

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 SEVEN -

THE HORRIBLE DISCOVERY (Hosea 6:3-11)

JEHOVAH'S CONTROVERSY with His people lengthens. It is tempered only by His incomprehensible patience. In spite of the many heart appeals, multiplied by His undying love, the coldness of heart, impenitence of soul, and perverseness of mind continued to threaten Israel with a future of sorrows - a chastening which, by now, should seem to them an interminable punishment.

It is an established fact of the Scriptures that those "**whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth**" (Hebrews 12:6), and this chastening is the guardrail of protection against the disastrous chasms into which disobedience would catapult those who swerve from the faith. It is the hand of love which seeks to turn wandering feet back into the course of honor and obedience. It is correction for character and conduct.

"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?" (v. 4). Should we permit ourselves to think that the Almighty had exhausted His ability to deal with His own people? Or do these questions of direct address but magnify the pathetic extent of rebellion on the part of the people? The latter, of course, is true.

But they would be hopeless incorrigibles indeed if parents could not detect some faint commendable quality in wayward children, although society at large may be ready to write them off as good-for-nothings. Even so, JEHOVAH sees a trace of something favorable in these people who seemingly have heaped every conceivable indignity upon Him. It is so faint, however, that it is termed "**a morning cloud**" and "**the early dew**" (v. 4), both unstable and quickly dissipated.

This, obviously, is why He had to deliver to them warnings of punishment (v. 5). Decadent days

always call for challenge. This is the chief characteristic of the minor prophets, the burden of the major prophets, and the point of emphasis in the second epistles. GOD's people so readily lapse into such alarming complacency and indifference that all Heaven becomes solemnly disturbed. **"O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?"** (Micah 6:3). Such were the intermittent surges from the heart of GOD in Old Testament days.

"O Ephraim . . . O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?" As the warning continued, the prophets "hewed" them, and the LORD's words "slew" them. **"He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked"** (Isaiah 11:4). And why? **"Thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth (disappears),"** the LORD explains (v. 5). They had light, but walked in darkness; they knew the right, but practiced the wrong. **"Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet"** (Jeremiah 14:10).

All the while, there was a semblance of religious observances. With impenitent hearts, they brought offerings from their herds and flocks (5:6) and feigned worship. Now they must be reminded that this is not acceptable. What GOD does not authorize, He cannot approve. He **"desired mercy [piety], and not sacrifice"** (v. 6). The word "mercy" in this verse is not the same word, found in 1:6, 7, or the one used in 2:4, 23. It is rather the word translated "mercy" in 4:1; and, as we observed earlier, it means piety or reverence. They honored the Lord with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him (Isaiah 29:13).

The desire of the LORD in verse 6 is twofold and constitutes a double contrast. JEHOVAH desired reverential trust and **"the knowledge of GOD."** They produced sacrifices, but did not evidence piety. They brought burnt offerings but did not have the knowledge of GOD. The words of Paul furnish a fitting commentary: **"Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God"** (I Corinthians 15:34). Those who are not awake to righteousness have no consciousness of the presence of GOD.

Their need therefore was practical, not theoretical; experiential, not intellectual. This does not imply that GOD overlooks or depreciates the intellectual faculties with which He has endowed us; but the LORD demands heart response, reality in the experience. So deeply had pretense penetrated their lives that they could disobey or ignore the unchangeable commands of the LORD as unprincipled men in the world break contracts with one another (v. 7). The LORD charged that this was treacherous dealing against Him on the part of His people.

As a consequence of transgressing the covenant (v. 7), Ramoth-gilead, once a city of refuge, now becomes a city of iniquity (v. 8) where violence flourishes to the point of bloodshed.

The spiritual leaders now come back into prominence in the text (v. 9) and are likened unto a band of highway robbers who lie in wait for their victims. Instead of being agents of blessing in Ramoth-gilead to lead men into safety, they collaborate ("**the company of**") as partners in crime ("**murder in the way by consent**") to destroy the spiritual testimony of the people. And how did this develop? Just as Aaron used his own hands to fashion the golden calf (Exodus 32:4), so the priests were the chief offenders in worshipping idols, **"for they commit lewdness"** (v. 9).

Words fail us utterly in attempting to capture in literary expression something of the grief which filled the heart of the LORD. **"I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel,"** He

sorrowfully reveals (v. 10). The virgin has become an (spiritual) adulteress. Ephraim has become joined to idols. If the moneychangers in the temple moved JESUS to register so firm a disapproval, what must have been the intensity of divine disapprobation in viewing the idols in the midst of His people?

Their leaders were broken in judgment (5:11). Continued disobedience to the revealed will of GOD carries with it a compounding principle; as, for instance: "**But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God**" (Romans 2:5). The prophet sounds the same alarming note when he says: "**Also, O Judah, he hath set a harvest (of judgments) for thee**" (v. 11).

The southern kingdom may have been more conservative than the northern for a time (1:7), but they had become increasingly contaminated with this rapidly expanding epidemic of idolatry.

Nothing is more certain in the Scriptures than that every deed will receive its just reward, but how graciously and patiently GOD sought to curb wayward tendencies and to invoke corrective measures among His ancient people!

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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