

5.1-6.3—Hope for the Hopeless

Aftermath: a hopeless situation, vv.1-11

- I. The guilt of Israel is universal, vv.1-2. God arraigns all men.
- II. The defilement of Israel is total, v.3. Despite the prosperity of the reign of Jeroboam II, the nation was defiled and corrupted.
- III. The state of Israel is one of total bondage, v.4; cp. 4.12. They're enslaved to a spirit of idolatry, Eph 2.2; Lk 11.21.
- IV. The devotion of Israel to Yahweh is hypocritical, vv.6-7; Mk 7.6; cp. Jer 2.28.
 - A. It's no wonder to see the Lord withdraw from Israel when we see that Israel has withdrawn from God, vv.2, 3, 7, 11, 13; Pr 1.20-33.
 - B. There's no greater judgment than to have God withdraw from you, Mk 15.34, but that's what our sin compels God to do, Isa 59.1-14. What hope do we have, then?
- V. Their influence upon Judah has been devastating, vv.5, 10. Judah obviously didn't heed the warnings of God in 4.15-19, cf. Jer 3.6-10.
- VI. The hopelessness climaxes in the judgment God pronounces upon them for all these evils. Besides the withdrawal in v.6, the Lord says Ephraim will become a desolation, even as early as the next new moon, vv.7-9, 11; cf. Rom 1.28-32.
 - A. Can anything be done? Something can be done, but only God can do it—and do it He will, v.12-15; cf. Eph 2.4; Hos 1.10.

God's covenant strategy of mercy, vv.12-15

- I. The Lord will come on like a moth, afflicting them with judgments designed to slowly eat away at their covenant blessings, v.12.
 - A. These judgments were graciously designed to call them back and remind them of the conditional side of the covenant in which the people of God are to *live* as God's people, Dt 6.10-19; 11.13-17.
 - B. God's covenant is full of grace and God sovereignly redeems sinners. But redeemed sinners mustn't return to a life of sin. So it's the nature of the covenant of grace to not only save sinners but sanctify them as well, Ezk 36.25-27; Tit 2.11-14. God's moth-like judgments are the first step in a strategy to show them His mercy.
 - C. But instead of repenting, Israel went further away from God, v.13.
- II. So the Lord will come on them like a roaring and tearing lion, v.14.
 - A. God will carry them away into exile. The Assyrians will carry it out, but it will be His judgment which they carry out, Isa 10.5.

- B. No wonder none shall rescue, v.14. If the God of Hope turns against them then there's no hope of escape. And unless they can find a way to be restored to His favor, they'll rot and die in a foreign land as a people with no God to care for them.

God's covenant hope for the penitent, 5.15-6.3

- I. Three clues indicate that there's hope in God for them still, v.15.
 - A. The Lord says *I will return to my place*. What place is this? It's His place above the mercy seat, Ex 25.22. That's the place of the God of the Covenant. He sits on a mercy seat, ready to show mercy to the penitent, Heb 4.16.
 - B. The Lord says, *I will return to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face*. That little word "until" shows us that everything God did, as a moth and a lion, was all with an eye to their redemption, 2.14-15. All God's judgments upon His people have an "until" stamped on them because they're all carried out by God with a gospel intent, 2.6-7.
 - C. The Lord says, *in their distress, they'll earnestly seek me*. This is a gospel indicative, a promise of the covenant. Though many will run yet farther away from God because of His judgments, His Spirit will work in the hearts of the elect to bring them back. They will repent and come back, but He will enable them to do it by His grace, Ezk 36.24-27; Phil 2.12-13; Jn 6.44-45, 60-65.
- II. Where are you with God today?
 - A. Has God been like a moth or a lion to you because of your sins? Know that He stands ready to show you mercy today, v.15.
 - B. Go to Him today and take the prophet's words with you (6.1-3), for He is the God who keeps covenant and the God who holds out hope and mercy for all who seek Him in that covenant, Ex 25.22.
 - C. Jesus Christ, whom Hosea saw in type and shadow, has now come in order that all who see their need for mercy in God may have it, Jn 14.6; Heb 4.14-16; Rom 3.23-26.