

Hosea 8:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.

Analysis

Multiplying altars for sin: 'Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.' The irony: multiplying מִזְבְּחֵי (mizbechot, altars) לַחַטֹּאת (lachato, to sin/for sin), they become לֶחֶט (lechet, for sinning). Intended for atonement, they multiply transgression. More religion produces more guilt when heart is wrong. Jesus similarly condemned Pharisaic multiplication of traditions (Matthew 15:1-9). Proliferating religious activity apart from genuine faith compounds rather than removes sin. Only Christ's once-for-all sacrifice truly atones (Hebrews 10:10-14); multiplying religious works adds nothing.

Historical Context

Jeroboam I established altars at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:28-29); subsequent kings added high places throughout Israel. Archaeological excavations have uncovered numerous 8th century Israelite worship sites. Each altar/high place theoretically enabled worship, yet divorced from Jerusalem temple and proper priesthood, they facilitated syncretism. The more places established, the more corruption spread. What began as accommodation (northern accessibility) became multiplication of idolatry. This demonstrates that wrong worship multiplied remains wrong—quantity doesn't sanctify falsehood. Church history shows similar pattern: multiplying religious works apart from gospel faith produces bondage not freedom (Galatians 5:1).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How can multiplying religious activities and practices compound rather than remove sin?
2. What distinguishes genuine worship pleasing to God from proliferating religious forms that multiply transgression?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	הָרַבַּ ה	אֶפְרַיִם יִם	מִזְבְּחֹת	לְחַטָּא:	הִיוּ
H3588	hath made many	Because Ephraim	altars	shall be unto him to sin	H1961
	H7235	H669	H4196	H2398	
וְ	מִזְבְּחֹת	לְחַטָּא:			
H0	altars	shall be unto him to sin			
	H4196	H2398			

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 12:11 (Sin): 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.