

HOUSEGROUP STUDY: JULY 5TH 2017

Hosea 8 -10 "REAP THE WILD WIND"

God's Judgement is deserved, dreadful and very real.

The Story So Far

Though Israel had committed spiritual adultery, God promised to woo his people back to relationship with him. He'd buy them back—at the cost of his Son's life. Hosea's marriage to a reformed prostitute was a picture of this.

Israel had broken relationship with God. And the priests, who were supposed to lead them in obeying God, had led them in idolatry and immorality.

God rejected Israel's fake return to him, because he knew they were not truly sorry, and did not intend to change.

Opening Question

Q: What is the most urgent warning you have ever received? How did you respond?

READ: Hosea 8 v 1-14 - Israel to reap the whirlwind

1. 'Put the trumpet to your lips!
An eagle is over the house of the Lord
because the people have broken my covenant
and rebelled against my law.
2. Israel cries out to me,
"Our God, we acknowledge you!"
3. But Israel has rejected what is good;
an enemy will pursue him.
4. They set up kings without my consent;
they choose princes without my approval.
With their silver and gold
they make idols for themselves
to their own destruction.
5. Throw out your calf-idol, Samaria!
My anger burns against them.
How long will they be incapable of purity?
6. They are from Israel!
This calf – a metalworker has made it;
it is not God.
It will be broken in pieces,
that calf of Samaria.
7. 'They sow the wind
and reap the whirlwind.
The stalk has no head;
it will produce no flour.
Were it to yield grain,
foreigners would swallow it up.
8. Israel is swallowed up;
now she is among the nations
like something no-one wants.
9. For they have gone up to Assyria
like a wild donkey wandering alone.
Ephraim has sold herself to lovers.

10. Although they have sold themselves among the nations,
I will now gather them together.
They will begin to waste away
under the oppression of the mighty king.
11. 'Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings,
these have become altars for sinning.
12. I wrote for them the many things of my law,
but they regarded them as something foreign.
13. Though they offer sacrifices as gifts to me,
and though they eat the meat,
the Lord is not pleased with them.
Now he will remember their wickedness
and punish their sins:
they will return to Egypt.
14. Israel has forgotten his Maker
and built palaces;
Judah has fortified many towns.
But I will send fire on their cities
that will consume their fortresses.

Q: Why do the people of Israel think that they are safe from God's judgment (v 2, 11-13)?

Israel reacts to the warning of God's judgment by complaining "Our God, we acknowledge you!". They build altars and offer sacrifices (v 11, 13), having an appearance of godly behaviour and thinking that this will keep them safe from judgment.

Q: What reasons does God give to show that his judgment is fair and just (v 1-3, 11-14)?

God's people may say his judgment is unfair, but God demonstrates the justice of his coming judgment. He had chosen Israel as his own people, yet they had broken the covenant (much like breaking marriage vows), rebelled against his law, and rejected what is good (both God's ways and God himself). "Israel has forgotten their Maker" (v 14) and trusted in other things. So God's just and fair judgment will come upon a people who have chosen to rebel against him and his rule.

Hosea 9 v 1-9 - Punishment for Israel

1. Do not rejoice, Israel;
do not be jubilant like the other nations.
For you have been unfaithful to your God;
you love the wages of a prostitute
at every threshing-floor.
2. Threshing-floors and winepresses will not feed the people;
the new wine will fail them.
3. They will not remain in the Lord's land;
Ephraim will return to Egypt
and eat unclean food in Assyria.
4. They will not pour out wine offerings to the Lord,
nor will their sacrifices please him.
Such sacrifices will be to them like the bread of mourners;
all who eat them will be unclean.
This food will be for themselves;
it will not come into the temple of the Lord.
5. What will you do on the day of your appointed festivals,
on the feast days of the Lord?
6. Even if they escape from destruction,

Egypt will gather them,
and Memphis will bury them.
Their treasures of silver will be taken over by briars,
and thorns will overrun their tents.

7. The days of punishment are coming,
the days of reckoning are at hand.
Let Israel know this.
Because your sins are so many
and your hostility so great,
the prophet is considered a fool,
the inspired person a maniac.
8. The prophet, along with my God,
is the watchman over Ephraim, the people of my God
yet snares await him on all his paths,
and hostility in the house of his God.
9. They have sunk deep into corruption,
as in the days of Gibeah.
God will remember their wickedness
and punish them for their sins.

Q: How will God's judgment put an end to Israel's superficial religion? How do these verses expose Israel's attitude to God and his word?

