

The Oven, Bread & Dove

Hosea 7:1-16

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Hosea 7:1-16 (NIV)

¹ Whenever I would heal Israel, the sins of Ephraim are exposed and the crimes of Samaria revealed. They practice deceit, thieves break into houses, bandits rob in the streets;

² but they do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me.

³ “They delight the king with their wickedness, the princes with their lies. ⁴ They are all adulterers, burning like an oven whose fire the baker need not stir from the kneading

of the dough till it rises. ⁵ On the day of the festival of our king the princes become inflamed with wine, and he joins hands with the mockers. ⁶ Their hearts are like an oven;

they approach him with intrigue. Their passion smolders all night; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. ⁷ All of them are hot as an oven; they devour their rulers. All their kings fall, and none of them calls on me. ⁸ “Ephraim

mixes with the nations; Ephraim is a flat loaf not turned over. ⁹ Foreigners sap his strength, but he does not realize it. His hair is sprinkled with gray, but he does not notice.

¹⁰ Israel’s arrogance testifies against him, but despite all this he does not return to the Lord his God or search for him. ¹¹ “Ephraim is like a dove, easily deceived and

senseless— now calling to Egypt, now turning to Assyria. ¹² When they go, I will throw my net over them; I will pull them down like the birds in the sky. When I hear them

flocking together, I will catch them. ¹³ Woe to them, because they have strayed from me! Destruction to them,

because they have rebelled against me! I long to redeem them but they speak about me falsely. ¹⁴ They do not cry out to me from their hearts but wail on their beds. They slash themselves, appealing to their gods for grain and new

wine, but they turn away from me. ¹⁵ I trained them and strengthened their arms, but they plot evil against me.

¹⁶ They do not turn to the Most High; they are like a faulty bow. Their leaders will fall by the sword because of their insolent words. For this they will be ridiculed in the land of

Egypt.

v1 – What will be the results of God healing Israel?

They will recognize their sins. People rejecting God don’t think they are sinning against Him.

What is mentioned here that God does not forget (v2)?

Their lawlessness (lying, thievery, robbery).

- Whenever you see God condemning theft, He is also supporting the concept of private property which is also a condemnation of socialism.
- Advocates of socialism claim the no-private-property mandate only applies to the means of production, not personal property. But where do you draw the line? Taken to socialism’s logical end, you get, “you’ll own nothing and be happy.”

v1-2 – What do people without God in their lives willfully forget?

That the LORD saw and remembered their sin. It may be secret before men, but not before God — He says, “they are before My face.”

Why is it sobering to remember that God sees all and remembers our sin?

We are lost if it were not for the precious promise to those who come to God under the New Covenant:

Jeremiah 31:34 – *For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more*

We might wish that time would make God forget our sin, but it doesn’t. Only the atoning substitute of Jesus, crucified in our place under the New Covenant enables God to forget our sin.

v2 – What kept God from healing Israel from their sin?

God was willing to heal Israel from their sin and its effects, but not as long as they acted as if God did not see their sin.

- They had to treat God as He really is, a God who sees and remembers unrepentant, uncovered sin.

v3 – Who were the people of Israel delighting with their wickedness?

Israel’s king... this phrase, together with princes have made him sick (Hosea 7:5) and all their kings have fallen (Hosea 7:7) probably all refer to one of the successful assassination plots against the throne of Israel during the ministry of Hosea.

- Since there were four kings violently overthrown during his ministry, it’s hard to exactly know which one he means.

v4 – To what was Israel’s unfaithfulness likened?

Like an oven heated by a baker: Israel was inflamed with desire and passion after idols like the coals of a freshly stoked fire, ready to bake bread.

1 Corinthians 7:9 – *but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

v5 – Who contributed to the unfaithfulness of Israel?

The princes and mockers... sub-rulers and other leaders of the people join with the ungodly to influence the people.

How are we seeing that dynamic in our culture today?

We see the media and corporations advancing an ungodly and woke narrative that contributes to people turning away from God.

v6 – What drives those who influence the culture to be more ungodly?

They have a religious fervor driven by the hearts, the seat of their emotions. Such emotion-driven people are irrational and you cannot reason with them.

Romans 1:28 – *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting*

What does it mean that they approached their king with intrigue?

Intrigue means, make secret plans to do something illicit or detrimental to someone. The NKJV says, *they lie in wait...* so, it looks like they are plotting against the king.

- Certainly, given the turnover of kings during Hosea’s time, a lot of this was going on.

v7 – Why did no one in Israel call on God?

Israel could not be hot, like an oven after idols and also call upon the LORD.

