

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: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, 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. Dishonest Merchant vv. 12:7-8

Hosea's record of Ephraim's downfall begins with a scornful description of the nation's lost integrity. Israel was like 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**).

Given a fair land and abundant material blessings, the Ephraimites had made these riches their god (**Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:10; Phil. 4:11-12**).

2. Canaanites 2.0 vv. 12:7-8

In **Hos 12:7**, the Hebrew word for merchant, used to describe Ephraim, is also the word for "Canaanite," branding Israel a true successor to the old corrupt inhabitants of the land. Ephraim gives us an excellent case study in the corrupting influence of a desire for worldly riches. They became like the dishonest Canaanites whom God so severely judged and had a false sense of security from riches against even the justice of God (**Hos 12:8**).

What folly this is in the presence of the all-knowing God.

Christians should reflect on Ephraim's corruption and ask ourselves whether we remember the purpose for which God has saved us. When we came to faith in Jesus, it was not so that we would live for ourselves, much less that we should practice the corruption of the surrounding world (**Matt. 6:19-21; Col. 3:5**).

3. Divine Response vs. 12:9a

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" (**Hos 12:9**). It was the Lord who brought them bounty and the Lord who would hold them accountable for sin. Whether the people remembered God's covenant or not, he still possessed the deed to their allegiance. The problem, however, was that, seduced by ill-gotten gain, they had forgotten the Lord. It was this very situation against which the book of Deuteronomy warned (**Deut 6:10-12**).

4. Contemporary Application vs. 12:9b

This warning remains as potent today as in the days of Moses. Few experiences militate against true piety than worldly success. Remembering the Lord was the point of Israel's feasts, such as Passover and Tabernacles. Today, Christians are called to regular attendance at a faithful church, where they gather with the saints, worship the Lord in song and prayer, and the hearing God's Word (**Heb. 10:25**).

A commitment to regular worship answers the appeal of **Deut 8:18**.

"What the Ephraimites had forgotten on Easy Street they would relearn on Skid Row:" "I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast" (**Hos 12:9b**).

Since the Israelites did not pursue the godliness they should have remembered "in the days of the appointed feast," i.e. the Feast of Tabernacles, back they would go into the desert, their palaces replaced by the tent existence of exiles.

Hebrews 12:3-4 relates how God chastises the people he has redeemed.

In the Lord's faithfulness that he fulfilled this warning to Ephraim.

Likewise, when it comes to believers in Jesus Christ, "the Lord disciplines the one he loves" (**Heb. 12:6**).

When we find our consciences afflicted by Hosea's accusation to Ephraim, or discover that God has brought various trials to refine our faith, as Christians, we will only find relief through true repentance (**2 Cor. 7:10**).

We cannot produce godly grief in our own strength, however.

It is the gift of God (**Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25**).

How is God able to give the free gift of repentance to guilty sinners?

Only by the merits of the one true Israelite, Jesus Christ the righteous one.