Despite the warning of judgment, Israel is rejoicing like the other superficial religion makes them feel safe from God's judgment. As a result, God's judgment will take away their rituals and religious actions—the land will not produce food or wine for sacrifices (v 2) and the people will be removed from the God's land. They will have nowhere to offer sacrifices (v 4) and nowhere to celebrate religious festivals (v 5).

What happened in the days of Gibeah?

READ: Judges 19 v 11-30

11. When they were near Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his master, 'Come, let's stop at this city of the Jebusites and spend the night.'
12. His master replied, 'No. We won't go into any city whose people are not Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah.'
13. He added, 'Come, let's try to reach Gibeah or Ramah and spend the night in one of those places.'
14. So they went on, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin.
15. There they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no-one took them in for the night.
16. That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim, who was living in Gibeah (the inhabitants of the place were Benjaminites), came in from his work in the fields.
17. When he looked and saw the traveller in the city square, the old man asked, 'Where are you going? Where did you come from?'
18. He answered, 'We are on our way from Bethlehem in Judah to a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim where I live. I have been to Bethlehem in Judah and now I am going to the house of the Lord. No-one has taken me in for the night.'
19. We have both straw and fodder for our donkeys and bread and wine for ourselves your servants – me, the woman and the young man with us. We don't need anything.'
20. 'You are welcome at my house,' the old man said. 'Let me supply whatever you need. Only don't spend the night in the square.'
21. So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink.
22. While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, 'Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him.'

23. The owner of the house went outside and said to them, 'No, my friends, don't be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don't do this outrageous thing.
24. Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But as for this man, don't do such an outrageous thing.'
25. But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go.
26. At daybreak the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there until daylight.
27. When her master got up in the morning and opened the door of the house and stepped out to continue on his way, there lay his concubine, fallen in the doorway of the house, with her hands on the threshold.
28. He said to her, 'Get up; let's go.' But there was no answer. Then the man put her on his donkey and set out for home.
29. When he reached home, he took a knife and cut up his concubine, limb by limb, into twelve parts and sent them into all the areas of Israel.
30. Everyone who saw it was saying to one another, 'Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt. Just imagine! We must do something! So speak up!'

Q: What is God saying about Israel in Hosea's day? How do you think you'd react if God said this about you, or your church?

It is as serious and horrific as what happened in Gibeah, where we see homosexuality, cowardice, rape and murder. "Gibeah" is shorthand for almost unthinkable sinfulness.

Q: In Hosea 8 v 7, God accuses Israel of sowing the wind—pursuing things which are empty and worthless. What worthless things has Israel gone after (v 4-6, 8-10)?

They have set up and put their trust in kings and princes (v 4) instead of God and the rulers he has chosen. They have gone after worship of idols which are simply man-made objects and cannot save (v 5-6). Finally, they have looked to other nations, such as Assyria, for strength and security, failing to trust God and be distinctive; instead they have been "swallowed up" by the nations around them (v 8). Each one of these things is futile to trust in and produces no result and no protection against God's judgment.

Q: How does God describe his judgment of these things (v 7a)?

He will make Israel "reap the whirlwind". That is, his judgement will fall on, and show the uselessness of, the things they have chosen to trust and worship. They will get what they have chosen. They trust Assyria—Assyria will invade them. They serve a calf-idol—this will be smashed to pieces. God judges people by handing them over to what they have chosen, to the consequences of their own decisions (as we have seen in Romans 1v24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another). Ultimately, God judges people by giving them what they want: life for ever without him. But this will mean life without his gifts—life without anything good, in hell. Hell is where people will reap the whirlwind of what they chose—things which are just wind—in this life.

Q. How do people who are outwardly religious "sow the wind" today?

There are an infinite number of ways to "sow the wind", for example: trusting career for security instead of God; seeking satisfaction in thinking sexually about people we're not married to; thinking deep down that we'll get eternal life because we are good/ religious people, rather than because Jesus has saved us from the judgment we deserve.

READ: Hosea 10 v 5-8 and 12-15

5. The people who live in Samaria fear for the calf-idol of Beth Aven*. Its people will mourn over it, and so will its idolatrous priests, those who had rejoiced over its splendour, because it is taken from them into exile.
6. It will be carried to Assyria as tribute for the great king.

Ephraim will be disgraced; Israel will be ashamed of its foreign alliances.

7. Samaria's king will be destroyed, swept away like a twig on the surface of the waters.
8. The high places of wickedness will be destroyed – it is the sin of Israel.
Thorns and thistles will grow up and cover their altars.
9. Then they will say to the mountains, 'Cover us!' and to the hills, 'Fall on us!'

12. Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love,
and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord,
until he comes and showers his righteousness on you.
13. But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil,
you have eaten the fruit of deception.
Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors,
14. the roar of battle will rise against your people, so that all your fortresses will be devastated –
as Shalman devastated Beth Arbel on the day of battle, when mothers were dashed to the ground with their
children.
15. So will it happen to you, Bethel, because your wickedness is great.
When that day dawns, the king of Israel will be completely destroyed.

* Beth Aven means house of wickedness (a derogatory name for Bethel, which means house of God).

Q. What is coming to Israel, and why?

The people of Israel face the imminent threat of God's judgment through the invading army of Assyria. The Assyrians were the dominant superpower of the time, and God would use them as the instrument of his judgment on his people. The Assyrians would invade, taking away the idol as a tribute, removing the king (he'll float away like a twig) and taking the people into exile. [in 722 BC Assyria conquered and destroyed Israel.]

Q. What do the cries of the people (v 8) tell us about the judgment they face?

God's people will cry to the mountains and hills to fall on them and cover them. The nature of God's judgment is such that the people would rather be caught in a landslide or rockfall than face the reality of God's punishment. Perhaps they foolishly think they can hide from God if a mountain covers them up! Israel's outcry shows they viewed God's righteous wrath as something terrible.

8. How should God's people have responded to this message of judgment (v 12-15)? What did they do instead?

The urgent warning of God's judgment at the beginning of chapter 8 should have been a wake-up call to God's people to turn back to him. They had previously "sown the wind" but instead they should "sow righteousness" (v 12) by seeking the Lord. The message of God's judgment should have led the people back to the Lord. Sadly, they did not heed the warning. They chose to continue in stubbornness and rebellion, planting wickedness and depending on their own strength (v 13). So they chose to face the just and dreadful punishment of God.

This pattern of disobedience and judgement is repeated throughout the bible.

READ: Luke 23 v 26-34.

26. As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.
27. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.
28. Jesus turned and said to them, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.'
29. For the time will come when you will say, "Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!"
30. Then ' "they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' "
31. For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?'
32. Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.

33. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left.

34. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'

Q: It's AD 33(ish), and the people of Jerusalem—Israel—have decisively rejected Jesus. What future event does He warn the people about (v 30)?

A day when they want the mountains to fall on them—which, as we've seen from Hosea 10, is a day of God's judgment. Jesus is pointing towards AD70, when Roman armies conquered and destroyed Jerusalem).

Q: Look at Jesus' words in verse 34. Why did Jerusalem desperately need to hear, and hang on to, this?

Because they were facing dreadful judgment—they needed God's forgiveness. And as Jesus hung on his cross, he asked God to forgive people. Of course, it is through the cross that even the most hardened rebel can be forgiven, avoid judgment and be given a place in God's kingdom (see Luke 23 v 39-43). In a city under judgment, the offer of forgiveness should come as a great relief (though, in the main, it was totally ignored).

READ: Revelation 6 v 12-17.

12. I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,

13. and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig-tree when shaken by a strong wind.

14. The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

15. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

16. They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

17. For the great day of his wrath has come, and who can withstand it?'

Q: What is coming, in the future?

The ultimate day of God's judgment. The closing verses of the chapter picture the wrath of God on that day, and the reality of that dreadful day dawning on those who face God's punishment.

Q: How do Hosea 10 and Luke 23 warn us of the folly of ignoring this?

God's judgment has been predicted in the past, and has then come, and been horrific. This shows us that God's judgment is real, and something to be avoided at all costs. Ignoring or downplaying it will not change the truth about what is coming.

Q: What effect will a correct view of God's judgment have on how we see this world, how we speak to those who are rejecting Jesus and how we feel about the forgiveness we have through Jesus?

How we see this world? It is under judgment. We shouldn't be surprised by people rejecting God, or by the world going "wrong". We shouldn't be too attached to what this world offers. We must ensure we don't chase the things of this world and cease to acknowledge God—the mistake Israel made.

How we speak to those who are rejecting Jesus? It should compel us to tell others about the gospel. It will give us urgency, determination and compassion for those who aren't yet Christians. It should also remind us just how good the good news of God's grace is, which we have the privilege of sharing.

How we feel about the forgiveness we have through Jesus? It's only through appreciating the depth of our sin, and the awfulness of the judgment it brings, that we can grasp the wonder of forgiveness. Being forgiven is not just something we understand intellectually; it is something that changes how we feel, emotionally great relief and joy; huge gratitude to Jesus; and a deep humility about ourselves.

Day 5

*For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you,
"Do not fear; I will help you." Isaiah 41:13*

David & Marianne **Chedgy** *Joanna, Naomi, Abigail*

Jean **Chedgy**

Ionela **Ciubotaru**

Paul **Ciungan**

Christina **Clifford**

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