



## Hosea - Chapter Eight

### II. Hosea 4:1-14:9 - Hosea Spells Out His Parable with Accusations, Warnings, and Promises (continues)

#### Summary of Chapter Eight

The people of Israel may claim to know and love the Lord, but their deeds prove otherwise.

#### II.f Hosea 8:1-14 - Israel's Apostasy

Refer to the chapter summary above.

- <sup>1</sup> Set the trumpet to your lips!  
One like a vulture is over the house of the Lord,  
because they have broken my covenant,  
and transgressed my law.

#### Hosea 8:1

Set the trumpet to your lips. Trumpets were used to assemble God's people and to call troops to battle. Here, God commands the trumpet to sound to gather the mighty Assyrian army to come against Israel for judgement, because they have broken my covenant.

The vulture is a symbol of an aggressor, most likely referring to the Assyrians.

The house of the Lord does not refer to the temple, since the temple resided in Jerusalem. It probably refers to the Lord's land, a phrase peculiar to Hosea: *<<They shall not pour drink-offerings of wine to the Lord, and their sacrifices shall not please him. Such sacrifices shall be like mourners' bread; all who eat of it shall be defiled; for their bread shall be for their hunger only; it shall not*

*come to the house of the Lord>> (Hosea 9:4), and: <<Every evil of theirs began at Gilgal; there I came to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their officials are rebels>> (Hosea 9:15). The remarks are obviously ominous from what follows.*

Because they have broken my covenant. Note that he says broken or transgressed and not annulled: *<<But at Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me>> (Hosea 6:7). The Lord had not annulled his covenant with Israel; they are still his estranged ‘wife’. While it was a foregone conclusion that Israel would violate the covenant, provisions for reconciliation were put in place; refer to Leviticus 26:40-45, Deuteronomy 30:1-10, and 31:27-29.*

<sup>2</sup> Israel cries to me,  
‘My God, we – Israel – know you!’

### Hosea 8:2

Israel cries to me. Chapter 8 is a response to Israel’s cry. For the people of Israel to say they know God is hypocritical; refer to Hosea 2:8, 5:4 and 11:3. What follows are accusations that expose Israel’s idolatry, politics, and false worship.

My God, we – Israel – know you! However, they did not really know God. It will be the same way for many church-goers today. Jesus said: *<<On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?” Then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers”>> (Matthew 7:22-23), and: <<They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work>> (Titus 1:16).*

<sup>3</sup> Israel has spurned the good;  
the enemy shall pursue him.

### Hosea 8:3

Israel’s cry is not sincere, because they have spurned the good by turning away from God. They set up rulers and princes against the Lord, and were steeped in idolatry, contrary to what God wants: *<<He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?>> (Micah 6:8), <<Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behaviour, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good>> (Titus 2:3), and: <<Beloved, do not imitate what is evil but imitate what is good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God>> (3 John 11).*

The enemy shall pursue him perhaps refers to the ‘vulture’ in v.1.

- 4 They made kings, but not through me;  
they set up princes, but without my knowledge.  
With their silver and gold they made idols  
for their own destruction.

#### Hosea 8:4

They made kings, they set up princes. The grievance is twofold. The leaders are not the Lord’s choice, and these usurpers are not godly. To choose leaders without the direction of God is not only sinful, it is foolish. Those who follow their own wisdom in the choice of leaders inevitably get what they deserve: <<*Where now is your king, that he may save you? Where in all your cities are your rulers, of whom you said, ‘Give me a king and rulers’?*>> (Hosea 13:10).

Without my knowledge. Hosea and his readers were well aware that God knows everything; the point is not whether God was aware of the princes they had set up, but rather, that the people had never asked him for guidance before choosing these leaders.

- 5 Your calf is rejected, O Samaria.  
My anger burns against them.  
How long will they be incapable of innocence?
- 6 For it is from Israel,  
an artisan made it;  
it is not God.  
The calf of Samaria  
shall be broken to pieces.

#### Hosea 8:5-6

Your calf is rejected, O Samaria. These verses respond to: <<*Israel has spurned the good*>> (v.3). Israel made beautiful idols out of silver and gold, but they will not stand. In judgement, God will break them to pieces. Archaeologists have found sculptures of Baal standing on a bull. This calf-idol is reminiscent of the calf-idol made by Aaron in Exodus 32:1-4, and the calf-idol erected at Bethel by Israel’s King Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28-29). As the calf-idol in Aaron’s day was pulverised, so this idol shall be broken to pieces. The same fate awaited Jeroboam’s idol in the time of King Josiah: <<*Moreover, the altar at Bethel, the high place erected*

*by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin – he pulled down that altar along with the high place. He burned the high place, crushing it to dust; he also burned the sacred pole>> (2 Kings 23:15).*

- 7 For they sow the wind,  
and they shall reap the whirlwind.  
The standing grain has no heads,  
it shall yield no meal;  
if it were to yield,  
foreigners would devour it.
- 8 Israel is swallowed up;  
now they are among the nations  
as a useless vessel.
- 9 For they have gone up to Assyria,  
a wild ass wandering alone;  
Ephraim has bargained for lovers.
- 10 Though they bargain with the nations,  
I will now gather them up.  
They shall soon writhe  
under the burden of kings and princes.

