

Hosea

Chapter 13

The Lord's Anger Against Israel

When Ephraim spoke, men trembled; he was exalted in Israel. But he became guilty of Baal worship and died.² Now they sin more and more; they make idols for themselves from their silver, cleverly fashioned images, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of these people, "They offer human sacrifice and kiss the calf-idols."³ Therefore they will be like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears, like chaff swirling from a threshing floor, like smoke escaping through a window.⁴ "But I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me."⁵ I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat.⁶ When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.⁷ So I will come upon them like a lion, like a leopard I will lurk by the path.⁸ Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open. Like a lion I will devour them; a wild animal will tear them apart.⁹ "You are destroyed, O Israel, because you are against me, against your helper."¹⁰ Where is your king, that he may save you? Where are your rulers in all your towns, of whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'?¹¹ So in my anger I gave you a king, and in my wrath I took him away.¹² The guilt of Ephraim is stored up, his sins are kept on record.¹³ Pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him, but he is a child without wisdom; when the time arrives, he does not come to the opening of the womb.¹⁴ "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? "I will have no compassion,¹⁵ even though he thrives among his brothers. An east wind from the LORD will come, blowing in from the desert; his spring will fail and his well dry up. His storehouse will be plundered of all its treasures.¹⁶ The people of Samaria must bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their God. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open."

13:1 *When Ephraim spoke.* In accordance with Jacob's blessing (Ge 48:10–20), Ephraim became a powerful tribe (Jdg 8:1–3; 12:1–7; 1Sa 1:1–4), from which came such prominent leaders as Joshua (Jos 24:30) and Jeroboam I (1Ki 11:26; 12:20). (CSB)

trembling. In Israel's glory days, when David and Solomon ruled over a united kingdom, the surrounding nations shuddered before their might. (TLSB)

Israel. The 12 tribes. (CSB)

guilt through Baal. After Israel became such a powerful nation, King Solomon allowed the spread of idolatrous practices. Under Jeroboam, his illegitimate successor in the north, worship began to be offered unabashedly to golden calves (1Ki 12:28). Later, during Ahab's

reign, the king himself “served Baal and worshiped him,” even setting up a temple for him (1Ki 16:31–32). Such departures marked the beginning of the end for Israel. (TLSB)

died. The wages of sin was death (cf. Ro 6:23), and the end of the nation was at hand. (CSB)

13:2 *idols.* See 4:12; 8:5–6; 11:2. (CSB)

King Jeroboam introduced worship of the twin golden calves c 200 years earlier. After that, the propagation of man-made idols accelerated. (TLSB)

human sacrifice. See 2Ki 17:17; 23:10; Eze 20:26; Mic 6:7. (CSB)

kiss. Show homage to (cf. 1Ki 19:18). (CSB)

This ironic passage juxtaposes two aspects of Baal worship. Idolatrous practices could include human sacrifice. At the same time, this sentence underscores the frivolity of those worshipping Baal, since they showed greater respect for images of animals than for human life. (TLSB)

literally, "to them they are speaking, men who sacrifice: they kiss the calves"; that is, the foolish idolaters speak with the very work of their hands and pray to them; they even kiss these pictures of calves, as though they were on a level with human, beings. The reproof is purposely couched in words of cutting irony. (Kretzmann)

13:3 “Mist” and “dew” (see 6:4), “chaff” (see Ps 1:4; 35:5; Isa 17:13; 29:5) and “smoke” (see Ps 37:20; 68:2; Isa 51:6) are all figurative for Ephraim, who was soon to vanish as a nation. (CSB)

Evaporates as soon as the sun rises. (TLSB)

chaff ... smoke. Blown away by even a puff of wind. A picture of how quickly and completely rebellious Israel will be destroyed. (TLSB)

window. Buildings did not have chimneys; smoke exited through a window. (TLSB)

