

4. Why is ethical relativism impractical?
5. How and why did God intend to "make them to dwell in tents" again?
6. How extensive were the opportunities for Israel to know the will of God?
7. Does the person who deliberately chooses evil deserve the wrath of God? Why?

REQUITING— GOD WILL PUNISH

TEXT: 13:1-8

- 1 When Ephraim spake, there was trembling; he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.
- 2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them the work of craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.
- 3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the dew that passeth early away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing-floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.
- 4 Yet I am Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no god but me, and besides me there is no savior.
- 5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.
- 6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me.
- 7 Therefore am I unto them as a lion; as a leopard will I watch by the way;
- 8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart; and there will I devour them like a lioness; the wild beast shall tear them.

QUERIES

- a. Why did they "kiss the calves?"
- b. How is Israel to be "like the dew that passeth early away?"
- c. What is the "caul of their heart?"

PARAPHRASE

It used to be when Israel spoke, her neighbor-nations trembled because Israel was powerful and influential. But Israel let his pride destroy him. He spurned Jehovah God and rebelled against Him, wor-

shipping pagan Baalism instead, and as a result, Israel began to die both spiritually and physically. And now the people disobey more and more. They melt their silver so that unprincipled silversmiths may mold it into pagan idols according to the desires of the people. Then the people say, Bring sacrifices to these gods—how utterly stupid and wicked—men worshipping and kissing calves! Because of such wickedness Israel will perish and vanish from national existence as quickly as the morning clouds, or the dew, or the chaff, or the smoke that rises from the cooking fires. In contrast to the impotency and stupidity of your idol-gods, I AM THE ETERNAL JEHOVAH-GOD. You have every reason to know Me for I delivered you by signs and wonders from the land of Egypt. You have been given all the evidence you need to know that I am the only God—I am the only One who can save you. I saved, protected and led you in the wilderness; I delivered you time after time from plagues, droughts and famines. But when I brought you into the land flowing with milk and honey and prospered you—when you had eaten and were filled, you allowed your heart to be lifted up in pride and you forgot Me, and I specifically warned you, through Moses, not to let this happen. Therefore I am going to come upon this people like wild beasts come upon flocks of sheep. I will tear this nation to pieces and tear its very heart out, and this nation will be swallowed up in My wrath.

SUMMARY

Israel could not stand prosperity. She let pride cause her to forget her prosperity came from Jehovah. Turning, in pride, to idols she persists in idolatry and incurs the terrible wrath of a jealous God.

COMMENT

v. 1 WHEN EPHRAIM SPAKE . . . THERE WAS TREMBLING . . . The struggles of the proud tribe of Ephraim to get the rule among the tribes of the covenant people led eventually to the secession of the ten tribes and the divided kingdoms and the establishment of the kingdom of Israel. Israel, the northern kingdom, then became powerful and rich, and when Israel "spoke" her neighbor-nations (esp. Judah) listened! When Israel became rich and powerful her kings (esp. Ahab, see I Kings 16:29-33) made alliances with heathen nations and brought in the worship of Baal. This offended the righteous and jealous love of Jehovah. From that time onward Israel began slowly but certainly to die—both spiritually, and as a consequence, physically.

v. 2 AND NOW THEY SIN MORE AND MORE . . . THEY SAY . . . LET THE MEN THAT SACRIFICE KISS THE CALVES . . . The farther one goes away from the light, the darker the darkness! The more Israel sinned, the more she wanted to sin. They became stupid and shameless in their sin and melted their silver and fashioned it with their own hands into gods and then bowed down before them and even kissed them. Pusey says, "Kissing was an act of homage in the East, done upon the hand or the foot, the knees or shoulder. It was a token of Divine honor, whether to an idol or to God (cf. I Kings 19:18; Psa. 2:12). It was performed, either by actually kissing the image, or when the object could not be approached, (as the moon) kissing the hand, and so sending, as it were, the kiss to it (cf. Job. 31:26-27). The apostle Paul reasoned logically with the philosophers of Athens that living men should never think that the Deity is like gold or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man (cf. Acts 17:22-31). Men, rational beings, professing to worship Jehovah, kiss, adore, worship, and expect help from calves made of silver. What foolish, stupid wickedness! There is even enough of the revelation of a personal God in nature that men ought not to worship idols or creatures (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). And Israel had in addition to this, a direct, miraculously confirmed, revelation of God!

v. 3 THEREFORE THEY SHALL BE AS THE . . . DEW THAT PASSETH EARLY AWAY . . . Hosea uses four common experiences of men to figuratively express the rapid demise of Israel. As suddenly as the morning clouds vanish, as quickly as the dew is dried up, as violently as the chaff is driven through the air by a whirlwind, and as completely as the smoke rising from a cooking fire vanishes—so will Israel suddenly, quickly, violently and completely vanish from the land. Hosea uses "dew" in other places as a figure of other experiences (cf. our comments on 6:4 and 14:5).

