

Hosea 11:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

Analysis

Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints. Israel surrounds God with lies and deceit - comprehensive falsehood in relationship. Judah contrasted as still ruling (rad, possibly wanders or still) with God and faithful (or faithful to, or against) saints. The Hebrew is difficult, but contrasts Israel's total falsehood with Judah's partial faithfulness. Yet later context shows Judah also fails. This teaches even relative faithfulness doesn't save; only absolute righteousness (found in Christ alone) suffices. All have sinned (Romans 3:23); Christ's righteousness alone justifies.

Historical Context

At Hosea's time, Judah hadn't fallen as deeply into apostasy as Israel - they maintained Davidic kingship, Jerusalem temple, and periodic reforms (under Hezekiah). Thus relative faithfulness compared to northern apostasy. Yet later prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah) showed Judah's corruption requiring judgment. The comparison teaches: degrees of unfaithfulness exist, but none meet God's standard. Only Christ's perfect righteousness satisfies divine justice. Relative morality or religious heritage doesn't save; absolute righteousness through Christ alone justifies.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does comparing Israel's lies with Judah's partial faithfulness warn against measuring righteousness relatively rather than absolutely?
2. What does even Judah's failure (despite relative advantage) teach about universal need for Christ's imputed righteousness?

Interlinear Text

סָבַבְנִי	בְּכִחַשׁ	אֶפְרַיִם	וּבְמַחֲמָה	בֵּית	יִשְׂרָאֵל
compasseth	me about with lies	Ephraim	with deceit	and the house	of Israel
H5437	H3585	H669	H4820	H1004	H3478
עַד וַיהוּדָה	כֹּד	עִם	אֵל	וְעִם	קְדוֹשׁ יִם
but Judah	yet ruleth	with God	with the saints	and is faithful	
H3063	H7300	H410	H6918	H539	

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 3:21 (Parallel theme): To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Isaiah 44:20 (Parallel theme): He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Hosea 12:7 (Parallel theme): He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.

