

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes: Book of Hosea

4/5/17

Hosea Chapter 5 & 6

Judgment Against Israel

¹ "Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, you Israelites! Listen, royal house! This judgment is against you: You have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on Tabor. ² The rebels are knee-deep in slaughter. I will discipline all of them. ³ I know all about Ephraim; Israel is not hidden from me. Ephraim, you have now turned to prostitution; Israel is corrupt. ⁴ "Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD. ⁵ Israel's arrogance testifies against them; the Israelites, even Ephraim, stumble in their sin; Judah also stumbles with them. ⁶ When they go with their flocks and herds to seek the LORD, they will not find him; he has withdrawn himself from them. ⁷ They are unfaithful to the LORD; they give birth to illegitimate children. When they celebrate their New Moon feasts, he will devour their fields. ⁸ "Sound the trumpet in Gibeah, the horn in Ramah. Raise the battle cry in Beth Aven; lead on, Benjamin. ⁹ Ephraim will be laid waste on the day of reckoning. Among the tribes of Israel I proclaim what is certain. ¹⁰ Judah's leaders are like those who move boundary stones. I will pour out my wrath on them like a flood of water. ¹¹ Ephraim is oppressed, trampled in judgment, intent on pursuing idols. ¹² I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah. ¹³ "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria, and sent to the great king for help. But he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores. ¹⁴ For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them. ¹⁵ Then I will return to my lair until they have borne their guilt and seek my face—in their misery they will earnestly seek me."

5:1-2 Mizpah and Tabor may have been sites prominent in the false worship of Baal. The leaders likely even encouraged the people to sin at these places. With both their civil and religious leaders hopelessly corrupt, the people of Israel did not have much of a chance. They looked to their leaders for guidance, and they should have found it. Today we can often choose our own leaders, but we still need to be aware of whether they are taking us toward or away from God. God held the people responsible for what they did. Similarly, God holds us responsible for our actions and choices.

5:3 Ephraim is another name for Israel, the northern kingdom, because Ephraim was the most powerful of the ten tribes in the north. In the same way, the southern kingdom was called Judah after its most powerful tribe.

5:4 Persistent sin hardens a person's heart, making it difficult to repent. Deliberately choosing to disobey God can sear the conscience; each sin makes the next one easier to commit. Don't allow sin to groove a hard path deep within you. Steer as far away from sinful practices as possible.

5:8 Gibeah and Ramah were Israelite cities near Jerusalem. Hosea prophesied that these cities would sound the alarm of the coming judgment.

5:10 Those who "move boundary stones" are guilty of a serious crime (Deuteronomy 27:17). Hosea was saying that the leaders of Judah were like those who cheat their neighbors by moving the boundary markers on their land (see Deuteronomy 19:14).

5:13 During the reigns of Menahem and Hoshea, Israel turned to Assyria for help (2 Kings 15:19-20; 17:3-4). But even the great world powers of that time could not help Israel, for God himself had determined to judge the nation. If we neglect God's call to repentance, how can we escape? (See Hebrews 2:3.)

Hosea Chapter 6

Israel Unrepentant

¹ "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. ² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. ³ Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." ⁴ "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. ⁵ Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth—then my judgments go forth like the sun. ⁶ For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. ⁷ As at Adam, they have broken the covenant; they were unfaithful to me there. ⁸ Gilead is a city of evildoers, stained with footprints of blood. ⁹ As marauders lie in ambush for a victim, so do bands of priests; they murder on the road to Shechem, carrying out their wicked schemes. ¹⁰ I have seen a horrible thing in Israel: There Ephraim is given to prostitution, Israel is defiled. ¹¹ "Also for you, Judah, a harvest is appointed. "Whenever I would restore the fortunes of my people.

6:1-3 This is presumption, not genuine repentance. The people did not understand the depth of their sins. They did not turn from idols, regret their sins, or pledge to make changes. They thought that God's anger would last only a few days; little did they know that their nation would soon be taken into exile. Israel was interested in God only for the material benefits he provided; they did not value the eternal benefits that come from worshiping him. Before judging Israel, however, consider your attitude. What do you hope to gain from your religion? Do you "repent" easily, without seriously considering what changes need to take place in your life?

6:4 God answered his people, pointing out that their profession of loyalty, like mist and dew, evaporated easily and had no substance. Many find it easy and comfortable to maintain the appearance of being committed without deep and sincere loyalty. If you profess loyalty to God, back it up with your actions.

6:6 Religious rituals can help people understand God and nourish their relationship with him. That is why God instituted circumcision and the sacrificial system in the Old Testament and baptism and the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. But a religious ritual is helpful only if it is carried out with an attitude of love for and obedience to God. If a person's heart is far from God, ritual will become empty mockery. God didn't want the Israelites' rituals; he wanted their hearts. Why do you worship? What is the motive behind your "offerings" and "sacrifices"?

6:7 One of Hosea's key themes is that Israel had broken the covenant God had made with them at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-20). God wanted to make Israel a blessing and a light to all the nations (Genesis 12:2-3; Isaiah 49:6); and if God's chosen people obeyed him and proclaimed him to the world, he would give them special blessings. If they broke the covenant, however, they would suffer severe penalties, as they should have known (see Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Sadly, the people broke the covenant and proved themselves unfaithful to God. How about you? Have you also broken faith with God? What about your forgotten promises to serve him?

6:8-9 Gilead was once a sacred place, but here it was corrupt. Shechem was once a city of refuge designated by Joshua (Joshua 20:1-2, 7-8); Gilead was a region that included Ramoth, also a city of refuge. At this time these areas were associated with murder and crime, with bands of evil priests lying in wait to murder travelers passing through the territory.

6:11 So that the people of Judah would not become proud as they saw the northern kingdom's destruction, Hosea interjected a solemn warning about God's "harvest." God's temple was in Judah (Jerusalem), and the people thought that what happened in Israel could never happen to them. But when they had become utterly corrupt, they, too, were led off into captivity (see 2 Kings 25).