

QUIZ

1. What do verses 1-3 of this chapter tell about the character of God?
2. What is the primary meaning of "after two . . . three days" in this context?
3. Could these "three" days have reference to Christ's resurrection? How?
4. What does Hosea mean by "knowing" the Lord?
5. How were the people "hewn" by the prophets?
6. Does this chapter teach that the prophets preached cessation of sacrifices?
7. How did Adam transgress God's covenant?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— LOVE OF SIN

TEXT: 7:1-7

- 1 When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood, and the thief entereth in, and the troop of robbers ravageth without.
- 2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness; now have their own doings beset them about; they are before my face.
- 3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.
- 4 They are all adulterers; they are as an oven heated by the baker; he ceaseth to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough, until it be leavened.
- 5 On the day of our king the princes made themselves sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with scoffers.
- 6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait; their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.
- 7 They are all hot as an oven and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.

QUERIES

- a. Why would the king "be glad" about the people's wickedness?
- b. Why the likening of the people to a baker's oven?
- c. How would the king "stretch out his hand with scoffers?"

PARAPHRASE

When I attempted to heal the nation of Israel of her wound, the full extent of her cancerous sinfulness was exposed. Especially is the malignancy resident in Samaria, her capital city. The land is full of liars, thieves and bandits. And what is most disastrous of all, the people are wilfully ignorant of both their own wickedness and of My Perfect Omniscience and Justice. The people have so deceived themselves, they have so encircled themselves with iniquity, they have become slaves to their sins. Their sinful deeds betray them on every side and I am fully aware of it all. Their king takes pleasure in their wicked deeds and the princes of the court are pleased with the lies told by the people. The whole nation is a nation of adulterers. Their burning passion to do evil resembles a furnace which a baker heats in the evening, and leaves burning all night while the dough is leavening, and then causes to burn with a still brighter flame in the morning, when the dough is ready for baking. On special royal holidays the noblemen of the government make themselves sick by drunkenness. The king gathers about himself such drunken fools and scoffers as advisers and confidants. Evil is allowed to smolder and simmer in their hearts like an oven whose fire has been banked for the night. Then, suddenly, the smoldering coals of evil imaginations are fanned into a roaring fire and the evil deeds are committed. These roaring fires of evil thoughts and deeds so consume the people they are oblivious to the fact that every vestige of justice, right, goodness and law and order has fallen as kings and judges are overthrown—they do not see that anarchy is ruling. And in the midst of it all, not one of them has the faith to call on Me!

SUMMARY

The moral depravity of Israel which is leading her inevitably in a headlong plunge into anarchy is pictured by the prophet. The hearts of the people are so passionate for evil they are insensible to it all!

COMMENT

v. 1 WHEN I WOULD HEAL ISRAEL . . . Like the surgeon who begins to dress a wound often exposes hidden contamination, so God as He began to heal Israel by sending the prophets to preach and by sending upon Israel certain providential, natural calamities, to call them to repentance, exposed the full content of the corruption of the nation. Especially was corruption rampant in Israel's capital city, Samaria. We are reminded of Micah's searing accusations against the capital cities.

of both Israel and Judah. Crime and corruption most often germinates in the urban societies. And, just as in the days of the prophets, so now, very often people blind themselves to their own condition.

v. 2 AND THEY CONSIDER NOT IN THEIR HEARTS . . . One cannot help but notice in this chapter how often the phrase "knoweth it not" recurs. Israel persistently ignored their own condition and persistently ignored God. It is dangerous for a nation to sin. But the most perilous condition possible is to sin and "know it not." We shall have more to say about this condition in the next section. But here the prophet depicts the people as blissfully ignorant of God. They refuse to accept the fact that God is aware of their wickedness and that He will judge them for it. Their sin is apparent to everyone but themselves. They have become so captivated, enslaved in evil ways, it is their way of life—they are beset about with it.

v. 3 THEY MAKE THE KING GLAD WITH THEIR WICKEDNESS . . . Pusey writes, "Wicked sovereigns and a wicked people are a curse to each other, each encouraging the other in sin." There are at least two reasons rulers are made happy by the sins of the people: (a) In most cases the rulers profit in a monetary way through the indulgence and excesses of the populace. For this reason evil rulers do all within their power to legalize crime and evil; (b) and furthermore good and serious people would be a reproach to the consciences of the rulers—if therefore the people condone and practice the evil the rulers practice, they are an encouragement to evil to one another. It goes without saying that this is true of every form of government devised by man, including democracy. The only nation where this is not so is the chosen nation of God, the kingdom ruled over by the Holy and Righteous King, Jesus Christ, the church of the living God! The citizens of this nation have been reborn and are being transformed into the image of their King—loving, righteous, holy, pure and just. Their King hates sin and is made to grieve when it occurs and so do His subjects, (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 35:5-10).