v. 4-5 . . . I AM JEHOVAH THY GOD FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT . . . I DID KNOW THEE IN THE WILDERNESS . . . Again the prophet sets forth the contrast between the true God and the false gods. The enormity of their sin is evident once the comparison is recognized. Their God, Jehovah, delivered them from the power of Egypt and Egypt's "gods" by demonstrating, through Moses and Aaron, the impotency of Egypt's idols and His own omnipotence. Jehovah delivered them, sustained them in the wilderness and revealed His will to them by mighty miraculous signs and wonders which their forefathers had

seen with their own eyes (cf. Deut. 32:1-43). How utterly stupid of this generation then, not to recognize that there is only One True God, Jehovah, and that He alone can save them.

v. 6 . . . THEY WERE FILLED AND THEIR HEART WAS EXALTED . . .

How could a later generation of Israelites be so mentally and spiritually depraved as to forget the facts of history? The answer is here in the sixth verse. Pride! They did exactly what Moses warned them not to do in Deuteronomy 8:11-20! When Israel became affluent, they did like so many other nations have done, and like America is doing today, they lifted up their hearts in pride and said, "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth." Pride—whether it is military pride, political pride, affluent pride or intellectual pride—causes men to "wilfully ignore the facts of history" as Peter points out in II Pet. 3:3-7. Pseudo-scientists, proud of their intellectualism, proud of their erudition, holding to evolutionary, uniformitarian views, will deliberately ignore the historical, empirical facts which testify to creation and catastrophism. Theologians, proud of their erudition or their religious heritages, will deliberately ignore the historical, textual integrity of the Bible and substitute theology and philosophy for the Word of God. Pride is the trap that snared the devil, snared Eve and then Adam and snares many millions today (cf. I Tim. 3:6-7).

v. 7-8 THEREFORE I AM UNTO THEM AS A LION . . . AND WILL REND THE CAUL OF THEIR HEART . . . God's flock had been caused to lie down in green pastures and drink beside the still waters. But now God will come upon this flock of helpless sheep (Israel) like all of the wild beasts and tear this nation to pieces. *Caul* is the pericardium or membranous sac surrounding the heart. God is going to tear the very heart out of this nation. He will cause it to be devoured and swallowed up in Assyrian captivity, like a lioness devours its prey.

QUIZ

1. Who "trembled" when Ephraim spoke?
2. When did Israel begin her downward plunge into moral decadence?
3. Did men actually "kiss" calves? Why?
4. How did Paul, the apostle, argue against idolatry to philosophers?
5. Why should Israel have known the difference between Jehovah and idols?
6. Why did Israel refuse to acknowledge the difference between God and idols?
7. How extensive will the judgment of God be upon Israel?

REQUITING— ISRAEL WILL PERISH

TEXT: 13:9-16

- 9 It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against me, against thy help.
- 10 Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?
- 11 I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath.
- 12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is laid up in store.
- 13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for it is time he should not tarry in the place of the breaking forth of children.
- 14 I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.
- 15 Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the breath of Jehovah coming up from the wilderness; and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall make spoil of the treasure of all goodly vessels.
- 16 Samaria shall bear her guilt; for she hath rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

QUERIES

- a. Why does God bring up the subject of Israel's king?
- b. Why the reference to "death" and "Sheol?"
- c. Were pregnant women really to be "ripped up?"

PARAPHRASE

It is to your own self-destruction, O Israel, that you have resisted Me, your only source of help. What good is your king now? Is it not evident that he is unable to save you? Where are all the royal counselors and ministers of state whom you chose when you broke away from the rule of the house of David and formed your own kingdom? You asked for them, now let them save you. In My anger over your separation from the throne of David I have repeatedly given you your desired kings and in wrath I have overthrown them because they are

all wicked. Ephraim's sins are all carefully bound together and preserved for the day when they will be punished. Pain and agony like that of a woman at childbirth will come upon Ephraim. Yes, God is going to chasten Israel in order to bring about a new birth—a conversion; but Israel behaves foolishly. Like a child, who at the time of the labor-pains will not enter the opening of the womb, Israel will not let himself be new-born. Yet out of the hand of hell will I redeem them; from death will I set them free! Where are your plagues, O death, now that I have annihilated you? Where is your destruction, O Sheol, now that I have conquered you? My purpose of salvation will be irrevocably accomplished and I will not change! For the remnant of Ephraim which remains faithful will bear fruit among brethren. On the other hand, upon the Ephraim that has turned into Canaan, an east wind will come, a judgment of Jehovah, which will destroy this Ephraim. This judgment of Jehovah, the Assyrian empire, will plunder the treasures and valuables of Ephraim. Samaria will pay for its sins because it has rebelled against its God. Her people will be killed by the invading armies, her babies dashed to death against the ground, her pregnant women ripped open with a sword.

