

Hosea Chapter 13

Verses 1-16

“When he offended in Baal, he died:” Under Ahab, the nation gave itself to the worship of Baal, and the result was spiritual death.

The nation’s spiritual decline also resulted in political decline (1 Kings 16:31).

The tribe of “Ephraim” initially produced strong, God-fearing leaders like Joshua (Joshua 24:30), but eventually became overly self-confident and prone to idol worship, a constant theme in Hosea.

Hosea 13:1 "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."

“Trembling”:

When Ephraim, the most powerful tribe, spoke early in Israel’s history, it was with authority and produced fear.”

“Died”:

Because of his sins and in spite of being feared, Ephraim died, spiritually and now nationally.

As long as Ephraim kept great fear and reverence for God, He did just fine.

It was when he got too proud, and started worshipping Baal, that God was offended.

It does not mean to imply that all the other worship of false gods was unimportant.

It just means it grew to its worst stage, when they worshipped Baal.

The worship of the golden calf in the wilderness had been terrible, and many died in punishment for it, but this is speaking of the whole land being involved in the worship of Baal.

Jeroboam instituted the worship of the calf as God.

The death of the nation was sounded, when this last offence against God came.

Hosea 13:2 "And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, [and] idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves."

“Kiss the calves”:

An act of devotion to their idols (1 Kings 19:18).

The making of idols was just another sign of how far they had fallen from God.

They used the precious metals of silver and gold, that God had blessed them with, to make these abominable idols.

Anything that you can see is not God.

If it is made by human hands, it is not God.

Even this calf was made by human hands, and was not to be worshipped.

God is a Spirit.

Kissing the calves just shows the degradation of their worship.

Verses 3-6

A collection of similes that point to the temporary nature of idols ("morning cloud ... early dew ... chaff ... smoke"), reinforce the message of judgment.

In contrast, the everlasting God reminds Ephraim of her past and His loyal love for her: "I knew you in the wilderness" (Deut. 8:14; 31:20).

Hosea 13:3 "Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff [that] is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney."

All the comparisons in this verse are intended to express a quick destruction, or that they should soon come to nothing.

Signifying that the idolatrous Israelites, king, priests, and people, should be no more.

Their kingdom would cease, all their riches and wealth would depart from them, and they and their children be carried captive into a strange land.

Bright and glistening with light is "the early dew;" in an hour it is gone, as if it had never been.

Glowing and gilded by the sun is "the morning cloud;" while you admire its beauty, its hues have vanished.

Yet in a little time their land would become desolate, and they are stripped of all that was dear and valuable to them these metaphors are used (in Hosea 6:4).

“As the chaff that is driven with a whirlwind out of the floor”:

Signifying that these idolatrous people were like chaff, struggling and empty, useless and unprofitable, fit for nothing but burning; and that they would be driven out of their own land through the Assyrian.

That should come like a whirlwind with great power, as easily and as quickly as chaff is driven out of a threshing floor of corn with a strong blast of wind (Psalm 1:5).

“And as the smoke out of the chimney”:

Which rises up in a pillar, and is so on dissipated by the wind, or dissolved into air; and is no sooner seen but it disappears (see Psalm 68:2).

All these similes show how easily, suddenly, and quickly, the destruction of this idolatrous nation would be brought about.

All of these things are experienced for a moment and fade away.

The "chaff" many times, symbolizes the lost of the world.

Their terrible sin they had committed, was bringing them to swift destruction.

Hosea 13:4 "Yet I [am] the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for [there is] no savior beside me."

“There is no savior beside me:”

Israel had put its trust in other nations (5:13; 7:11; 8:9-10), and its own strength (9:6; 12:8; 2 Kings 14:25-28), rather than in the One who is the only Savior.

God was still the same God who had sheltered them with His providence, ever since He had delivered them from Egypt.

He had the same power and will to help them.

Therefore, their duty was the same, and their destruction arose, not from any change in Him, but from themselves.

"God is the God of the ungodly, by creation and general providence."

“Thou shalt know no god but me”:

I forbade thee to know any other god but me, in gratitude thou should know no other; if there were any other, in point of interest thou should have known, i.e. worshipped, trusted, and obeyed, none but me.