v. 4 . . . THEY ARE AS AN OVEN HEATED BY THE BAKER . . . The people allow their hearts to smolder and simmer with evil thoughts and imaginations and plans, like the smoldering fire built by the baker near which he places his kneaded dough ready to bake in the morning when he will fan the coals into a roaring fire. The people go to bed at night with their evil plans smoldering in their hearts to awake in the morning and fan the coals into roaring deeds of evil.

v. 5 ON THE DAY OF OUR KING . . . Just what this "day of our king" was we do not know. It was probably either the king's birthday or the anniversary of his coronation. It was a holiday of some significance devoted to much excess in feasting and drinking. The leaders of the nation spent the day in revelry and carousel over indulging themselves to the point of nausea. The king, drunken with wine, let down his royal dignity and joined the crude, boisterous, sacrilegious scoffers (or blasphemers). "Wine is a mocker (or scoffer)" (Prov. 20:1) and drunkenness removes all restraint revealing the evil which is in the man. The king, rather than stretching out his hand to protect the few in Israel who were being exploited and persecuted for their righteousness, stretched out his hand (or welcomed) to join with these profane, degraded men. How can any society survive when its leaders become examples of corruption and excess? How can any nation hope to be a master of its destiny when it enslaves itself to indulgence and excess? May God raise up prophets of righteous indignation and fearless courage to pronounce the judgments of God upon the leaders of nations today who enjoy wickedness and indulge in excesses because of the profit they make.

v. 6-7 . . . THEY HAVE MADE READY THEIR HEART LIKE AN OVEN . . . THEY . . . DEVOUR THEIR JUDGES; ALL THEIR KINGS ARE FALLEN . . . Now Hosea looks to the consequences of Israel's moral depravity. Perhaps such consequences are already beginning to take place. The leaders and the people are so saturated with sin they do not even let their hearts rest from devising new wickedness. The prophet is probably describing a scene of revelry, debauchery and scoffing which preceded the murder of Zechariah, king of Israel (became king in 753 B.C. upon the death of Jeroboam II). Zechariah was slain through conspiracy publicly in the open face of day, "before all the people" (II Kings 15:9), no one heeding, no one resisting, about 10 years after his coronation by Shallum. From then on it was almost complete anarchy with one king after another being slain in Israel. We quote from Pusey:

"The kingdom of Israel, having been set up in sin, was, throughout its whole course, unstable and unsettled. Jeroboam's house ended in his son; that of Baasha, who killed Jeroboam's son, Nadab, ended in his own son, Elah; Omri's ended in his son's son, God having delayed the punishment on Ahab's sins for one generation, on account of his partial repentance; then followed Jehu's to whose house God, for his obedience in some things, continued the kingdom to the fourth generation. With

these two exceptions, in the houses of Omri and Jehu, the kings of Israel either left no sons, or left them to be slain. Nadab, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Jehoram, Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, Pekah, were put to death by those who succeeded them. Of all the kings of Israel, Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Menahem, alone, in addition to Jehu and the three next of his house, died natural deaths. So was it written, by God's hand on the house of Israel, *all their kings have fallen*. The captivity was the tenth change after they had deserted the house of David. Yet such was the stupidity and obstinacy both of kinds and people, that, amid all these chastisements, none, either people or king, turned to God and prayed Him to deliver them. Not even distress, amid which almost all betake themselves to God, awakened any sense of religion in them. *There is none among them, that calleth unto Me.*"

QUIZ

1. Why was the iniquity of Israel uncovered when God set out to "heal" them?
2. Why was their wickedness so staggering or unnatural?
3. Why were the kings and princes glad at the wickedness of the people?
4. What is the "day of the king?" How did the king behave?
5. How did the people "devour" their judges and kings?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— LOVE OF SIN

TEXT: 7:8-16

- 8 Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned.
- 9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there (sprinkled) upon him, and he knoweth it not.
- 10 And the price of Israel doth testify to his face: yet they have not returned unto Jehovah their God, nor sought him, for all this.
- 11 And Ephraim is like a silly dove, without understanding: they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria.
- 12 When they shall go, I will spread my net among them; I will bring them down as the birds of the heavens; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.

- 13 Woe unto them! for they have wandered from me; destruction unto them! for they have trespassed against me: though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against me.
- 14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, but they howl upon their beds: they assemble themselves for grain and new wine; they rebel against me.
- 15 Though I have taught and strengthened their arms, yet do they devise mischief against me.
- 16 They return, but not to him that is on high; they are like a deceitful bow; their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

QUERIES

- a. What is the meaning of the figure, "Ephraim is a cake not turned?"
- b. What is the meaning of the figure, "gray hairs . . . sprinkled upon him?"
- c. What "shall be their derision" in the land of Egypt?

