

- I. Epharim (Northern Israel) is now a dead man walking
  - A. Ephraim had once been powerful and blessed
    - a) Ephraim becomes the most prominent tribe in the northern kingdom. So a place of favor, a place of respect is initially given to Ephraim. Genesis chapter 48 tells us that before Jacob dies he gives blessing to Joseph's son's Manasseh and Ephraim. And as the blessing is being given, Jacob crossed his hands and placed his right hand on the head of the younger son so that Ephraim was by the choice of God given prominence over his brother Manasseh.
    - b) **Genesis 41:52** – “**The name of the second he called Ephraim, “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”** (Ephraim sounds like the Hebrew for “making fruitful.”)
  - B. Incurred guilt through idolatry & polytheism – “those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!” - The calves in question were the golden bull calves worshipped at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:28-33). When a worshiper gave his or her sacrifice at an idol shrine, it was the practice to bow before the idol and kiss it (1 Kings 19:18).
    1. Why was idolatry such an attraction to the Israelites, so much so that most of them practiced it at any given time during this history of the nation? There are nine reasons. (Stuart)
      - a) It was believed to guarantee the notice of the god(s). Idols were thought to capture the presence of the god/goddess in question, so that he/she had to pay attention to the worshiper.
      - b) It was selfish. It involved a materialistic system in which the gods favored the worshiper in return for the food given in sacrifice. (Ancient peoples tended to believe, interestingly enough, that the one thing the gods could not do was feed themselves-this was the one “hold” that humans had on the gods.)
      - c) It was easy. Frequency and generosity of worship were the sole requirements. Living a godly, upright life (keeping the terms of a covenant) was not required by idolatry.
      - d) It was convenient. Worshipping Yahweh required three yearly pilgrimages to a central location (the temple). Idol shrines were “on every hill and under every green tree” (Deut. 12:2). Idol worship could occur almost any place, at almost any time.
      - e) It was “normal.” Idolatry was the common mode of worship without exception in the ancient world other than among orthodox Israelites. It was assumed to be the basis for successful Canaanite farming of the same land that the Israelites wanted to be fertile, and it was assumed to be the practice behind the success of the various military and

economic superpowers of the day (Assyria, Babylonia, Tyre, among others).

- f) It seemed logical. Idolatry, which went hand in hand with polytheism, accorded to each god a specialty. By comparison, Yahweh looked like a generalist, whose only real ability lay in his having functioned to bring Israel out of Egypt, an appreciated, but currently unneeded, skill.
- g) It was pleasing to the senses, involving icon worship of all sorts (cf. Ezek. 8:9 ff) and rituals like bowing and kissing. By contrast, worshipers of Yahweh had to put up with an invisible God who forbade any depiction of himself.
- h) It was indulgent, involving frequent meat meals, gluttony, and heavy drinking (cf. e.g. Amos 2:8; Dan. 5:1ff; Isa. 5:11-12).
- i) It was erotic. Sex with a prostitute (male or female, depending on your sexual preference) was not merely allowed, but encouraged as an act of worship symbolizing agricultural fertility. (Cf. Amos 2:7; Hos. 4:14; Gen. 38:21-22; 1 Kings 22:46; 2 Kings 23; 7; Jer. 2:20; 5:7.)

**1 John 5:19–21 [19] We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. [20] And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. [21] Little children, keep yourselves from idols.**

- 2. They had other god's – polytheism or syncretism – The language of vs 4 echoes the first two commandments (Exod. 20:2-4).

