

Hosea 4:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend;
and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven,
nor swear, The LORD liveth.

Analysis

Warning to Judah: 'Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.' Despite pronouncing judgment on northern Israel, God warns southern Judah to avoid identical sin. Gilgal and Beth-aven (scornful name for Bethel, meaning 'house of vanity' instead of 'house of God') were major northern shrines. The prohibition against swearing 'The LORD liveth' refers to invoking YHWH's name in oaths while practicing idolatry—blasphemous hypocrisy. This demonstrates God's patience toward Judah and His desire that they learn from Israel's judgment. Jesus similarly warns: 'Remember Lot's wife' (Luke 17:32)—past judgments instruct the wise. Only by fleeing idolatry and clinging to Christ do we escape judgment's path.

Historical Context

Gilgal, originally site of Israel's covenant renewal after Jordan crossing (Joshua 4-5), had become corrupted worship center (Hosea 9:15, Amos 4:4, 5:5). Beth-el (Bethel), where Jacob encountered God (Genesis 28:19), Jeroboam I perverted by erecting golden calf (1 Kings 12:28-29). Hosea mockingly calls it Beth-aven ('house of nothingness/wickedness'). Despite Israel's imminent fall (722 BC), Judah survived until 586 BC—partly because some kings (Hezekiah, Josiah) heeded prophetic warnings and pursued reform. Yet Judah ultimately failed similarly,

proving that warnings unheeded become judgments executed. Church history parallels: denominations falling into apostasy warn others to guard truth vigilantly.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How should observing others' spiritual decline and judgment motivate personal vigilance and corporate reformation?
2. What does it mean to invoke God's name ('The LORD liveth') while living in contradiction to His character and commands?

Interlinear Text

אִם H518	זָנָה H2181	אֶתָּה H859	יִשְׂרָאֵל H3478	אֶל H408	יֹאשֶׁם H816	יְהוּדָה H3063
	play the harlot		Though thou Israel		offend	yet let not Judah
וְאֵל H408	תָּבֹאוּ H935	הַגִּלְגָּל H1537	וְאֵל H408	תַּעֲלוּ H5927	בְּ יֵת H0	אֶל H1007
	and come	not ye unto Gilgal		neither go ye up		to Bethaven
וְאֵל H408	תִּשְׁבַּע H7650	חִי H2416	יְהוָה H3068			
	nor swear	liveth	The LORD			

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 12:11 (Parallel theme): Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

Hosea 9:15 (Parallel theme): All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers.

Amos 4:4 (Parallel theme): Come to Beth-el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:

Jeremiah 5:2 (References Lord): And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely.

Amos 5:5 (Parallel theme): But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.

Amos 8:14 (Parallel theme): They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

Hosea 10:8 (References Israel): The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.

Hosea 5:8 (Parallel theme): Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin.

Hosea 10:5 (Parallel theme): The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.