And finally, by woeful experience thou shalt know that calves and Baal are no gods.

They cannot save thee nor themselves; thou shalt know I am God alone, who can destroy those who would not obey me.

“For there is no savior beside me”:

When thy idols cannot save thee out of the hands of those I deliver thee up to, then thou shalt see, what now thou wilt not, that there is no savior but me.

None who can deliver from all evil, and who can enrich with all blessings, who can pardon sin and save the sinner.

Exodus 14:13 "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever."

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Hosea 13:5 "I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought."

"God so knew them, as to deserve to be known by them.

By "knowing" them, He showed how He ought to be acknowledged by them.

"As we love God, because He first loved us," so we come to know and own God, having first been owned and known of Him.

God showed His knowledge of them, by knowing and providing for their needs.

He knew them "in the wilderness, in the land of great drought," where the land yielded neither food nor water.

He supplied them with the "bread from heaven" and with "water from the flinty rock."

He knew and owned them all by His providence; He knew in approbation and love, and fed in body and soul those who, having been known by Him, knew and owned Him.

God had protected them from the famine.

He had caused water to come from the Rock to take care of their thirst.

They should recognize His goodness, and be faithful to Him.

Hosea 13:6 "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me."

As I was their shepherd, and provided pasture for them, so they were fully fed; they had an abundant plenty of all things.

“And their heart was exalted”:

The consequence of their having this plenty was, that from thence they grew proud and high-minded.

“Therefore have they forgotten me”:

Who found them in slavery, poverty, reproach, and tears in Egypt, out of which I saved them.

And they have most scandalously made them gods, worshipped them, and with sacrilegious unthankfulness given the praise of all I did for them to dumb idols, though I warned them of it beforehand (Deut. 6:11-12; 8:13-14).

God had led them to green pastures.

He had provided for their every need.

The most difficult time to stay in good fellowship with the LORD is when everything is going great.

We have a tendency to be like them, when things are running smooth.

We take God for granted, and the first thing you know, we are backsliding.

A believer in God never stands still.

They are either pressing closer to God (usually in time of great trials), or they are drifting away from God.

They had become comfortable and wandered away from God.

Verses 7-8

The lion, leopard, and bear are all native to Israel.

Her Protector would now become to her as a wild beast, tearing and devouring (Lev. 26:21-22; Deut. 32:24; Ezek. 14:21).

Hosea 13:7 "Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe [them]:"

They had waxen fat, were full; yet it was, to become themselves a prey.

Their wealth which they were proud of, which they abused, allured their enemies.

To cut off all hopes of God's mercy, He says that he will be to them, as those creatures of His, which never spare.

The fierceness of the lion, and the swiftness of the leopard, together portrays a speedy inexorable chastisement.

“As a leopard”:

A very fierce, swift, sly, and watchful creature (Jer. 5:6; Hab. 1:8).

“Observe them”:

Watch for them, that I may be sure to take them.

The end of all their sin is destruction.

The lion or leopard, stalks its prey, and then at a convenient time, pounces on them.

The destruction that comes on them for their unfaithfulness to God will be sudden.

Verses 8-16

Hosea painted startling pictures of the coming judgment of God with the “lion,” the “leopard,” and the “bear” and then heightened the terror with references to “infants ... dashed in pieces” and pregnant “women ... ripped open” by the Assyrians.

Hosea 13:8 "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 lion: the wild beast shall tear them."

The Syrian bear is fiercer than the brown bears to which we are accustomed.

It attacks flocks (1 Sam. 17:34), and even oxen.

The fierceness of the she-bear, "bereaved of her whelps," became a proverb (2 Sam. 17:8; Prov. 17:12; and here).

"They who have written on the nature of wild beasts, say that none is more savage than the she-bear, when she has lost her whelps or lacks food."

They had closed their hearts against God.

Their punishment is pictured by the rending open of the closed heart, by the lion which is said to go instinctively straight to the heart, tears it out, and sucks the blood.

Fearful will it be in the Day of Judgment, when the sinner's heart is laid open, with all the foul, cruel, malicious, defiled, thoughts which it harbored and concealed, against the will of God.

