

ISRAEL IS HALF-BAKED

TEXT: HOSEA 7:1-16

INTRODUCTION:

1. Hosea 6:4 refers to Israel's insincere repentance. It was fleeting. It was not genuine.
2. Hosea chapter 7 continues with the same theme (7:14), and the LORD continues rebuking the nation Israel till the end of the book.
3. God would have healed them (speaking spiritually as well as physically), but their wicked rebelliousness hindered the LORD from blessing them and restoring them (7:1).
4. Therefore, God judged them. Dishonest and treacherous men were plundering the nation – both from within and without (7:1b).
5. In Hosea chapter 7, the LORD uses three colorful metaphors to describe His wayward people: a cake not turned (7:8b), a silly dove without heart (7:11), and a deceitful bow (7:16).

I. EPHRAIM IS A CAKE NOT TURNED (7:8)

1. Ephraim is referred to 37 times in the book of Hosea (7:1).
2. Ephraim was the second son of Joseph, born in Egypt to Joseph's Egyptian wife Asenath. Though he was younger than his brother Manasseh, the birthright blessing was conferred upon him by his grandfather Jacob.
3. The tribe of Ephraim increased in stature when the tabernacle was set up in Ephraim at Shiloh. After the kingdom was divided, Ephraim became the dominant tribe of the ten northern tribes. That is why the northern kingdom was often designated as "Ephraim" (cf. 6:10; 7:1, 8, 11).
4. Samaria was the capitol of the northern kingdom (7:1). Here we see that sin in the leadership did much to set the course for the nation.
5. Back in Israel they used to cook little cakes on an open fire. These cakes were like our pancakes, and they had to be turned at just the right time, otherwise they were ruined (7:8b).
6. The metaphor of Ephraim being a cake not turned indicates a lack of balance. Let me apply this to today. Many Christians and many churches lack balance.
7. Today we are seeing many churches that emphasize emotionalism but they ignore Bible doctrine. On the other hand, some churches are still maintaining sound doctrine but are they are dead.

8. Doctrine and duty must go together; otherwise things are out of balance. On one side the cake is burnt and overdone; on the other side it is doughy and undone – in other words, spoiled, ruined, good for nothing!
9. The picture also suggests carelessness. If a woman had a cake on the fire, she had to keep an eye on it otherwise it would not come out right. Sadly, Ephraim did not come out right.
10. A cake not turned is disgusting, nauseating, and inedible. One commentator put it this way: "Israel's religion prevented them from conforming fully to the world's philosophy; and their worldliness prevented them from truly conforming to their religion" (Thurman Wisdom).
11. And another wrote these words: "Such were the people; such are too many so-called Christians; they united in themselves hypocrisy and ungodliness, outward performance and inward lukewarmness; the one overdone, but without any wholesome effect on the other" – E.B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets*.
12. Their ungodly behaviour was judged by God. The Hebrew word translated "discover" in Hosea 7:1 means, "to uncover." The LORD was exposing or uncovering all their sins.
13. They were guilty of fraud and stealing (7:1), lying (7:3), adultery (7:4), drinking (7:5), and mixing it up with the heathen (7:8, 9).
14. So bereft of the knowledge of God were the Israelites that they did not consider in their hearts that the Lord remembered their wickedness and would have to judge them for all their evil doings (cf. 4:1, 6; 7:2).
15. They did not understand the doctrine of the omniscience of God!
16. They would not consider because their hearts were so full of sin that they were hardened by sin. Fraud, stealing, lying, adultery, drinking, and other wicked sins had hardened them to the point where they were incapable of repenting.
17. Like Hamlet's uncle, the king, who prayed in vain. He said, "Try what repentance can: what can it not? Yet what can it, when one cannot repent? O wretched state! O bosom black as death!"
18. Then he finishes up his prayer with, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go."
19. Their own doings were all around them, reminding them of their horrible sin (7:2). And their own doings were before God's face (7:2).
20. They seemed unaware ("they considered not") that God held them accountable for their wickedness (7:2).

21. The wicked king of Israel approved of their wickedness. He was "glad" (7:3). Hosea does not mention this king's name, but it does not matter for none of Israel's kings was any good – all the kings of Israel were wicked. The point here is that the country was wicked from the top down. The drunken king drank so much wine he got sick (7:5).
22. "They are all adulterers..." (7:4), like red hot ovens (7:4, 6, 7). This sounds very much like today with all the smutty TV shows, movies, magazines, sensual music and so on. People are all steamed-up. That is why there are so many illegitimate babies, abortions, AIDS and other diseases, divorces, broken homes, etc. As Christians we must avoid all of this immorality; we should watch how we dress, etc.
23. Notice the phrase "until it be leavened" (7:4b). In the Bible "leaven" always represents sin.
24. In Matthew 16:6, our Lord said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." At first, the disciples thought our Lord was referring to literal leaven and literal bread, but eventually they understood He was warning of "the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:12).
25. In I Cor. 5:6-8, the apostle Paul said to the church in Corinth, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."
26. Paul repeats this warning in Galatians 5:9, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."
27. In Hosea's day, the leaven was working in Israel and God had to judge it. It had permeated the entire nation. Today it has spread all throughout Christendom.
28. Our Lord told us this would happen. He said in Matthew 13:33, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."
29. Doctrinal error, compromise, worldliness, formalism, immorality, etc. have crept into Christian churches.
30. Israel devoured their judges and they murdered their kings (7:7). In the last three decades of the Northern Kingdom, there were six kings, and four of them were assassins. Only one of them was able to die a natural death.