13:4 *I am the LORD.* See 12:9; Ex 20:2–3; Dt 5:6. The contrast is with Jeroboam’s declaration, “Here are your gods” (1Ki 12:28). (CSB)

from the land of Egypt. Israel is again reminded of their deliverance from Egypt. This redemptive intervention is repeatedly evoked amid Hosea’s admonitions, reminding Israel that they should refuse to know any other God besides the One who rescued them from bondage. (TLSB)

acknowledge ... God. See 4:1; 6:3; 8:2. (CSB)

Hbr *yada* ‘, implies an evidential-experiential knowledge, i.e., a familiarity based on relationship. (TLSB)

besides Me there is no savior. The exodus event is the greatest way that God revealed Himself as Savior in the OT. The greatest redemptive act in all of history, however, is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, which results in the world's salvation from sin, death, and the devil. Christianity, unlike all other religions of the world, can point to factual events and historical persons as the basis for knowing God and, most important, knowing the certainty of salvation. (TLSB)

13:5 *desert.* See 2:14; 9:10. (CSB)

Israel's 40-year wandering. (TLSB)

13:6 *satisfied.* See Dt 6:11–12; 8:10–14; 11:15–16. (CSB)

Their enjoyment of the goodness of God causing them to become proud in their own conceit. (Kretzmann)

forgot me. Cf. Dt 8:14; 31:20; 32:15, 18. (CSB)

Haughty and deluded into believing they had no need of the Lord, they failed to appreciate all that the Lord had done for them. Moses warned them against this. (TLSB)

13:7–8 The Lord, previously pictured as a shepherd (4:16), would attack like the wild beasts that often ravaged the flocks. (CSB)

Not commonly found in the Near East today. Asiatic lions and leopards found only in India, are on the verge of extinction. Similarly, Asiatic black bears are found only in China. These animals conjure up the image of a voracious beast tearing a tame flock of sheep or goats to pieces, illustrating just how angry God was with Israel. (TLSB)

The punishment of the apostate people is represented as a rending and devouring of a herd, which has grown fat with a rich pasture, by wild beasts. In the midst of His most serious rebukes the Lord still inserts a pleading cry admonishing men to turn to their only Savior with a repentant heart. (Kretzmann)

13:7 *lion.* See 5:14. (CSB)

leopard. See Jer 5:6; Rev 13:2. (CSB)

13:8 *bear robbed of her cubs.* See 2Sa 17:8; 2Ki 2:24; Pr 17:12. (CSB)

Mother bears are notoriously fierce as they protect their cubs. (TLSB)

tear open their breast. Laying bare the heart. (TLSB)

13:9 *He destroys.* “The beginning and cause of evil is not God’s foreknowledge. (For God does not create and do evil, neither does He help or promote it.) The cause of this evil is the wicked, perverse will of the devil and of people” (FC SD XI 7). (TLSB)

helper. See Ps 10:14; 30:10; 54:4. (CSB)

Hbr *‘ezer*, “ally.” Not only did the Lord bring the Israelites out of Egypt, but He also continued to bless and sustain His chosen people. (TLSB)

literally, "It has destroyed thee, Israel, because [thou art] against Me, against thy Help." That is the great contrast: on the one side, certain help and deliverance, on the other, destruction which Israel brings upon himself by opposing the true God and His way of redemption. There is no way of bringing about an agreement and of reconciling God and man but by accepting God's way of salvation. (Kretzmann)

13:10 *Where is your king ... ?* Help is only from the Lord, not from kings. The prophet likely alludes to the royal assassinations of his day (see 3:4; 7:7; 8:4; 10:3). (CSB)

Give me a king. Though all Israel asked for a king in the days of Samuel (1Sa 8:5, 20), the reference here is only to the northern monarchy. They selected Jeroboam I (1Ki 12:26) in preference to the Davidic kings. (CSB)

After King Solomon’s death, the Lord’s warnings about kings came to fruition. For more than two centuries, Israel languished under terrible leadership. (TLSB)

took him away. When the Lord had endured enough of Israel’s apostate kings, he allowed the Assyrians to destroy the Northern Kingdom and bring their royal line to an end. (TLSB)

13:11 The monarchy is here considered a rebellion (see 1Sa 8:7). (CSB)