SUMMARY

The prophet once more discloses to the people the reason for their corruption. Then, after pointing to the saving power of the Lord, he holds up before them utter destruction as the just punishment for their guilt.

COMMENT

v. 9 IT IS THY DESTRUCTION, O ISRAEL, THAT THOU ART AGAINST ME . . . *What a statement this is*—pregnant with meaning! Man's sin, judgment, sentence and destruction are not, in themselves, from God, but from man's moral choice to rebell against God. Whoever casts himself against the Rock of Ages will destroy himself (cf. Matt. 21:42-44), for God's justice, mercy, righteousness is immutable. An ancient church father wrote, "Rightly is God called, not the Father of judgments or of vengeance, but the *Father of mercies*, because from Himself is the cause and origin of His mercy, from us the cause of His judging or avenging." Hosea is here speaking of the ten tribes in their rebellion against Jehovah when they withdrew from the rule of the house of David under Rehoboam and made Jeroboam their king. The ten tribes showed their contempt for Jehovah when they renounced allegiance to and portion in the throne of David (cf. I Kings 12:16). Of course, this

spirit of desiring to be rid of the rule of Jehovah began in the days of Samuel (cf. I Sam. 8:5) when all the people desired to imitate the nations about them and be ruled over by a visible, physical king.

v. 10-11 WHERE NOW IS THY KING, THAT HE MAY SAVE THEE . . . I HAVE GIVEN THEE A KING IN MINE ANGER . . . The challenge of verse 10 does not presuppose that Israel had no king at all at that time, but simply challenges the people to put forth any of their kings that could save them. None could. We are reminded of Isaiah's challenge to idols and false prophets (Isa. 42:21-24; 44:6-20), to prove their omniscience—they could not. Israel had put all her trust in her kings to save her from economic and political ruin, but "all the king's horses and all the king's men, couldn't put Israel together again."

Verse 11 does not refer simply to the dethronement of one king by another, but to the kingdom generally, which God would overthrow in His anger. The anger of God stands at the beginning and at the end; giving kings and taking them away, are both an evidence of His displeasure. Lange says:

"The whole (temporal) kingdom was a divine system of punishment and chastening. At the request of the people, He granted them a king, but with the expression of His displeasure at their desire because it proceeded from unbelief and vanity, and with the declaration that they would lose their freedom by its realization. But, at the same time, this kingdom of Israel might become a blessing if it with its king would obey God. Nay, God, by establishing the throne of David in Zion, even connected the most precious promises with this kingdom, if the king were entirely one with God and should gather about him a nation obedient to God. But the people with their king followed more and more decidedly a course opposed to God by separating (in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes) from the house with which God had connected his promises, and so forsaking the king which God had given them, they must therefore be punished by having this self-erected kingdom taken away, and the punishment is all the greater that they shall never return to a state of freedom, but must lie under the much viler bondage of foreign rulers until they return to the king whom God had promised to raise up from the House of David."

God gave the tribes who were discontented with the rule of the House of David, a king of their own that He might punish them for their resistance to His divinely appointed government. God held the

rebellious ten tribes responsible for separation from the royal house to which the promise of covenant fulfillment had been given. So when Israel separated itself from the theocracy, it separated itself from the divinely appointed worship and altar, and formed an apostate worship, priesthood and an idol-god. God, after a long period of grace in which He sent many prophets to turn the people back to His will, finally took away Israel's government and gave the nation into the hands of the Assyrians to serve as slaves.

v. 12 THE INIQUITY OF EPHRAIM IS BOUND UP . . . The word *tsarur* means, bound up in a bundle to store away or preserve with certainty, so as not to be lost. So, the idea here is the certainty of the punishment of Israel. Israel thought, as do all sinners, that because God does not punish sin at once, He never will. They think that God will bear with them always, because He bore with them so long; or that He does not see, does not regard it, is not so precise about His laws being broken (cf. Ecc. 8:11). But unrepented sin is increasingly stored up, piled one upon another, stored up until the patience of God reaches the divine day of appointment.