31. Shallum slew Zechariah; then Menahem slew Shallum; then Pekah killed the son of Menahem; and then Hoshea killed Pekah.
32. All of these kings were murdered during Hosea's lengthy ministry. All was bloodshed and anarchy in Israel, until finally the Israelites were taken into captivity by Assyria.
33. Back in 6:9, Hosea said the priests were murderers.
34. The children of Israel did not call upon the Lord (7:7b; cf. 7:14). They "mixed...among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned" (7:8).

II. EPHRAIM ALSO IS LIKE A SILLY DOVE WITHOUT HEART (7:11).

1. As a result of Israel mixing it up with pagan peoples, "strangers have devoured his strength" (7:9), i.e. sapped his moral and spiritual stamina.
2. Psalm 106:35, 36 says, they "were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them."
3. How sad the words, "and he knoweth it not" (7:9). Like Samson, after becoming entangled in sin, he knew not that the Lord had departed (Judges 16:20). Israel "knoweth not" (7:9).
4. Many churches today are in a similar predicament – they know not that the Lord has departed. We need to stay separated from the world or it could happen to us (II Cor. 6:14—7:1).
5. I do not believe that the "gray hairs" are literal (7:9).[I am not just saying that because my hair has turned gray!] Like the oven and cake, and silly dove, the Lord is using figurative language.
6. Gray hairs are a reminder that we are getting old. God was giving them reminders and warnings but they "knoweth it not" (7:9).
7. Gray hairs tell us that some day, maybe soon, we will all die.
8. The prophet Isaiah went to see King Hezekiah and said unto him, "Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (II Kings 20:1).
9. Are you ready to meet God? Every time I get a haircut and see this pile of gray hair, I am reminded that some day I will leave this world.
10. Israel was too proud to repent, too proud to seek the Lord (7:10; cf. 5:5).
11. Ephraim flew like a silly dove to Egypt and Assyria for help (7:11). But God caught them in His net and chastened them (7:11, 12).
12. Israel was situated between these two heathen nations, Assyria to the north and Egypt to the south, and like a "silly dove" she flew back and

forth. She would frantically seek the help of one to offset danger from the other (cf. II Kings 17:3-6; Hosea 9:3; 12:1).

III. ISRAEL IS LIKE A DECEITFUL BOW (7:16).

1. The Hebrew lexicon says a "deceitful bow is one which shoots untruly."
2. God says, "Woe unto them!" (7:13). Their wickedness called for the wrath of God – "destruction unto them!"
3. They had fled from God (7:13).
4. They transgressed against God (7:13).
5. They had spoken lies against God (7:13).
6. They showed no genuine repentance (7:14a).
7. They rebelled against God (7:14b).
8. They imagined mischief against God (7:15).
9. They returned, "but not to the most High" (7:16). This indicates that they must have returned to their idols!
10. Notice the phrase "against me" (7:13, 14, 15; cf. 6:7). All sin is against God, but it is especially bad when God has to remind sinners that they have sinned against Him with such impunity.
11. When David committed adultery with Bath-sheba, and then had her husband killed on the battlefield, he prayed, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51:4).
12. Therefore, all sin is against God, but it is especially bad when God has to remind sinners that they have sinned against Him with such impunity (6:7; 7:13-15).
13. They would become a laughing-stock in Egypt (7:16). Egypt represents the world. When Christians compromise with the world, God has no use for them – they are like "a cake not turned" (7:8). And yet the world has no respect for them either – "this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt" (7:16).
14. "They are like a deceitful bow" (7:16; cf. Ps.78:57), i.e. one that will not hit the mark.

CONCLUSION:

1. I read an unusual story about a thief who tried to steal some sausages in a grocery store. He did not realize that they were part of a string 45 feet long.
2. He tried running out the door with this 45 foot long string of sausages but tripped over the string and fell.

3. He tried to get up but lost his balance and became hopelessly entangled in the string.
4. When the police arrived they found the hapless thief trying to untangle himself from the sausages.
5. That's the way sin is. It looks inviting but then we realize that there is more than meets the eye. Before you know it you are all tangled up.
6. Just as Israel became "the derision in the land of Egypt," so is every foolish sinner, who mistakenly believes that he can get away with sin.