PARAPHRASE

Israel has so thoroughly absorbed the ways of the heathen he is like a cake not turned—scorched on one side and undone on the other; he is putrid and useless. This heathenish contamination has sapped Israel's intellectual and moral strength and he does not even recognize it! Yes, "gray hairs" or signs of decadence are everywhere apparent in Israel but the nation is unconscious of them! Jehovah is continually testifying to Israel through the prophets and judgments in nature but in spite of all this Israel has not returned to God. Israel, flitting back and forth from Egypt to Assyria for succor, is unaware of the trap they are about to fall into—he is like a silly dove when flying about in search of food, does not observe the net that is spread for it. The trap they are about to fall into will be My judgment. I will bring upon them the chastisement which has been announced by My prophets. Woe shall be upon them because they have flown away from Me. I would like to redeem them still; but they have lied to themselves and others about Me saying I cannot and will not redeem them. Oh, they cry to Me but their cries are not of faith and not from the heart. They howl upon their beds in unbelieving despair at the distress that has come upon them. They huddle together seeking through idolatry to get the corn and new wine I have withheld because their only desire is to fill their bellies. They have utterly rebelled against Me. I have, many times over, tried to deliver them, but whatever I did Israel

continued to scheme and plan to bring dishonor to My name. Oh, they return, but not to God on high. They are constantly changing and turning from one idol to another. They are like a crooked bow; no matter where it is aimed the arrow flies away from the target. Because their princes have lied about God and blasphemed His name they shall die violently. God will have them in derision because they have blasphemously placed their trust in Egypt and not in Him.

SUMMARY

The moral depravity of Israel is exposed by citing various examples of it and picturing the passion with which the people love their sin.

COMMENT

v. 8-9 . . . EPHRAIM IS A CAKE NOT TURNED . . . GRAY HAIRS ARE HERE AND THERE UPON HIM, AND HE KNOWETH IT NOT . . . In these two verses the prophet shows, by vivid figures of speech, the extent of the moral decadence in Israel. The "cake" here mentioned is in Hebrew, *uggab*, literally, "circular," was a thin pancake, to which a scorching heat was applied on one side. Israel had been separated from the nations by the Lord (Lev. 20:24-26), to be a people dwelling alone (Num. 23:9), in order that it might be a holy nation to serve Him. But Israel thought itself wiser than the Lord and mingled with the nations through intermarriage (Ahab and Jezebel), through cultural and economic exchanges, through political alliances, and most disastrous of all through adoption of heathen religions of idolatry. A cake not turned is burned to a crisp on one side and uncooked, putrid, on the other side—it is worse than useless, it is nauseating. This is the first figure to describe Israel's moral decadence. The second figure of speech used by Hosea pictures Israel as a man whose hair is beginning to show signs of physical decadence by the sprinkling of gray hairs appearing. The phrase, "and he knoweth it not" is interesting. As G. Campbell Morgan asks, "Now I ask you, if any of you were unconscious when gray hairs began to appear!" Such behavior is quite unnatural. Men discover gray in their hair and laugh at them, try to pull them out or dye them—but they do not ignore them for they are signs of declining strength. As tragic and stupid as this might be in the physical realm it is even more tragic and stupid in the spiritual and moral realm.

Yet it is continually true that signs of spiritual decadence, which are so patent to others, are undiscovered by ourselves. We go on, and on, and on, the victims of ebbing strength, spiritually and morally becoming degenerate, without recognizing it! We are too often blind to the signs which are self-evident to onlookers. And there is no condition more perilous to our highest well-being than being unaware of spiritual degeneration. Malachi writes of this attitude among the people even after they had suffered the captivities and been restored to the land by God. The refrain of the people in Malachi's day is "Where in . . ." They were spiritually blind to their spiritual decadence. How do men so blind themselves? By setting up false standards—by refusing to admit the validity of God's standards.

How may we overcome spiritual decay? First, of course, we must recognize it, admit it, confess it. But mere recognition and admission that "gray hairs" are present will not remove them. Dyeing the "gray hairs" of sin with a false veneer of respectability will not hide them. We must turn to God in faith and obedience—He will remove them. He will renew our spiritual life. He will give us new birth (cf. Psa. 103:1-5; Isa. 40:29-31); Jn. 3:1-6; II Cor. 4:16-18; 5:17, etc.). God alone is able to remove gray hairs from our spiritual and moral nature by taking away the destructive forces which are producing the moral degeneracy.

v. 10 . . . THE PRIDE OF ISRAEL DOTTH TESTIFY TO HIS FACE . . .