- They did in fact continue to sacrifice to the LORD (Hosea 5:6) but it was empty ceremony, not a true calling upon their covenant God.

How was Israel devouring their rulers?

They had a pretty steady turnover of their kings.

v8 – How was Ephraim like a “half-baked” cake?

In that day, bread was often prepared as a cake that was cooked on both sides, something like a pancake. In thinking they can serve both the Lord and idols, Israel is like an unturned pancake — burned on one side, uncooked on the other.

- Their idolatry was a direct result of their mixing with the nations.

How is the USA like a “half-baked” cake today?

We are no longer a melting pot; we are more of a tossed salad. We no longer attempt to assimilate immigrants into the American culture; instead, we accommodate their differing values alongside American values thus diluting what made America exceptional in the world.

v9 – What sapped Ephraim’s strength?

The foreigners in their midst that they accommodated.

What strength did Ephraim have that was sapped by foreigners?

Their strength was in the Lord and being the Lord’s people gave them direct access to Him. But the more they pursued the idols of other nations, the less access to the Lord’s strength they’d have.

How is the impact of foreigners working out for America today?

- Keeping the cost of labor low and thus not keeping up with inflation.
- Bringing in people who don’t understand the value of democracy and freedom... they’re OK with less
- They are over-taxing social welfare programs
- More criminals are coming here where law enforcement is lax
- There are foreign agents now threatening jihad and infrastructure sabotage

Why didn’t Ephraim know its strength was being sapped?

Cultural change is slow... like the difference between the frog dropped into boiling water and being in water brought to a boil.

- It is like a person growing old... they are getting gray hairs but still feel young in their mind.

What does this tell us about how a person can justify their sin?

Man has an amazing ability to deceive himself when he is in sin.

Jeremiah 17:9 – *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*

Considering how easily we deceive our self, and how our sin can be apparent to everyone but us, Israel’s condition isn’t unusual:

- Burned and ruined — but he does not know it.
- Strength devoured — but he does not know it.
- Aging and weakening — but he does not know it.
- Pride testifies against him – but he does not know it.

It was said of Samson after Delilah cut his hair: *But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him* (Judges 16:20). This is where the people of Israel — and some followers of God today were...

- They are far from God and already suffering the effects, but they can't see it.

v10 – What testifies against Ephraim?

The arrogance, or pride (NKJV), of Ephraim blinds them to their need for the Lord.

How is that dynamic playing out in America today?

We too are a prideful nation who thinks we are where we are due to our own abilities. We don't realize that we have been blessed by God and when we turn away from Him those blessings are on thin ice.

v11-12 – How was Ephraim like a silly dove?

Israel is like a bird fluttering about, confused and without direction. They think they can escape God by running to other nations, but the Lord says, "I will spread My net on them."

Why should Israel have known better?

I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard: Since they are God's people and they have His Word, they have no excuse. Israel's guilt is increased according to what they have heard. Greater knowledge means great accountability...

Luke 12:48 – *for everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

v13 – Why was Israel doomed to destruction?

Because they have strayed away from trusting in the Lord and rebelled against Him.

- Likewise, people who never mature beyond their cultural Christianity to have a relationship with the Lord are likewise doomed to destruction.

Why wouldn't the Lord redeem this generation of Israel?

They didn't know Him and thus spoke falsely about Him. Since they thought there was value in following after the idols of the nations, they certainly did not know the Lord.

v14 – Why was Israel wailing but not crying out to God?

They were suffering but did not see God as the solution to what was afflicting them. Instead, they appealed to idols trusting in them.

v15 – How had God trained and strengthened Israel?

By making them His people and revealing His Word to them.

How was idol worship plotting evil against God?

It was rebellion against Him; unfaithfulness leading to a broken relationship. All sin is evil against God.

v16 – Why didn't Israel turn to the Lord in their affliction?

Israel saw their problem, but not their sin. When God's hand is against man, he easily sees he has a problem but often does not see it as sin against the LORD.

- So, when Israel had problems, they wailed upon their beds, but not to the LORD. They sought remedies, but not from the Most High.

How was Israel like a treacherous bow?

Hosea adds another image, of a faulty bow that won't shoot an arrow straight. Everything that comes from Israel misses the mark. They are like a useless and dangerous weapon.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- Good News: The imputed righteousness of Christ makes it possible for God to forgive & forget our sin.
- Our culture is being driven to be more ungodly; resist the influence of our ungodly culture.
- Multiculturalism is sapping the strength of the American culture; don't despair, share more Jesus
- Pride causes us to stay on a path away from God; get back on the narrow way
- We are today's people of God; that comes with a responsibility to be His representatives.