them when they cried for help (Exodus 3:7). And he is going to deliver again! He will make them "**to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast**" (v. 9). But, will these people, like their forebears wandering in the wilderness, take an unnecessary detour? Will they fail at this point as their forefathers failed at Kadesh-Barnea. Apparently so. What a fearful circuitous course most people take to arrive at the center of GOD's will for their lives, if indeed they arrive at all!

Second, they must be reminded that they were not without light. GOD had spoken to them through prophets such as Ahijah, Jonah, Shemaiah, Iddo, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu, Elijah, Elisha, Joel, Amos and others. GOD caused these faithful servants to employ "**similitudes**," that is, illustrations, historical precedents and parables, to impress upon them the truth of His message. He "**multiplied visions**," a prominent means of divine communication in those days, giving the people every opportunity to know Him and His way of blessing for them. Yet Hosea finds them in shameful idolatry and hardened in disobedience.

The enemy of man's soul had firmly entrenched himself in sacred precincts. Gilead and Gilgal, once the scenes of godly devotion, have now developed into spheres of blasphemous idolatry. It is no wonder that Jeremiah inquired: "**Is there no balm in Gilead?**" (Jeremiah 8:22). The question now is: Is there no godliness in Gilead (v. 11)?

The answer is immediately given: "**Surely they are vanity**" (v. 11). Gilgal, meaning "a heap of stones," appeared just that way to the LORD as He looked down because there were so many altars to false gods, even like heaps of stones along the countryside. "**They sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal**" (v. 11), proving that, even in decadent days, people will engage in religious ceremony. They will carry on some semblance of worship.

As Isaac sent away Jacob (Genesis 28:5), so JEHOVAH will send away his descendants. They will be carried into Mesopotamia, the land lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates. They too will become fugitive. "Jacob's hand as an infant won the birthright; as a penniless vagabond he won the kingdom; as a slave he won Rachel; as a cripple he won a title" (Jamison, Faucet & Brown). Now it is all loss for his posterity. There is no promise here of obtaining a kingdom or of receiving a title. The very best GOD can promise these rebellious people at this time is that they will be preserved (v. 13).

Their preservation throughout the years and their distinction from all other people is an amazing thing. It is not at all hyperbolic to use the expression, "the indestructible Jew." Mrs. Helen Mael is quite correct in her observation:

- The king of Egypt could not diminish him (Exodus 1:9-12).
- The waters of the Red Sea could not drown him (Exodus 14).
- The gallows of Haman could not hang him (Esther 5:14; 7:10).
- The great fish could not digest him (Jonah 1:17; 2:10).
- The fiery furnace could not destroy him (Daniel 3:16-28).
- Balaam could not curse him (Numbers 23:7, 8).
- The lions of Babylon could not devour him (Daniel 6:8-28).
- The nations of the world cannot assimilate him (Deuteronomy 33:29).
- The dictators of the world cannot annihilate him (Isaiah 14:1-3).

Chosen of the LORD as these people were and given the covenant seal of the Most High, their provocation incurred the bitter anger of GOD. There was no alternative but to chasten them (v. 14). There remains but one question at this juncture. When will the sad day arrive?

~ end of chapter 13 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