v. 13 THE SORROWS OF A TRAVAILING WOMAN SHALL COME UPON HIM . . . FOR IT IS TIME HE SHOULD NOT TARRY IN THE PLACE OF THE BREAKING FORTH OF CHILDREN. Here is an example of the prophet slipping from one figure to another with application to the same object. It is a very graphic use of figures of speech to portray the obstinacy of Israel. First Hosea describes the punishment Israel will endure by the figure of alluding to the pains of childbirth. Yet, though there is pain in child-birth, it brings forth new life. So, Israel, if she allows her sorrow and travail to turn her to God will be bring forth new life (cf. Micah 4:9-10; Isa. 26:17-18). But death comes if the foetal child does not enter the vagina during labor. So, now, Hosea turns to this tragic picture to represent the stubborn resistance of Israel to the divine purpose in its travail. Israel is an unwise son because, while under the chastening judgment, he resists conversion and new birth. The "place of the breaking forth of children," is in Hebrew, *Mishbar banim*, which means literally, "the breach; the place of bringing forth."

v. 14 . . . O DEATH WHERE ARE THY PLAGUES? O SHEOL, WHERE IS THY DESTRUCTION? . . . This verse contains a promise, not a threat, as some commentators have mistakenly understood. The primary intent of the statement is for a faithful remnant of Israel (the Ten Tribes). God's promise here is that He has the power even to redeem Israel

from the premature death mentioned in verse 13, by raising them from the dead (so to speak) even as Ezekiel predicted in his figure of the "dry bones" in Ezekiel 37! Some of the Ten Tribes did eventually return with Judah and form the Messianic people. But the ultimate fulfillment of this promise was fulfilled when Christ, the true Israel, conquered death and hell, when He died and rose from the grave (cf. I Cor. 15:55). The Israel restored from the captivity became a type of the Messiah and the Messianic people (cf. Isa. 25:8ff).

The phrase "repentance shall be hid from mine eyes," simply signifies that what God has promised to do will be certainly and absolutely accomplished, conditioned upon the response of Israel to His promise. God does not repent! He does not change! His will is immutable! (cf. Psa. 89:34-36; 110:4). Israel, if she will, can put her trust completely in God's promise to redeem her from the "death" of captivity and restore her to her intended destiny as a part of the Messianic people—if she will! It is not God's will that has changed—He does not repent—it is Israel's choice that has changed.

v. 15 **THOUGH HE BE FRUITFUL AMONG HIS BRETHREN . . .** We prefer K & D translation of the conjunction in verse 15 which makes it read "For he will bear fruit among brethren," rather than the "Though he be fruitful . . ." of the text. The opening phrase of verse 15 then becomes a play upon the name "Ephraim" which means "double-fruitfulness." The prophet is saying, in essence, "Yes, even your name signifies the promise of God that some of Ephraim will be redeemed and bear fruit." Of course, all the promises of God are fulfilled to those who adhere to the conditions under which they are given. Of the whole nation of Israel in Hosea's day, only that small remnant who walked in faith in the promises of God and were obedient to His commandments, would be fruitful among their brethren. On the other hand, upon the majority of the people of Israel that has turned itself into Canaan (cf. 12:8), an "east wind" will come. A storm from the "east" will come upon them. This storm from the east (Assyrian soldiers) will consume the fruitful land of the northern kingdom, and all the impenitent sons of Ephraim with it. Their treasures shall be plundered. They become paupers.

v. 16 **SAMARIA SHALL BEAR HER GUILT . . .** Samaria (Israel represented by her capital city) must atone for her sins. She must pay! She has sown the wind—now she shall reap the whirlwind! One word summarizes the past and present history of the Northern Kingdom: **REBELLION** (cf. I Kings 12:19; II Kings 17:14-17). There is a grue-

some description of the cold-blooded cruelty of the Assyrian conquest here. Children will be dashed to death upon the pavements of village streets; women, pregnant with child, will be ripped open with the swords of the soldiers. For a record of the actual fulfillment of this see II Kings 8:12; 15:16.

QUIZ

1. Why is rebellion against God a prelude to self-destruction?
2. How did God give them a king in anger and take away a king in wrath?
3. Why does the prophet liken Israel's situation to child-birth?
4. What is the promise concerning victory over hell and death to Israel?
5. Where is this promise quoted in the New Testament and what is its meaning?
6. What is the "east wind" that will come and destroy impenitent Israel?
7. Where is the record of the fulfillment of verse 16?

LOVE RECONCILING

PEACE REMAINS—LURED

TEXT: 14:1-3

- 1 O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
- 2 Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.
- 3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

QUERIES

- a. Why is Israel directed to "take . . . words" unto Jehovah?
- b. Why does Israel pledge not to "ride upon horses?"

PARAPHRASE

Return, O Israel, by taking the right steps toward God. You have stumbled in taking the wrong steps of sin and rebellion. It is still possible for you to return, but if your return is to be in the right way, it must begin with a prayer for the forgiveness of your sin. So take