

Hosea

Chapter 13

The LORD's Relentless Judgment on Israel

When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel, but he incurred guilt through Baal and died. 2 And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves metal images, idols skillfully made of their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of them, “Those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!” 3 Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window. 4 But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior. 5 It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought; 6 but when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me. 7 So I am to them like a lion; like a leopard I will lurk beside the way. 8 I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs; I will tear open their breast, and there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild beast would rip them open. 9 He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against me, against your helper. 10 Where now is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers—those of whom you said, “Give me a king and princes”? 11 I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath. 12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store. 13 The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son, for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb. 14 I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes. 15 Though he may flourish among his brothers, the east wind, the wind of the LORD, shall come, rising from the wilderness, and his fountain shall dry up; his spring shall be parched; it shall strip his treasury of every precious thing. 16 Samaria shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword; their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and 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 *images.* 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)

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)

you know no God. 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 *wilderness*. Israel’s 40-year wandering. (TLSB)

13:6 *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 *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)

13:10 *Where now 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)

where are all your rulers. 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 *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)

13:13 *Pangs ... 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 *shall I 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)

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

every precious thing. 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.* Here, the northern kingdom. (CSB)

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

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.. (CSB)

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)