

Hosea 12:7-13:3

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had a dream in which he saw a statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, abdomen, and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron, with feet partly of iron and clay (**Dan 2:33-34**). The statue represented successive ancient empires, each of which rose and fell until the final empire was brought down by a great stone cast from heaven (**Dan 2:35**). Like the golden head of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Ephraim 'was exalted in Israel,' but ended up 'like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor' (**Hos 13:1, 3**).

Summary

In Hosea 12:7-13:3, the prophet maps out the collapse of the northern kingdom of Israel, referred to as Ephraim after its leading tribe.

1. Canaanites 2.0 Revisited vv. 12:7-9

Hosea compares Israel to a dishonest businessman who cheats his customers with false scales, trusting in riches rather than God (**Hos. 12:7**). To make his case, Hosea quotes Ephraim's own words (**Hos. 12:8**). Ephraim proved to be a true successor to the old corrupt inhabitants of the land. In discovering the love of money, the people forgot the Lord to which God answers: "I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt" (**12:9a**). What the Ephraimites had forgotten, they would relearn by their exile (**Hos 12:9b**).

2. Guilty Law-Breakers vv. 12:12-14

Hosea next refers to Jacob's sojourn in Aram, seeking a wife (**Hos 12:12**). In Aram, Jacob fell in love with Rachel, and there he served fourteen years tending sheep in order to have her as his bride. The word "guarded" is repeated in Hosea 12:13, where the prophet uses the same word in recalling the exodus. The point is that God was the one guarding (shepherding) Jacob and his descendants, Israel. Ephraim's sins occur against the backdrop of amazing grace throughout the nation's history. Ephraim, having given bitter provocation, his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him and will repay him for his disgraceful deeds (**12:14a**). The full penalty of the law would be exacted: he "will repay him for his disgraceful deeds" (**12:14b**). Likewise today, to reject God is not to make Him go away, but only to cast Him in the role of a judge whose strict adherence to the divine law must lead to judgment (**Matt. 25:32**).

3. Condemned Idolators vv. 12:10-11; 13:1, 3

Hosea's message is concluded with a prophetic riddle (**12:10-11**) that finds its answer in **Hos 13:1-3**. He has the ministry' of the former prophets in mind,

since his own role was to provide God's prophetic word to this last generation of Israel (**Hos. 12:10**). Not only did God speak clearly through the prophets, but He also through the prophets gave parables"(**12:10**), which were a judgment from God in His turning away from clear speech (**Isa. 6:9-10; Matt. 13:14-15**). **Hosea 12:11** contains the parable that alludes to Ephraim's judgment. Gilgal and Gilgal together "project a picture of destruction so severe that nothing of value is left. This once proud and prosperous people will end up having nothing and becoming nothing because of their deceptive ways." Hosea explains the meaning of his riddle which declare the final destruction of the northern kingdom (**Hos 13:1-3**). First, the tribe began in strength and honor (**Hos 13:1**). Secondly, Hosea recounts the effect of idolatry (**13:1**). Thirdly, Hosea adds, "and now they sin more and more" (**13:2**). Fourthly, the Ephraimites became so depraved in their spiritual death that they performed human sacrifice in their worship. Their ultimate slavery was seen in the skillful care given to fashioning images of the very animals that plowed their fields, after which they kissed the golden calves that had brought them ruin (**13:2**). The final end of Ephraim would be destruction (**Hos. 13:3; Ps. 1:4-5**).

4. Great and Eternal Kingdom

Hosea's portrait of the death of the Ephraimite nation was merely a preview of the larger history seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream of the statue with the head of gold, the chest of silver, the abdomen and thighs of bronze, and the feet of mixed bronze and clay. This decline represented the natural outworking of sin in the history of nations, just as it destroys individual lives. Yet in the end, the death was executed by the hand of God in judgment. Daniel saw a great stone, "cut out by no human hand," that "struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces," so that they "became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away... But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2-34-35).

Daniel's mountain-stone was the Rock of Ages: Jesus Christ, whose kingdom will have no end (**Dan 2:44**). God revealed these things to Nebuchadnezzar yet he did not receive them. If you will turn in faith to Jesus Christ, the one who by His life and death established the eternal reign of righteousness, then your story will not be one that ends in destruction but eternal life.

The book of Revelation anticipates the end of the history foretold in the Bible, when the kingdoms of the entire earth suffer a disastrous fall like that of Ephraim. It also depicts the glorious end of those who have escaped from these evil kingdoms, having "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (**Rev. 7:14-17**).