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

"There will I devour them":

Where I find them and seize them, like the hungry and fearless lion, which feasts on his prey where he caught it, draws it not into his den, but devours it immediately.

"Like a lion":

An old lion that hath his great teeth, his grinders, and hath still whelps (Gen. 49:9); fierce and terrible, that will either call in his whelps to divide the prey, or drag the prey to his den for them: and what hope of anything to be spared, when you fall into such hands?

The wild beast shall tear them: it is said of the lion, that he calls by his roaring the wild beasts together to the prey when he hath taken it; so you shall be devoured by the whole troop of wild beasts.

Or it may be a general threat added to those particular ones before; every wild beast shall prey upon them.

All this God executed on them by the Assyrians, who in their fierceness, cruelty, greediness, and courage answered the character here given to them.

A mother bear that has lost her whelps is a ferocious animal.

She will destroy everything that gets in her way.

This is speaking of this ferocious animal grabbing at the heart area, and tearing an opening to the heart to kill it.

Hosea 13:9"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me [is] thine help."

After these menaces it might seem I had destroyed thee, but thou thyself hast done it by thy sins.

It is the rebel that destroys himself, though he falls by the sword of his provoked sovereign: thou art the cause and author of thine own ruin.

“But in me is thine help”:

Or, for I was always ready and able to help thee, and would certainly have saved thee; but thy sins, thy wickedness carried thee toward other helps, which were lies, and have disappointed thee.

And now thou dost perish under thine own choice, whereas hadst thou chosen me I would have helped and saved thee.

Or else thus the whole verse:

This hath destroyed thee, O Israel, for thou hast rebelled against me, against thy help.

This is a cry for them to stop and consider all of this, before it is too late.

Their only help is in the LORD.

Hosea 13:10 "I will be thy king: where [is any other] that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?"

I would have been thy king to save and govern thee, but thou refused me in both respects: yet “I will be thy king” to judge me and punish thee.

The LXX and all the ancient versions interpret the clause differently, and give the interrogative, Where?

Where is thy king now, that he may serve thee?

“Where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities?”

Or, who is there, what wise, valiant, and successful commander, in any of thy cities that can deliver thee first out of my hand, and next out of the Assyrians’ hand?

“Thy judges”:

Where are they?

Thy magistrates have sinned with thee, and shall be destroyed with thee.

Thy rulers or inferior governors,

“Of whom thou saidst, Give me a king”:

Whom thou didst importune and solicit, in a manner forced to meet, consult, and resolve in seditious times?

Who should be king next, when treasons had taken away him that was?

Some refer this to their first asking a king, but it is better referred to the times either after Jeroboam the First, or to the times after Jeroboam the Second, between whose death and Hosea’s time, some say, there was a period of twenty or near twenty years.

During which a turbulent people, as the Israelites were, would be frequent and earnest in all likelihood in moving for a king.

“And princes”:

Necessary to assist the king.

Israel had been unfaithful to God, when they sought the help of the worldly kings around them.

God was their help.

These worldly kings not only could not save them from destruction, but would not if they could.

They have made agreement with the world and left God.

God is the only One that could and would, save them.

Hosea 13:11 "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took [him] away in my wrath."

Not the king of Assyria, sent to waste and destroy them, and carry them captive, as some think, for of him the next clause cannot be said.

Nor Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes, as others, who was not given in anger to Israel, but to Solomon.

Rather Saul, as Kimchi and Aben Ezra, the first king of all Israel; and who was given at the request of the people, though in anger and resentment, they rejecting God their King.

Or it may design the kingly office and power in general, in a succession of kings from him the first of them.

“In my wrath”:

God was angry when he gave such kings to Israel, and he was no better pleased when he took them away.

They were punishments when given, and it was punishment to Israel when they were taken away.

If you read this verse in the future tense, as you may, I will give them a king in my anger, it may refer to God's giving the king of Assyria the rule over them.

Making them his vassals; and I will take away (i.e. you), O Israelites, "in my wrath", I will destroy some, and send others into captivity.

I will take all away out of your land, and send you in wrath to the grave, or captives into Assyria.

God had never wanted Israel to have an earthly king.

He wanted to be their only King.

They kept insisting on having a king like the countries around them, until God gave them Saul to be their king.

