

Hosea 10:9-15

In Hosea chapter 10, there are two cities allied in the cause of evil; Gibeah, the location of one of the greatest sins in the history of Israel and Bethel, the site of the golden calf that led the people into the worship of idols. Nevertheless, Israel would fall under the weight of its own depravity. The people, who had turned away from the Lord, would receive their due judgment.

Summary

In Hosea 10:9-15, the prophet addresses the northern kingdom of Israel in terms of two cities that represent its past and present, anticipating the final destruction of Samaria, Israel's capital, and the fall of its illegitimate kingship.

1. New Gibeah vv. 9-10

Gibeah was notorious for the evil that had happened there and the subsequent judgment (**Judg. 19:22-26; 20:1-48**). Hosea repeatedly identified Israel under the label of "Gibeah." Since Samaria had become a new Gibeah, God will now repeat the judgment inflicted on the past Gibeah (**Hos 10:9-10**).

2. Bethel Idolatry vv. 12-15

Samaria is compared not only to the depravity of Gibeah, but also to the idol-worshiping center of Bethel. Throughout Hosea, Bethel and the other shrines are described as places of apostasy, immorality, false piety, and hostility to God. It was the heart of Israel's darkness. The Lord had intended for Israel to sow "righteousness," but the people had sown exactly the opposite in iniquity (**Hos 10:12-13**). Here we see the familiar biblical pattern of sowing anti reaping (**Gal. 6:7**). Samaria had produced a society rife with injustice (**10:13**). Compounding the problem of immorality and deceit was a vain reliance on military might (**Hos 10:13; cf Deut. 28:52**). Samaria should expect no mercy when God unleashed His judgment; "the Beth-Arbel treatment" would be given to this city of idols and its king (**Hos 10:14b-15**). Today, in the church, we see the same man-centered reliance though in different forms (**cf. Jer. 9:23-24**).

3. Imminent Destruction vv. 11-12

In vv. 11-12, Hosea adopts the picture of the pastoral scene of Israel's first days in the land of promise. Here we see God's ancient favor for Israel, together with a fresh call to return in faith and obedience. Ephraim was "a trained calf that loved to thresh" (**Hos. 10:11**) but now, given the unfaithfulness of Israel, the situation would become much harder (**10:11**).

This scenario was not only the case for Israel, but also for Judah, with both nations compromising the legacy of Jacob (**10:11**).

Was all therefore irretrievably lost? The good news of Hosea is that there is always a way of salvation through true repentance and faith in God and His grace. Hosea maps out the way back to the God for sinners with classic language to describe repentance and a renewal of saving faith (**Hos 10:12**). Sinners, whoever and wherever they are, who confess their sins and place their trust in Jesus' cleansing blood, are forgiven by God and are justified. We then add to justification the seed of practical, living righteousness in the doctrine of sanctification (**Hos 10:12a**).

Hosea sums up the call of salvation that the Bible offers to all kinds of sinners even the Gibeah and Bethel sinners of Israel on the very brink of destruction: **Hos. 10:12c** "it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you."

"Is it really possible?" "Will God give salvation to sinners if they turn to Him in repentance and faith? Hosea answers: "that He may come and rain righteousness upon you" (**Hos 10:12**). God's blessings in justification and sanctification are like rain that will wash away all your sin and leave soft ground where new life may flourish.

In the Lord's salvation, it is God himself who forms our great reward and whose presence brings the blessing that we seek (**Hosea 14:5, 7**).

4. Clearly Revealed Gospel

The Lord who revealed his mercy to Israel in the time of Hosea displayed His gospel most clearly in the coming of his Son, Jesus Christ.

It was Jesus who called out to the Gibeah-Bethel sinners of our world: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (**Matt. 11:28-29**). Since Jesus is the Savior of sinners, the message of the church today should echo Hosea's plea.

In the Gibeah cities of our time; places of sin, violence, deceit and injustice, we must cry out that there is salvation through faith in Christ.

In the Bethel places, where seekers after success are bowing down to all the false gods of our day, we must herald the good news that Jesus saves.

He saves the wicked and unfaithful, and calls everyone to the mercy that he offers in His Son.