**Exodus 20:1–6 [1] And God spoke all these words, saying, [2] "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. [3] "You shall have no other gods before me. [4] "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. [5] You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, [6] but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**

C. They forgot God!

*"Verses 4-6 tracks the very progression of degeneration Moses had warned about centuries earlier (Deut 8:11-19); from exodus redemption to wilderness dependence to prosperity in the land to forgetfulness." (Barrett, pg 129)*

**Deuteronomy 8:11–18 [11] “Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, [12] lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, [13] and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, [14] then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, [15] who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, [16] who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. [17] Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ [18] You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.**

*“Remembering and forgetting are volitional terms: they are acts of the will. To remember is consciously and willfully to think about something. To forget is consciously and willfully to refuse to think about something. Forgetting God, therefore, is a most serious offense. The psalmist said, “The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all the nations that forget God.” -Ps 9:17 (Barrett p130-131)*

II. The result of their sin as made them dead men walking – they were still alive, but spiritually they were dead

A. Mist, dew, chaff, and smoke are all things that disappear, symbolizing the coming disappearance (annihilation as a nation) of the Israelites.

**Psalm 1:4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

**Psalm 68:2 As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God!**

B. They had lost their weight, they had lost their glory. the Old Testament word for “glory” is kabod, which has a primitive root meaning “heavy.” Used in a negative sense, something weighty is something burdensome. When used in a positive sense, such heaviness means wealth and honor. Weighty issues are important ones.

**2 Corinthians 4:16–18 [16] So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. [17] For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, [18] as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.)**

*“All the loneliness, angers, hatreds, envies and itchings that [Hell] contains, if rolled into one single experience and put into the scale against the least moment of the joy that is felt in Heaven, would have no weight that could be registered at all.” (C.S. Lewis, The Great Divorce)*

- C. They were unwise, unnatural, weak, without potential, unable to help themselves.
  - 1. Sin “kept in store” is a way of saying that the nation had for a long time been committing more than enough sin to deserve destruction under the terms of the Mosaic covenant
  - 2. The metaphor in vs 13 highlights Israel's folly for failing to enter into the life that God had prepared for them.
  - 3. 2 Kings 19 tells us of the invasion of the Assyrians, and how Sennacherib the great king of Assyria destroyed Israel (fulfilling the prophecy of Hosea). Sennacherib also invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem. And Hezekiah the king of Judah sent word to Isaiah the prophet, saying: “Thus says Hezekiah, this day is a day of distress, of rebuke and of disgrace; children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth.” (2 Kings 19:3)
- III. God's Definite Judgement – because they have rejected God as their helper, he has now become their destroyer

***Deuteronomy 8:19-20 [19] And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. [20] Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.)***

***James 1:15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.***

- 1. Punishment by wild animals

***Leviticus 26:21–22 [21] “Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins. [22] And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.***

- 2. Punishment by loss of the king - This probably refers to the point in Israel's history when the Assyrians had taken Israel's king Hoshea captive, along with the royal family and the most important military leaders. 2 Kings 17.

3. Punishment by drought

**Deuteronomy 11:16–17 [16] Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; [17] then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the LORD is giving you.**

4. Punishment by the horrors of war

- a) Fall by the sword
- b) Little ones dashed in pieces
- c) Pregnant women ripped open

**2 Kings 8:12 And Hazael said, “Why does my lord weep?” He answered, “Because I know the evil that you will do to the people of Israel. You will set on fire their fortresses, and you will kill their young men with the sword and dash in pieces their little ones and rip open their pregnant women.”**

**2 Kings 15:16 At that time Menahem sacked Tiphshah and all who were in it and its territory from Tirzah on, because they did not open it to him. Therefore he sacked it, and he ripped open all the women in it who were pregnant.**

IV. God is a God of infinite mercy

- A. I will ransom them, I will redeem them...some translations shall I ransom them?... shall I redeem them?
- B. Death is the outcome for sin. God is telling a remnant of his people that he will ransom them from death.
- C. This is a promise that points forward to the deliverance that Christ accomplished in his death and resurrection. His great victory brought about the death of death for all who will look to him in faith. Like Israel, we too will die, but death is not the end for us if we are in Christ.
- D. As Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:54–57 [54] When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” [55] “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” [56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. [57] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

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