

Hosea 6:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

Analysis

God's lament: 'O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.' This expresses divine frustration - not helplessness but anguish over Israel's superficial repentance. Their 'goodness' (hesed) is transient like morning fog or dew that vanishes quickly. Repentance motivated by desire to escape consequences (6:1-3) rather than genuine grief over sin proves temporary. Jesus condemned similar religion (Matthew 15:8): 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.' True repentance produces lasting transformation through Spirit's regenerating work (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Historical Context

Israel's pattern throughout history: crisis provokes temporary reform, prosperity brings renewed apostasy. Judges cycle demonstrates this: oppression, crying out, deliverance, apostasy, oppression. Kings occasionally reformed (Jehu, Jehoash), but changes didn't last. Hosea 6:1-3 presents shallow repentance - quick 'let us return' without deep heart change. Context (6:4-6) shows God rejecting such superficiality. Modern parallel: crisis conversions that don't produce lasting discipleship. Only Spirit-wrought regeneration creates permanent transformation, not circumstantial religion.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do I distinguish between temporary crisis-motivated repentance and genuine Spirit-wrought transformation in my life?
2. What evidence demonstrates that my 'goodness' is lasting fruit of regeneration rather than vanishing morning cloud?

Interlinear Text

מַה הַעֲשֵׂה אַתָּה לְבָנֶךָ אַפְּרִים מַה הַעֲשֵׂה אַתָּה לְבָנֶךָ
H4100 what shall I do H0 O Ephraim H4100 what shall I do H0
H6213 H669 H6213

לְבָנֶךָ הַיְהוֹדָה וְעַל־מִסְדָּךְךָ בְּקָרְבָּנֶךָ כְּלֹט לְבָנֶךָ
unto thee O Judah unto thee for your goodness cloud is as a morning dew
H3063 H2617 H6051 H1242 H2919

הַלְּבָנָה מַשְׁכֶּב יָמֶנֶת
and as the early it goeth away
H7925 H1980

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 11:8 (Parallel theme): How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

Hosea 13:3 (Parallel theme): Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

Matthew 13:21 (Parallel theme): Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

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