

WHEN GOD DEPARTS

TEXT: HOSEA 9:1-17

INTRODUCTION:

1. We see some very sad words in Hosea 9:12 -- "Yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!"
2. This is a theme we see often in Scripture (cf. Deut. 31:16-18).
3. The LORD warned the Israelites that when they would "go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land," His anger would be kindled against them, and He would forsake them, and hide His face from them.
4. And that is precisely what happened (Hosea 9:1, 12).
5. Oftentimes God departs from individuals. In I Samuel 28:15, King Saul said to Samuel, "I am sore distressed...and God is departed from me."
6. Samuel replied to King Saul, "Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?" (I Sam. 28:16).
7. This means when the LORD departs He is no longer a friend, but He becomes an enemy (cf. Hosea 9:15 -- "for there I hated them").

I. GOD DEPARTED BECAUSE OF THEIR IDOLATRY (9:1).

1. Hosea's wife Gomer was a harlot, and she was a picture of the nation of Israel, who had "gone a whoring from God" (9:1).
2. The expression, "gone a whoring" refers to their idolatry (cf. 4:12).
3. Leviticus 17:7 says, "And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring."
4. Ezekiel 23:30 says, "I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols."
5. Like an immoral, shameless harlot, they were lying down "upon every cornfloor (threshing floor where they threshed the grain)" (9:1).
6. "Reward" (9:1) refers to a harlot's pay (cf. 2:5, 12). Israel was like a harlot committing spiritual fornication by worshipping idols.
7. The idolatrous Israelites believed that when they had good crops Baal and the other false gods were rewarding them.
8. This was the so-called "prosperity gospel" 2,700 years ago! It didn't start with Oral Roberts or Joel Osteen! The backslidden Israelites believed if someone worshipped Baal, his crops would be very fruitful and his family would be very prosperous.

9. Furthermore, Baal-worship involved the grossest form of immorality - sex with temple prostitutes, both male and female. God said, "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah" (9:9), a reference to the horrible rape of the Levite's concubine, recorded in the book of Judges. They raped her for hours until she was dead.
10. Because of their spiritual adultery, the Israelites would go into captivity – into Assyria and even back to Egypt (9:3).
11. Because of their idolatry, the LORD told them they would have famine and exile (9:2, 3).
12. "They shall eat unclean (polluted, defiled, i.e. food that was ceremonially unclean) things in Assyria" (9:3b).
13. Ezekiel 4:13 says, "And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them."
14. This scattering of the Jews is often referred to as the "Diaspora," the worldwide dispersion of the Jews from Israel (cf. Hosea 9:17). Scattered abroad and having neither priesthood nor temple, Israel would be deprived of pouring out "wine offerings to the LORD" (9:4).
15. Their sacrifices would be "as the bread of mourners..." (9:4). It would bring them no satisfaction and it was displeasing to God (9:4).
16. God had already said that He would put an end to Israel's feast days (2:11). Now God wants to know what they would do on those days when they would be scattered among the heathen and unable to participate in privileges they had long taken for granted (9:5).

II. GOD'S DEPARTURE MEANT JUDGMENT

1. "Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis (Egypt's capital) shall bury them" (9:6). "For, lo, they are gone because of destruction..." (9:6). This was the judgment of God.
2. "Memphis (Egypt's capital) shall bury them" (9:6). Memphis was where the Egyptians buried their dead.
3. In the Bible, Egypt always represents the world. Because of their rebelliousness and unfaithfulness, God was going to send them back to Egypt. What would they do there "in the solemn day"? (9:5).
4. Sometimes Christians go back to the world. I often wonder how they could be happy on the Lord's Day when they were not in church with God's people.
5. Nettles and thorns (9:6) signify desolation. "The days of visitation (judgment) are come" (9:7).

6. Isaiah 10:3 says, "And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?"
7. Jeremiah 10:15 says, "They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish."
8. Micah 7:4 says, "The day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity."
9. Hosea 9:7 says, "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence (retribution, reward) are come."
10. Isaiah 34:8 says, "For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion."
11. Jeremiah 16:18 says, "And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things."
12. The word "recompense" is also used in Romans 1:27 -- "And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet."
13. Sadly this Scripture is ignored and dismissed today!
14. "The (false) prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad..." (9:7b), but the backslidden Israelites had it backwards and they considered the true prophets like Hosea fools and mad men.
15. You will recall that Festus said to Paul, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad" (Acts 26:24).
16. Jehu's captain thought the same thing about the young prophet whom Elisha sent to anoint Jehu. He said to Jehu, "Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?" (II Kings 9:11).
17. Some of the Jews said about Jesus, "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" (John 10:20).
18. And it has always been this way. People called Wesley and Whitefield and Moody madmen. Sinners think Christians are crazy to follow the Bible and live for God.
19. There were a few good "watchmen" (9:8a; cf. Ezek. 3:17; 33:7), but most of the people were being ensnared by the false prophets.
20. "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah" (9:9). This refers to the shocking, brutal rape and murder of the Levite's concubine, recorded in Judges 19.

