

SEEKING GODS FACE

TEXT: HOSEA 5

INTRODUCTION:

1. Chapter 5 picks up where chapter 4 left off:
"For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer..." (4:16a)
"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (4:17).
"The wind hath bound her up in her wings..." (4:19). This refers to the impending Assyrian captivity (cf. 13:15, 16)
2. As we continue in our series through the book of Hosea, we see that God is still dealing with the sins of Israel, and to a lesser extent, the sins of Judah as well.
3. It is clear that God's judgment would soon come upon them (5:9, 10).
4. Hosea 5:6 reveals that God had withdrawn His face from them (cf. 5:15). This is the key verse because in the Bible, the face of God represents His divine presence and approval, including His guidance, His help, and His comfort.
5. Therefore, it is a terrible thing to have God withdraw His face from either an individual or a nation. Psalm 34:16 says, "The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."
6. It appears that God has withdrawn His face from the USA, but there is still hope for our sin-loving nation (5:15). The Lord promises to return if sinners acknowledge their offence, and seek His face (5:15).
7. How sad, how pitiful it is when God pleads with backsliders, and tries to reason with them, and they refuse to listen. Finally, God says: "Enough" and He withdraws His face from them (5:6, 7).

I. THE SPIRIT OF WHOREDOMS (5:1-4).

1. The "spirit of whoredoms" (cf. 4:12) refers to demonism, which is the dynamic behind all idolatry. First Corinthians 10:20 says, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."
2. However, the spirit of whoredoms is not limited to idolatry. In Israel, Baal worship involved very lewd practices with the temple prostitutes.
3. The spirit of whoredoms includes immorality and drinking (cf. 4:11).
4. For example, alcohol is often referred to as "spirits." There was a liquor store in my old neighborhood called "Buzzy's." He had a big sign that said, "If your spirits are low, let Buzzy know!"

5. Unclean spirits are also behind drugs and rock music and all the filthy garbage in Hollywood and on television.
6. A sleazy new film about Wall Street is full of nudity, orgies, and profanity. *Variety* magazine reported that one notorious dirty curse word is heard in the movie 506 times (not including all the other dirty words), beating a record set by Spike Lee's 1999 film *Summer of Sam* (435 times).
7. That is "the spirit of whoredoms," and it is straight from hell.
8. God spoke to the priests (5:1), because they represented the leadership of the nation. The priests should have been setting a good example but they were not. They were no better than the rest of the backslidden nation. Hosea 4:9 says, "And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings."
9. Unfaithfulness in leadership leads to a decline of testimony among the people. Also, the kings were no good (5:1). There were no good kings in Israel since the kingdom was divided. From King Jeroboam on down the line, none of them knew the Lord.
10. Our situation in America today is not much better. Most of the religious and political leaders in our country are very liberal and ungodly. Another big problem is the liberal news media and the liberal schools. They are all contributing to the climate of ungodliness.
11. Another thing to consider is that the northern kingdom had an alien priesthood. God had ordained that the priests were to be descended from Aaron and from the tribe of Levi.
12. Israel had become "a snare on Mizpah" (5:1). Instead of being a light and a good example, encouraging people to serve the Lord, they had been as a snare and a net, trapping unwary feet into their wicked ways. In other words, they had become a stumbling block.
13. And just as the religious leaders of Israel had become a menace to the spiritual health of the citizens, oftentimes today the greatest menace to the Christian faith is found inside the Christian churches.
14. Many churches today are places that are leading people in the wrong direction. It's sad, but it's true. (Example: a Baptist church inviting heretical T.D. Jakes to preach.)
15. Mizpah was in the southwest section of Israel, and Tabor (Mt. Tabor) was in the northeast (5:1). In other words, the backslidden people were worshipping idols all throughout the land, from one end to the other. The spirit of whoredoms was everywhere.
16. "Revolver" (5:2) literally means a "swerver," a person who swerves from the truth. A revolver is a rebel and an apostate.

