

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)

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN -

THE EPITAPH OF SELF-DESTRUCTION (Hosea 13)

HISTORY IS REplete with grief-filled experiences of disappointment and defeat. Whether a Napoleon capitulating at Waterloo, a Kaiser Wilhelm signing an armistice in a forest in France, a Hirohito surrendering on a U. S. destroyer - defeat drapes a gloomy shroud about those whom it visits. It is incisively bitter. But what should be said about the people of GOD who have played into the hands of the enemy and have been cast into shame and disgrace? GOD Himself speaks the sad word: **"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself"** (v. 9).

To the stated astonishment of all Heaven, two committed evils were discovered. First, they had forsaken the fountain of living water. Second, they hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that could hold no water (Jeremiah 2:13). That is to say, they indulged themselves in substitutes, then labored under the delusion that lasting benefit would result. It was then that JEHOVAH asked: **"Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled?"** (Jeremiah 2:14).

Their intermittent attempts to improve conditions, apart from divine instructions and assistance, brought this interrogation: **"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil"** (Jeremiah 13:23). Inability of self-reform and unwillingness to turn to the LORD for help left Israel in a perilous state.

When Ephraim was in fellowship with GOD, his word had a ring of authority. People felt its impact. He was respected and honored. But when he turned to idolatry, he forfeited his influence (v. 1). He sold his birthright for a "mess of pottage."

The flesh is subtle. It is sense and reason apart from the HOLY SPIRIT. It is self-will in rejection of divine revelation. There is a point of self-abandonment to diversionary interests where better judgment is utterly lost. Then one is carried captive. **"And now they sin more and more"** (v. 2),

the LORD sadly observes.

- Disregarding the Decalogue and the ceremonial instructions,
- Counting the word of the true and living GOD as of no value,
- They leaned unto their "**own understanding**." And herein they were seriously betrayed.

And what did their "own understanding" produce? More images, more idols! Their silver was spent for vanity. The work of the craftsman was dissipated energy.

The activities of the spiritually indifferent are always meaningless. Samson carrying away the gates of Gaza was an unproductive effort. It may have impressed some onlookers, but it did not elicit heavenly approbation.

"Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves" (v. 2). By what authority did they state this? Who originates the unauthorized procedures which have so plagued and rendered impotent the people of GOD down through the years?

Those who dethrone GOD from the citadel of their souls will find a usurper ready to ascend the throne of their lives. But how anyone once enlightened can kiss (approve, espouse) an endeavor so evidently contrary to the divine will as image worship is difficult to understand.

Since GOD is both omniscient and holy, such departures cannot escape His observation nor pass without His indictment. **"Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away"** (v. 3).

The cloud and dew, which in themselves have value for man, beast and vegetation, are not the main points of observation in this text. It is rather their instability, their quick passing, so symbolical of fickleness and lack of depth on the part of the people. Observe the further description: **"As the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney"** (v. 3). What could be more worthless than chaff and smoke? Yet relationship and love would limit the primary application, not to the people themselves, but to their illicit operations. Stirred-up chaff by a gust of wind and circulating smoke are irritating to the eyes and lungs. Thus, these licentious indulgences on the part of His people became a stench in the nostrils of the Most High GOD.

Now comes one of those intermittent reminders of Deity. And, though unheeded, the compassionate warning further proves the patience of GOD and leaves the people without excuse. **"I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me: for there is no saviour beside me"** (v. 4).

Ears are deaf indeed when the sharp two-edged sword of divine Truth fails to penetrate.

Hearts are hard indeed when the Word, a discernor of the thoughts and intents, makes no perceptible impact. Such were these ancient backsliders in their propensities toward idolatry.

"**I did know thee**" (v. 5), did acknowledge thee as Mine, did manifest tender care in the wilderness and in the drought. "**You only have I known of all the families of the earth**" (Amos 3:2). I knew thee as a shepherd knows his sheep (John 10:27). He sought and provided. He delivered and protected. But alas, divine provisions were taken for granted and their privileges were abused (v. 6)! Prosperity was their downfall, idolatry their sin.

The goodness and the severity of the LORD seem equally evident in these prophecies, GOD preferring to show goodness but forced by a rebellious people to employ firmness. His austerity is figured as "**a lion**," "**a leopard**" and "**a bear**" as the rod of His wrath must fall upon a disobedient company (7, 8). These wild beasts are symbolical of the Gentiles, the lion-empire being Babylonia; the bear, Medo-Persia; and the leopard, Graeco-Macedonia.

The only hopeful note, the singular pleasant suggestion, in the Book of Hosea is projected into the future: "**I will be thy king: where is any other . . . ?**" (v. 10). True, GOD gave them a king when they cried insistently in the days of Samuel (v. 11), but this first king was impeached, utterly rejected (I Samuel 15:26). GOD only intended that they should have one king, and that King is yet to be enthroned.

In the meanwhile, the people show no inclination toward repentance. "**The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up**" (v. 12). The reference is to the oriental method of securing a treasure, hiding it away from anyone's reach or discovery. Or, in the words of a common colloquialism, "He thought he was getting away with it." "**Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil**" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). However, there is no place to hide sin apart from the atoning blood of the LAMB. The wrath of GOD will discover it anywhere else.

Looking upon this delusion of Ephraim, JEHOVAH simply commented, "**He is an unwise son**" (v. 13).

The truth is, he will pay dearly for his sin. "**The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him**" (v. 13), and their long-continued dispersion, made dark and dreadful by such inhumanities and brutalities as the concentration camps and the slaughter of six million by the hand of Hitler, magnifies the seriousness of persistent rebellion against the holy commands of GOD.

The ransom from the grave and redemption from death (v. 14) could, and in all probability do, have a dual application. The people will be brought from the graveyards of the nations (Ezekiel 37:21) and from the dust of their physical interment (Daniel 12:2). Sheik Farouki, leader of the Arab refugees in Jericho, is quoted in Time Magazine, Jan. 16, 1956, as saying: "Ben Gurion is not a full man. He is a poet . . . not a man of facts. He wants to build a nation by raiding cemeteries, and making a people from the bones of history." This is precisely what is happening currently in the new statehood of Israel. It is what will develop in a more impressive and in a more conclusive manner at some future date.

Verse 15 is simply another way of saying: "**The world passeth away, and the lust thereof**" (I John 2:17). It is always preferable to choose GOD's way "**than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season**" (Hebrews 11:25).

The fruitfulness of Ephraim, that is, the prosperity of the people, was soon to be cut short by the invading Assyrians. The well of their self-satisfaction would dry up. What they prized most highly, "**the treasure of all pleasant vessels,**" would fall into the hands of their captors (v. 15).

The chapter closes with a terse, but almost imponderable, description of the desolation destined to ensue. The indignities and brutalities to be visited upon the populace, especially as affecting infants and pregnant women, never registered as a possible actuality in the minds of Hosea's hearers. "**To whom shall I speak, and give warning?**" GOD asks (Jeremiah 6:10).

The answer is reflected in the attitudes and actions of the people, of any people, in any day. In spite of the gracious, loving entreaties through faithful servants, "**every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle**" (Jeremiah 8:6).

The weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the day of disillusionment and judgment promises no consolation to those who disregard the warning of GOD. Nor could Israel charge GOD with the cruelties visited upon them. It must be attributed to her own misconduct, "**for she hath rebelled against her God**" (v. 16).

Israel wrought her own destruction.

~ end of chapter 14 ~

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