21. This horrifying and disgusting sin in Gibeah happened over 600 years before, but God did not forget it. God keeps a record of everything.
22. H.A. Ironside said, "Sin never dies a natural death; it must be thoroughly judged."
23. Israel had much promise in the beginning, like delicious "grapes in the wilderness" or like "the firstripe (first fruits) in the fig tree" (9:10).
24. "But they went to Baal-peor..." (9:10b), another reference to their shameful past. These references prove to us that sin left unjudged will eventually be dealt with. God does not "sweep things under the rug."
25. Hosea's reference to the abomination at Baal-peor reminds us again of Ironside's statement concerning God's judgment on sin.
26. Numbers 25:3 says, "And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel."
27. This wicked sin is also mentioned in Psalm 106:28, and the Lord referred to it in Revelation 2:14 in his letter to the church in Pergamos.
28. Archaeologists have uncovered the Ras Shamra tablets in Syria. These ancient tablets demonstrate how wicked and perverted Baal worship was. The LORD called it an "abomination."
29. "And their abominations were according as they loved" (9:10b). In other words, they had become as disgusting and vile as the false gods they worshipped and loved,
30. Deuteronomy 7:26 says, "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing."

III. THE TRAGEDY OF LOSING THE PRESENCE OF GOD (9:12)

1. The most severe and disastrous part of God's judgment is the withdrawal of His presence.
2. Only a wicked sinner, blinded by the devil, would want God to depart.
3. Job sounds like he was describing America in 2014 when he said over 4,000 years ago, "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:13-15).
4. Job 22:17 says the wicked say said to God, "Depart from us."
5. Matthew 8:34 says, "And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts."

6. Over the years I have heard of people who have told God to leave them alone – how tragic!
7. I heard about a young man who had been attending a good church regularly but stopped going. The pastor went by his house to visit him and asked him why he stopped going to church. He said that he felt uncomfortable listening to him preach about heaven and hell, and sin and judgment.
8. The pastor asked, "Do you deliberately choose to continue in sin, reject God, and go to hell?" The young man said: "Yes, I do not want to hear anything more about God or the Bible. I want God to leave me alone." It wasn't long before the young man died and went to hell.
9. The consequences of Israel's folly were tragic: "Their glory shall fly away like a bird..." (9:11; cf. 4:7). "It shall suddenly spring away from them, and return no more" (Adam Clarke).
10. "Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place" (9:13). Tyre was strongly situated on a rock in the sea, but that did not save them from destruction.
11. God would make Ephraim barren and childless (9:11b,12). Ironically, the name *Ephraim* means "fruitful." Genesis 41:52 says Joseph called the name of his second son Ephraim: "For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."
12. But now, "Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit" (9:16). They went from fruitful to fruitless.
13. Another irony is that Baal-worship was a fertility cult. God's punishment would be infertility, barrenness, loss of children, and miscarriages (9:14).
14. Those children who did not die in childbirth would be murdered (9:13, 16).
15. In addition to barrenness, God would "drive them out" of His "house," i.e. the land (9:15; cf. 8:1).
16. God would "hate them" for their wickedness (9:15). He "will love them no more." There are some things God hates. Contrary to what most people think, God still hates sin.
17. When the Bible says God "hated them," it refers to His holy hatred of their sin.
18. God was going to smite them (9:16a) and "cast them away" (9:17). The LORD warned them in Deuteronomy 28:64, "And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone."

19. The ten tribes did not return after the Assyrian captivity. Nor did they settle in any one country. They are scattered all over the world, just as God's Word said would happen.
20. People refer to the "lost tribes of Israel." However, they are not lost; they are scattered. They are "wanderers among the nations" (9:17b).
21. James 1:1 refers to the "twelve tribes which are scattered abroad."

CONCLUSION:

1. Hosea chapter 9 begins with a warning from God -- "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God" (9:1).
2. They may have felt secure but their peace and security would not last very long. Therefore, God considered their rejoicing unwarranted.
3. Today many Americans are rejoicing and celebrating and gambling and drinking and doing drugs and fornicating and partying and so on.
4. They are eagerly enjoying their "pleasures of sin for a season," unaware that the judgment of God will soon come down upon their heads.
5. Sadly, there is no fear of God (cf. Hosea 9:9).