17. God had "been a rebuker of them all" (5:2). The word *rebuke* here carries with it the idea of chastisement; discipline with the goal of restoration (cf. 5:9). God's purpose in judgment is not to be vindictive but to bring His people back to Himself (5:15).
18. In the book of Hosea, the ten northern tribes are frequently referred to as "Ephraim" (5:3). Ephraim was the largest and most dominant tribe.
19. Hosea pointed out the root of Israel's trouble: "They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God" (5:4). In other words, they would not put in order their actions so that they would conform to what God requires. Instead, they resisted God and rebelled against Him.
20. Isaiah 63:10 says, "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them."
21. Notice the contrast: God knows Ephraim (5:3a), but "they have not known the LORD" (5:4b).

II. THE PRIDE OF ISRAEL (5:5, 6).

1. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."
2. Despite their wretched condition, the children of Israel were puffed up with pride and haughtiness. Therefore, God would bring them down low (5:5).
3. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Pro. 16:18). Israel would soon fall in their iniquity (Hosea 5:5).
4. "Judah also shall fall with them" (5:5b). The Babylonian captivity would come about 100 years after the fall of Israel.
5. "They shall go with their flocks..." (5:6) in an attempt to propitiate God but would not find Him. Adam Clarke wrote, "They shall offer many sacrifices, professing to seek and be reconciled to the Lord; but they shall not find him. As they still retain the spirit of their idolatry, he has withdrawn himself from them." There are many folks like that!

III. THEY DEALT TREACHEROUSLY AGAINST THE LORD (5:7-15).

1. Treachery is a violation of allegiance, a breach of faith. Many times in the Bible, God uses the term "dealt treacherously" to describe Israel's unfaithfulness (5:7; cf. 6:7).
2. They had begotten "strange children" (5:7), i.e., children with no knowledge of God. This is a big problem today as well. How sad to see Christian people turn out heathen children! Children that do not

- even go to church; children that marry unsaved husbands and wives; children that never read the Bible – God calls them "strange children."
3. The historical background to 5:8-14 is found in II Kings 16. Israel (Ephraim) and Syria had invaded Judah. With the help of Assyria, Judah had counter-attacked and had captured some territory ("The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound..." – 5:10).
 4. Three cities in Benjamin were warned to prepare for God's rod of correction (5:8). "After thee, O Benjamin" (5:8b) – sin had caused them to turn their backs and run away from their enemies (cf. Ex. 23:27).
 5. Hosea 5:8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 all describe God's judgment upon Israel and Judah – judgment that could not be avoided.
 6. God says that He "will be unto Ephraim as a moth" (5:12). I heard an interesting story about a man who had a problem with moths and bought some mothballs at a drug store. But he brought them back, saying that they did not work. The store manager asked him to explain, and the man said: "I stayed up half the night throwing these balls at the moths, but I never did hit one of them!"
 7. The moth is a little insect but can cause a lot of damage. And the lion is a dangerous animal that can tear a man to pieces (5:14).
 8. But the most serious judgment of all is when God withdraws Himself.
 9. God would be to the house of Judah "as rottenness" (5:12).
 10. Ephraim (Israel) would go to the Assyrians for help (5:13) but their expected helper would soon invade their country and take them away into captivity.
 11. In the hour of their stringency, instead of looking to God, Israel looked to a heathen nation for help. The king of Assyria had no concern for them and would soon be the final scourge in the hand of God to carry away Israel into captivity.
 12. God would be like a lion to Israel, but "as a young lion" to Judah (5:14). A young lion was not as fierce, Judah's punishment would not be as severe.
 13. Ephraim (Israel) faced a horrible judgment (5:14; cf. 13:7, 8; Ps. 50:22). But the chapter ends with a note of hope (5:15b). The day when Israel will seek God's face is still future.

CONCLUSION:

God's face would be withdrawn until "they acknowledge their offence" (5:15). True repentance must include acknowledgment of sin.

Confession of sin must precede seeking God's face.