The constant change of kings being a decided misfortune to the country, while the end of the kingdom was now in sight. (Kretzmann)

13:12 *guilt ... stored up.* See 9:9. (CSB)

bound up. Their sin is preserved or collected so it can be taken into consideration when the time for punishment comes. (TLSB)

Ephraim. Israel, the northern kingdom. (CSB)

sins ... on record. See 7:2; Dt 32:34–35. (CSB)

Sealed in a package, for ready reference. This being true, the punishment was bound to follow. (Kretzmann)

13:13 *Pains as of ... childbirth.* Their helpless situation was comparable to that of a woman in childbirth (see Isa 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; Jer 4:31; 13:21; Mic 4:9–10; Mt 24:8) who cannot deliver the child (see 2Ki 19:3; Isa 37:3) and consequently dies. (CSB)

The judgment awaiting Israel would be, at least figuratively, as great as the trauma one experiences at birth. In Israel's case, however, this travail would last an abnormally long time. (TLSB)

unwise son. God's "firstborn son" resists being born. (TLSB)

13:14 *I will ransom.* A promise of redemption from death. (CSB)

death. The personified reference is to the death of the nation (see v. 1). Paul applies this passage to resurrection (1Co 15:55). (CSB)

O Death ... your sting? Obviously, only God can overcome the final and destructive power of death. He alone can loosen its hold on humankind. "Christ's death is a satisfaction not only for guilt, but also for eternal death" (Ap XIIB 43). (TLSB)

His plan of salvation would most certainly be carried out. In the very midst of a proclamation of wrath and punishment, then, we have a most glorious promise of the victory gained through the redemption planned in God's counsel of love, and the Apostle Paul was right in using this passage as his song of triumph on account of Christ's victory over death and hell. Cp. 1 Cor. 15, 55-57. (Kretzmann)

grave. For a description of Sheol see Job 3:13–19; Ps 18:5; 116:3. (CSB)

Compassion is hidden. Although the Lord will indeed redeem His people and bring His great plan of salvation to fulfillment in His time, for the moment the theme of judgment and doom predominate. Paul repeats these questions at the climax of his greatest chapter on the meaning of Christ's resurrection and then answers them: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 15:57). (TLSB)

13:15 *thrives.* In Hebrew a wordplay on Ephraim (meaning "fruitful"). The drought-bringing east wind (cf. Job 1:19; Isa 27:8; Jer 4:11; 13:24; 18:17) is here a figure for Assyria, an instrument of the Lord (Isa 10:5, 15). Assyria invaded the northern kingdom in 734 B.C., then crushed it and exiled its people in 722–721.

the east wind. An apt metaphor for God's destructive vengeance through the Assyrians, from the east. (TLSB)

all its treasures. See Na 2:9.

When the Assyrians conquered the northern tribes, they plundered the Israelites' personal and national wealth. (TLSB)

Of all the wealthy and proud cities of the northern kingdom. (Kretzmann)

13:16 *Samaria*. See 7:1; here, the northern kingdom.

rebelled against. See Ps 5:10; Eze 20:8, 13, 21.

little ones ... women. For atrocities against women and children see 10:14; 2Ki 8:12; 15:16; Ps 137:8–9; Isa 13:16; Am 1:13; Na 3:10.

According to the unspeakably cruel methods of warfare then in use. The call of the Gospel, as we see here once more, sounded even in the midst of degenerate Israel; for it is not the desire of the Lord that any man should perish, but that all should be led to repentance. (Kretzmann)

Ch 13 Israel's never-ending idolatry and disobedience provoked this most violent description of judgment. The children offered to Baal would be ripped away. Today, offer yourself, your family, and your congregation to the Lord in repentant prayer. Acknowledge lack of control and beg God's forgiveness, restoration, and health. By grace, God's Holy Spirit will enable you to see things aright. He will ransom and redeem His people through His Son's compassionate love.

- Thank You, Jesus, for opening my eyes to Your compassion. May I always trust in You when faced with sin, death, and the power of the devil. Amen. (TLSB)