

Focus on Hosea 7:3-7: The Burning Oven!

Russ's commentary: It is essential to understand why Hosea says in verse 7:7, "All their kings fall, and none of them calls on me. (See 2 Kings 15:1-31; 17:1-23) During the last forty-one and a half years, there were six kings, **four of whom were assassinated** by the subsequent kings. Moreover, they all did evil in the eyes of the Lord. This explains why Hosea said, "All their kings had fallen down. Moreover, none of them once called on the Lord."

Does this remind you of another country today?

"All this took place (the invasion of Israel by the Assyrians) because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. The Israelites secretly did things against the Lord their God that were not right... They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill... They did wicked things that provoked the Lord to anger. They worshiped idols, though the Lord had said, "You shall not do this."

The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I confirmed your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants, the prophets." But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the Lord their God... They forsook all the commands of the Lord their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal. They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, provoking him to anger" (2 Kings 17:7-14, 16-17).

1. Read the commentary excerpts below. According to Eaton, **verses 3-7** probably depict one of these assassinations in which one of these kings is murdered. Some of the similes and descriptions are difficult to understand. But give it a try. What do you think these verses specifically refer to? (Again, remember that an assassination is probably being described.)

Commentary by Eaton:

- 'burning like an oven' seems to refer not to sexual passion but to their burning zeal (although I think it could be both) to get rid of the king and place another ruler on the throne.
- Perhaps Hosea is describing a "wild party, or whatever it was, was much the same. The would-be assassins entertained the king. As the night wore on, the king became more helpless, but the assassins became more wildly ambitious. By the early hours of the morning, they were in a burning rage against the king."¹

¹ Eaton, 115-116.

Commentary by David Guzik:

- Israel was inflamed with desire and passion after idols like the coals of a freshly stoked fire, ready to bake bread. Paul used the same image of “burning lust” in 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.*

None among them calls upon Me: 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 an empty ceremony, not a true calling upon their covenant God.²

2. Think of our nation’s current moral and spiritual condition. How might these same verses apply to America?
 - a. What does godless leadership lead to?
 - b. How do these verses give a picture of the human heart or nature (see Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:18-31; 3:10-18)?
 - c. How do these verses point to the inevitable failure of a society without God?
 - d. Look at the patterns/cycles of empires below and state which cycle you think America is currently in. Explain your answer.

One such observer (of patterns or cycles) was Sir John Bagot Glubb (AKA Glubb Pasha). Army General and historian, he studied eleven empires starting with the Assyrians in 859 B.C. and ending with the British in 1950 A.D. Sir John determined that each followed a remarkably similar pattern from birth to demise. Spanning a period of about ten generations, each went through 7 Stages of Empires:³

- The Age of Pioneers (Outburst)
- The Age of Conquests
- The Age of Commerce
- The Age of Affluence

² *Why is Ephraim like a dove in the bible?* <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/hosea-7/> ; Accessed on May 13, 2024.

³ Seven stages of Empires: <https://medium.com/i-m-h-o/7-stages-of-empire-fcc641b07875> accessed on May 9, 2024.

- The Age of Intellect
- The Age of Decadence

The Age of Decline & Collapse

Read Hosea 7:8-16: How sin affects us!

3. In his commentary on Hosea, Eaton says that sin affects both individuals and nations in the following ways (see italicized declarations below from Eaton):⁴

Explain how these declarations are true about us and America:

- a. *Sin causes confusion and blindness.* (Verse 10—they forgot their past sin; Verse 11—like a bird flittering about confused and without direction; 1 Samuel 8:4-5—Israel wanted to be like all the surrounding nations) How does mixing and spending time with pagans often result in confusion?
 - b. *Sin in God’s people obstructs his work in their lives.* (Verse 11; Philippians 1:6—a cake not turned over is symbolic of God not completing his work in us). How does sin in the life of a believer stall and inhibit his spiritual growth?
 - c. *Sin brings deprivation, weakness, and death.* (Verse 9; Romans 6:23—Israel’s best days are in the past). Read James 1:13-15. How does sin result in death for both the unbeliever and the unbeliever? (Consider both the temporal and eternal consequences)?
 - d. *Sin brings pride.* (Verse 10—Proverbs 16:18 “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”) How does sin result in pride?
4. According to verse 12, who **ultimately** pulled Israel down to destruction and led them away as slaves in a foreign land (Isaiah 8:1-8)?
 5. According to verses 10b, 14-16, and Luke 13:34, what was Israel’s response to God? What is the response of most Americans?

⁴ Eaton, 121-122.

6. Read Revelation 22:17. How should we all respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ? Don't you find it comforting that the Bible essentially ends with an invitation to come to Jesus?

Think/Grow/Live

7. God condemns the Israelites for seeking help from idols or other nations. How are you and the church like the Israelites?
8. The Israelites are incredibly self-deluded in these chapters. Where do you see this self-delusion today in the church and yourself?

Prayer Points

- Pray for forgiveness for the times that you delude yourself.
- Pray that you will be able to face the truth and find freedom through the power of the Spirit.