

Hosea 10:1-8

For all the signs of impending doom, the people of Israel were seemingly unaware of the imminent judgment of God which would eject them from the land never to return.

The reason for their blindness to this spiritual reality was the material prosperity that they had so long enjoyed (c.f **Deut 8:11-14; 19; Matt 13:22**). Material prosperity posed a dire threat to faith and salvation.

Summary

In Hosea 10:1-8, whilst the people celebrated their affluence and splendor, Hosea declares that God looked with displeasure on their hearts and He would tear down the unfaithful vine, casting down the glory of the people's success to become their shame.

1. Destructive Vine vv. 1-2

Israel is described as a "luxuriant vine that yields its fruit" (**Hos 10:1a**). It was like the notorious kudzu vine which grows with the kind of abundance that destroys other wholesome plant life. Israel employed its success and prosperity for its own self-focused benefit. In Israel, earthly prosperity had fostered spiritual decline, so that instead of living with thanks to God for his blessings, the people forgot him. Similarly, the prosperous nations of the West, despite their Christian heritage, have seized their material blessings for the service of their own sin in rebellion to God.

Hosea shows how Israel's God-defying prosperity was expressed largely in religious forms (**Hos. 10:1b**).

By worshiping false gods and in false ways, the people revealed a lack of integrity in their devotion. Their hearts were truly given to their own well-being, comfort, and sinful indulgence. In judgment, God would remove the altars and pillars that were both the product and the mechanism of their false hearts (c.f. Jesus' parable of the wicked servants; **Luke 20:9-18**).

2. Disdained Divine Authority vv. 3-4

Starting with his depiction of Israel as an abundant but unprofitable vine, the prophet now adds its disdain for God-given authority (**Hos 10:3**). Israel appears to have celebrated their freedom from any higher authority, be it from kings or from God, Himself. The reason for their failure in leadership, together with their cynical disdain for authority, was their irreverent attitude toward God (**10:3**). The situation called not for factionalism, however, but repentance.

When we think about the foolish stubbornness of Israel in Hosea's day, how could a once-virtuous people be reduced to such a sordid condition. The answer is the practice of infidelity that had corrupted the people (**10:4**). This attitude pervaded relationships of all kinds. It resulted in a litigious society in which each faction was out for itself. They made promises easily, with little intention of keeping them, and therefore with little trust in the promises of others. In a culture such as Hosea's, and ours today, the value of integrity and fidelity on the part of genuine believers is great. If there is one kind of person whose simple word should be inviolable, and for whom a handshake is tantamount to a legal contract, that person is a Christian.

3. Trampled and Destroyed Vineyard vv. 5-8

The final section of this passage reveals the vine-turned-weed as being trampled and destroyed in the judgment of God. Hosea begins by turning from the false splendor of the high places and the low corruption in Samaria, nation's capital, to the nation's most celebrated monument, the golden calf at Bethel (here, renamed "Beth-aven," meaning "house of destruction"). It had likely been moved to the city of Samaria for safekeeping. The prophet points out the dismay that this loss would work in the people's hearts (**Hos 10:5**). The thing itself shall be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king and to the great shame of the people (**Hos. 10:5-6**). Hosea concludes by describing the final judgment that God would inflict on the northern kingdom (**Hos. 10:7-8**). Whilst the agency of this destruction would be the Assyrian king, it was God's hand that worked the reality of this judgment.

So great would be their lament that Hosea uses language later employed for the dismay of the condemned in the final judgment when Jesus returns (**Hos.10:8; cf. Rev. 6:16**).

4. Hope for Sinners

The prophet has repeatedly offered hope in a return to true faith and a casting off of sin (**Hos. 6:1-2**). The connection in the New Testament between Hosea's warning and the scene of the condemned in the final judgment makes the offer of escape even clearer (c.f. **Rev 7:9-14**).

The offer remains open today to be cleansed by Jesus' atoning blood, through faith in his gospel promise. It will result in the casting off the shining bulls of idolatry but when your sins are washed away and you are restored to fellowship with God, and God will make you a vine that is fruitful for his praise and service (**John 15:5**).