

Lesson 7: Willful Rebellion

Hosea 8:1-14

According to Eaton, “Hosea 8:1 to 11:11 focuses on events in Israel’s spiritual history. The first matter, in 8:1-8, is the rebelliousness of Israel in choosing kings and in choosing gods for themselves.”¹

In this chapter, we have the image of Hosea being ordered by God to “set the trumpet to your lips.” This is like a military command. He is like the watchman on the wall of a city - the enemy is almost at its gates, and the watchman sounds his trumpet to warn the people of the imminent danger. This is like a wake-up call for the people of Israel so that they can avoid total disaster. The people should be trembling at the sound of this warning trumpet. But this warning went unheeded.

Read Hosea 8:1-6: Making Idols to Worship!

1. Read Deuteronomy 28:15 and 49-52.
 - a. Why is the judgment of God being announced by Hosea over God’s people Israel (v. 1)?
 - b. What nation do you think the eagle or vulture, as in some translations, represents?
 - c. According to the Deuteronomy passage, what would this nation do to Israel?
2. Read Exodus 20. Skim Exodus 21-23 and read Exodus 24.
 - a. What covenant did the Israelites break?
 - b. Read John 14:21. How do we do the same thing?
3. Read Deuteronomy 30:9-20:
 - a. What was promised if the Israelites obeyed God’s laws and commandments (the Sinai Covenant)?

¹ Eaton, 125.

b. What was promised if they disobeyed this covenant?

4. What should you do to ensure you are not guilty of the same thing (John 14:15, 21)?

Israel had a flourishing religious life. Plenty of praying went on in wicked, northern Israel. They even rejoiced in their supposed knowledge of God. But the religion was just that—ritualistic, self-centered religiosity. It was not love of God...Despite Israel's claimed relationship with God, they were not keeping the Mosaic law. They were thus forfeiting the 'life and the good' that came from obedience (Deuteronomy 30:15). The result of their disobedience was that an enemy was encircling the land like a vulture—the Assyrians.²

5. Do you think acknowledging God, for example, when a man recites the Apostles' Creed, is enough to prove genuine faith? What does this show if we claim to know God, but our continuous actions go against what He tells us to do (v. 2-3)?

6. From verses 1 through 4, list five to six different ways that Israel sinned against God.

7. What is the most critical aspect of choosing leaders in the church, or for that matter, the government (v. 4)? What is the role of a leader who is God's chosen instrument rather than the people's choice (Acts 20:28, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4)?

8. First Kings 12:28-30 states, "After seeking advice, the king (Jeroboam I) made two golden calves. He said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt. One he set up in Bethel (southern Israel just north of Jerusalem), and the other in Dan (in the far north just southeast of Damascus). And this thing became a sin; the people went even as far as Dan to worship the one there.'"

First, Kings 16:29-33 states that King Ahab "set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, that he built in Samaria" (8:5).

In Exodus 32:4, the people of Israel give their gold to Aaron, who fashions it into a golden calf. Then Aaron says to the people, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out

² Eaton, 127.

of the land of Egypt!” When these idols are “broken into pieces” (v. 6), it shows they are weak and unable to perform as gods.

Calf worship was the national religion of the northern kingdom (see 1 Kings 12:25-33). This kind of worship had been rejected by God ever since it first appeared (see Exodus 32:1-35).³

- a. What idols have you made in your life that keep you from full surrender to God and enjoying His blessings in your life (v. 5-6)?
- b. Why were the Israelites “incapable of purity/innocence?” (verse 5; John 15:5)?
- c. Are you abiding in Christ? How so? What are your spiritual disciplines?

Hosea spells out the consequences. (i) It would lead to the end of the nation (‘Israel will be cut off’). (ii) The ‘new theology’ would be rejected (‘He has rejected your calf, O Samaria’). (iii) They would face God’s anger (‘My anger burns...’) because their idolatry was evidence of long-term rejection of God himself and persistent wickedness. How long would they be capable of purity? It was a scandal that such an idol as the golden calf they were using should be made in Israel. Had they learned nothing from the story of Aaron’s ‘golden calf’ at Sinai? But ‘this thing come from Israel!’ It was man-made, not truly divine, doomed to judgment. ‘Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken in pieces.’⁴

Making Alliances with Other Nations

Read Hosea 8: 7-10

9. What do you think “they sow the wind and reap the whirlwind” means (v. 7; think about agriculture)? [Hint: John MacArthur writes, “This (expression in v. 7) indicates the escalating futility and uselessness of all their false religion.”]⁵
 - a. Read Psalm 106:34-43. How did Israel sow to the wind? What did they reap?
 - b. How has America been sowing to the wind for the past 60 years? What might we reap?

³ MacArthur, 75.

⁴ Eaton, 128-129.

⁵ Ibid, 75.

10. Concentrate on verses 8-10 and read 2 Kings 15:17-20.

In verse 8, “Israel is swallowed up” – foretelling of a time when they would go into exile, be part of other nations, and lose their identity.

When Israel turns away from Yahweh and seeks assistance, they turn to other nations, specifically Assyria (v. 9; 2 Kings 15:19-20), for support. However, God will use these same nations to pronounce judgment on Israel.

- a. Who should King Menahem have turned to rather than to Assyria?
- b. What was the result (2 Kings 15:20 and 17:5-6)?
- c. What is the lesson for us individually and as a nation?

Read Hosea 8: 11-14: Making Altars for Sinning!

11. Concentrate on verse 12. Read Psalm 119:11, 24, 92-93 and Romans 10:17.

- a. Why is it important to read what God has written (His Word; the Bible; Hosea 8:12)?
- b. How do so many people, including churchgoers, perceive the word of God as something “alien” (8:12)?

12. In many churches in the West (Western Europe, Great Britain, America), why is much of our worship both displeasing and unacceptable to God (8:13; Isaiah 29:13; John 4:23-24)?

13. What would it mean for an Israelite to “return to Egypt” (8:13; remember, they had been enslaved in Egypt for 430 years)?

SHALL RETURN TO EGYPT: Recalling the place of Israel’s bondage, Hosea reminds the Israelites that Assyria will be their future “Egypt” (See Hosea 9:3; 11:5; Deuteronomy 28:26). A few Judean refugees actually did go to Egypt (see 2 Kings 25:26).⁶

14. What does it mean for the people of Israel and Judah to “have multiplied their fortified cities” (8:14)?

JUDAH...FORTIFIED CITIES: Though less idolatrous than Israel, Judah showed a lack of faith in God by trusting more in fortifications. Instead of drawing near to God, Judah multiplied human defenses (see Isaiah 22:8; Jeremiah 5:17). All of these efforts to trust more in human means than to depend wholly on God are doomed to failure.⁷

- a. What are some of the human means our nation turns to instead of God?

- b. How do our wealth and prosperity, as residents of a first-world country, challenge our reliance on God, both nationally and on an individual level?

- c. How do you think we should pray for our nation?

⁶ MacArthur, 76.

⁷ MacArthur, 76.