#### Hosea 8:7-10

For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. Trusting flimsy alliances, i.e. sowing the wind, will exacerbate the situation by reaping the whirlwind by bringing on a ruthless invader: <<*As I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble reap the same*>> (Job 4:8), <<*Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of anger will fail*>> (Proverbs 22:8), and: <<*If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit*>> (Galatians 6:8). It will seem to Israel that the judgement they receive is worse than the sin they committed. This is not true in the sense of God being worse to his people than their sin deserves, but it is true in how judgement feels. This is usually because such sin is sown over a long period of time, but often reaped in a contracted period of judgement.

Now they are among the nations, I will now gather them up. God promised that Israel would face the conquering Assyrians and exile, but also that he would one day gather them again, although not all of them: <<*Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, and say, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing?>>* (Haggai 2:2-3), <<*And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, 'Though the number of the children of Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved'>>* (Romans 9:27). This note of mercy is sprinkled throughout the song warning of judgement.

They shall soon writhe under the burden of kings and princes. Foreign armies ravaged the land, exacting heavy tribute as they went.

- 11 When Ephraim multiplied altars to expiate sin,  
they became to him altars for sinning.
- 12 Though I write for him the multitude of my instructions,  
they are regarded as a strange thing.
- 13 Though they offer choice sacrifices,  
though they eat flesh,  
the Lord does not accept them.  
Now he will remember their iniquity,  
and punish their sins;  
they shall return to Egypt.

### Hosea 8:11-13

They became to him altars for sinning. Israel foolishly built many altars for sin. So it is no surprise that those altars became altars for sinning. When people give themselves opportunity and occasion for sin, it is never surprising when they end up sinning.

Though I write for him the multitude of my instructions. In their sin and idolatry, Israel also rejected the Word of God and his laws. God had great things planned for Israel: <<*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope>>* (Jeremiah 29:11), but they seemed like a strange thing because their hearts were far from God.

The Scriptures were written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and therefore the author is God himself, i.e. though I write for him.

The multitude of my instructions reveals the content of the Bible; it is full of great things. Spurgeon wrote, “The Bible treats of great things, and of great things only. There is nothing in this Bible which is unimportant. Every verse in it has a solemn meaning, and if we have not found it out yet, we hope yet to do it.” Paul writes: *<<All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work>>* (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and John states: *<<Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God; whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching; for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person>>* (2 John 9-11).

They are regarded as a strange thing. This reveals the way the Bible is received by the natural man. Paul expressed the same idea: *<<Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are discerned spiritually>>* (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Word of God and the things of the Spirit are great things, but seem like a strange thing when man is in sin and idolatry.

The Lord does not accept them. The Israelites still brought sacrifices to the Lord. However, it was all just an outward ceremony because they were still steeped in sin and idolatry; this is not acceptable to God: *<<I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings and grain-offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon>>* (Amos 5:21-22). Therefore their sin remained uncovered, and God will remember their iniquity and punish their sins.

<sup>14</sup> Israel has forgotten his Maker,  
and built palaces;  
and Judah has multiplied fortified cities;  
but I will send a fire upon his cities,  
and it shall devour his strongholds.

#### Hosea 8:14

Israel has forgotten his Maker. Israel built palaces, but not for the Lord who made them and was their God: *<<O come, let us worship and bow down, let us*

*kneel before the Lord, our Maker!>>* (Psalm 95:6). Therefore, the judgement described in this chapter is coming upon them.

Judah has multiplied fortified cities. While Israel practiced outright idolatry, Judah was guilty of a more subtle sin. They trusted in the fortified cities they built against the Assyrians rather than trusting in God. Those cities would be of no help, i.e. I will send a fire upon his cities, and the only the Lord would preserve Judah from total destruction: <<*Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege-ramp against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.*>> Then the angel of the Lord set out and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies>> (Isaiah 37:33-36).

Perhaps some of the ungodly heart of Israel and Judah can be captured by examining the modern attraction to large, elegant facilities. What could be wrong with success and nice buildings? They easily become idols if the heart turns away from God. If God great buildings, it is wonderful, as long as people do not turn their eyes away from him, making those things their idols.

It shall devour his strongholds refers to the most secure place within each city - its citadel: <<*When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house; he burned down the king's house over himself with fire, and died*>> (1 Kings 16:18), <<*Pekah son of Remaliah, his captain, conspired against him with fifty of the Gileadites, and attacked him in Samaria, in the citadel of the palace along with Argob and Arieah; he killed him, and reigned in place of him*>> (2 Kings 15:25), <<*Within its citadels God has shown himself a sure defence*>> (Psalm 48:3), <<*But you are a tower of refuge to the poor, O Lord, a tower of refuge to the needy in distress. You are a refuge from the storm and a shelter from the heat*>> (Isaiah 25:4 NLT). Ephraim trusted religious shrines for security; Judah her armaments. Both will ultimately prove to be futile.