It turned out he was not a good king and God (in His wrath), destroyed him, and put David in his place as king.

Hosea 13:12 "The iniquity of Ephraim [is] bound up; his sin [is] hid."

"Bound up ... is hid":

Israel's sins are all well-documented and safely preserved for the day of reckoning (compare 7:2; Deut. 32:24-35; Job 14:17).

The sin of Ephraim had not been forgotten.

He might believe it to be hidden, but God knew.

God would bring judgment upon them.

Hosea 13:13 "The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he [is] an unwise son; for he should not stay long in [the place of] the breaking forth of children."

"The breaking forth of children":

This refers to the birth canal.

Employing this figure of giving birth, the LORD likens Ephraim to an unwise child, unwilling to move through to birth.

By long deferring a "new birth" with repentance, the nation was like a child remaining in the canal dangerously long and risking death (2 Kings 19:3; Isa. 37:3; 66:9).

This is speaking of the pain accompanied with child birth.

The severity of the punishment is compared to the pain of childbirth.

His sorrow will overcome him.

It is very bad to stay in the sin that got him into this trouble.

His way out is through repentance.

Verses 14-16

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave.”

Only God can save Israel from national extinction.

After its judgment is complete, Israel will ultimately be redeemed and will bring forth fruits of repentance.

This national repentance and restoration will be realized in the Israel of the Millennium.

Paul applies verse 14 to the resurrection of Christ, which guarantees the resurrection of all believers in Christ.

Hosea 13:14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."

Placing the strong affirmation of deliverance so abruptly after a denunciation intensified the wonder of His unrequited love (compare 11:8-9; Lev. 26:44).

This can apply to God's restoration of Israel from Assyria, and in future times from all the lands of the dispersion, preserving them and bringing them back to their land for the kingdom of Messiah (Ezek. Chapter 37).

It also speaks of the time of personal resurrection as (in Dan. 12:2-3).

Repentant Israelites will be restored to the land and even raised from death to glory.

Paul uses this text (in 1 Cor. 15:55; quoting the LXX), to celebrate the future resurrection of the church.

The Messiah's great victory over death and the grave is the firstfruits of the full harvest to come, when all believers will likewise experience the power of His resurrection.

These images reveal God's power over death (1 Cor. 15:55).

This is a promise that God will redeem them.

Jesus defeated death, when He rose from the grave.

This is a promise of restoration to them.

Not restoration to their homeland, but restoration to their God.

God will not repent of their punishment, but will use it to change them.

Hosea 13:15 "Though he be fruitful among [his] brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels."

"East wind":

Refers to Assyria.

The coming storm would not completely do away with them.

Ephraim speaks of double fruit, and is thought of as being fruitful.

The wind of an angry God can change that.

The wind shows up in the Assyrians that take the land, but comes from God.

The Assyrians do take the vessels for spoil.

Hosea 13:16 "Samaria shall become desolate; 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."

The shocking atrocities mentioned were in keeping with brutalities characteristic of the Assyrians (compare 2 Kings 17:5; Isa. 13:6; Amos 1:13; Nahum 3:10).

This is speaking of their capital.

The severity of the war is shown in the infants being dashed to pieces, and the women with child being ripped apart.

This is a very nasty war.

We must remember they actually bought it upon themselves when they worshipped false gods.

Hosea Chapter 13 Questions

1. When Ephraim spake _____ he exalted himself in Israel.
2. When he offended in Baal, he _____.
3. Who instituted the worship of the calf as God in Ephraim?
4. What had they made with their silver?
5. God is a _____.
6. What things were they compared to in verse 3?
7. What did these things have in common?
8. What did the "chaff", many times, symbolize?
9. When is the most difficult time to stay in fellowship with God?
10. Verse 7 says God will be to them as a _____.
11. Describe a mother bear who has lost her whelps.
12. What is verse 9 really?
13. Who had Israel sought help from?
14. Who was the king God had given them in His anger?
15. Who did God replace him with?
16. What was their trouble compared to in verse 13?
17. What is his only way out of this trouble?
18. What is verse 14 a promise of?
19. What takes away the fruit of Ephraim?
20. How bad was the war?