How often the pride of Israel, had testified to the face of Israel. One prophet after another declared Israel's sin and God's judgment. One natural calamity after another (locust plagues, earthquakes, droughts, diseases, etc.) testified to the wrath of God upon Israel's sin. Yet for all of this they would not turn and seek the forgiveness of God (cf. 4:6ff).

v. 11-12 . . . EPHRAIM IS LIKE A SILLY DOVE . . . I WILL SPREAD MY NET UPON THEM . . . There is an Eastern proverb, according to Pusey, which says, "There is nothing more simple than a dove." Jesus used the dove as a symbol of simplicity (Matt. 10:16), in a good sense. Hosea's figure of speech refers to Israel as having a stupid or ignorant simplicity—silly, foolish. Israel is like a silly or dumb creature distressed not knowing where to turn for relief. Israel does not know enough to turn to its God (cf. Isa. 1:3). Israel has turned to its enemies for help! She is so silly that she turns for help to those whose sole purpose is to do her harm! Israel, flitting here and there for succor, is oblivious that she is flying right into the trap God has set

for a disobedient people. God has announced before hand that He will chasten Israel by the hand of Assyria (cf. Isa. 10:5 ff). The very nation Israel considers a source of strength will become her trap, (cf. Hosea 11:5).

v. 13 **WOE TO THEM . . . THOUGH I WOULD REDEEM THEM . . . THEY HAVE SPOKEN LIES AGAINST ME . . .** How often God would have redeemed them (cf. Isa. 49:16; Hosea 11:1-9)! How often He did redeem them! But they continually wandered (cf. Heb. 3:7-19). They continually lied to themselves and to one another about the nature of Jehovah. They lied to themselves by refusing to believe Jehovah would bless them in spite of their extremities. They refused to trust in the faithfulness of Jehovah toward His people, even in the face of past experience of history. So their turning to idols was living the lie that was in their heartts.

v. 14-15 . . . **THEY HOWL UPON THEIR BEDS . . . THEY REBEL AGAINST ME . . . THEY DEVISE MISCHIEF AGAINST ME . . .** Instead of turning to Jehovah who proved Himself true and faithful and willing to save and bless, time after time, they lied to themselves and in the midst of certain distressing periods they cried and howled upon their beds in unbelieving despair. They howled to their dumb idols which could neither speak nor hear (cf. Isa. 41:21-29; 44:1-22). They rebelled against Jehovah by devising human or pagan ways and means of supplying the corn and wine which God had withheld from them to bring them back to Him. What they were doing, in reality, turned out to be declaring war on God's ways. The writer of Hebrews (3:10) attributes the failures of their ancestors to "not knowing the ways" of God. These Israelites of Hosea's day refused to recognize that drought, famine, etc. were God's ways of calling them back to Him. They literally assembled themselves together to devise rebellious ways to fight against the judgments of God. How presumptuous! How useless! God was trying to teach them and strengthen them morally through chastening. This is the end of all righteous discipline—moral growth. But he who rebels against moral growth through discipline only destroys himself.

v. 16 . . . **THEY ARE LIKE A DECEITFUL BOW . . .** Israel was changing and turning constantly but not in the right direction! She was missing the mark. She was not headed toward the goal God had set for her. She turned here and there and everywhere but not to the King of the Universe. Like a crooked bow; no matter where it is aimed the arrow flies away from the target. No matter which way Israel turned she missed the target God had set for her, because she

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE — LORD'S LAMENT 7:13-16

always turned away from God's word. Because their princes have lied about God and blasphemed His name they shall die violently. God will have them in derision because they have blasphemously placed their trust in Egypt and not in Him. Any person or people who trusts in their own might or wisdom will be defeated, shamed and confused. "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision" (cf. Psa. 2:1-11).

QUIZ

1. How dangerous is moral decadence when we are unaware of it?
2. How can moral decadence be cured?
3. Why was Israel like a "silly dove?"
4. How did God trap Israel?
5. How did they devise mischief against God?
6. How was Israel like "a deceitful bow?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— THE LORD'S LAMENT

TEXT: 8:1-7

- 1 Set the trumpet to thy mouth. As an eagle he cometh against the house of Jehovah, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.
- 2 They shall cry unto me, My God, we Israel know thee.
- 3 Israel hath cast off that which is good: the enemy shall pursue him.
- 4 They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold they have made them idols, that they may be cut off.
- 5 He hath cast off thy calf, O Samaria; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?
- 6 For from Israel is even this; the workman made it, and it is no God; yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.
- 7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind; he hath no standing grain; the blade shall yield no meal; if so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up.

QUERIES

- a. Who is coming "as an eagle" against the house of Jehovah?
- b. How did they set up kings but not by Jehovah?
- c. What does "sow the wind . . . reap the whirlwind" mean?