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The Mission
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Hosea 9.1-9

If you have your Bibles with you, if you could turn with me please to Hosea chapter nine. So we're going to continue our studies through the book of Hosea tonight and we'll be reading verses one through nine. And again this section of scripture pertains to one main idea and so that's why we want to consider just these nine verses tonight. So Hosea chapter nine, verses one through nine.

And I'm going to read all nine verses and then we'll come back and consider them one by one.

Hosea 9:1, Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples, For you have played the harlot against your God. You have made love for hire on every threshing floor.

**2 The threshing floor and the winepress
Shall not feed them, And the new wine shall fail in her.**

**3 They shall not dwell in the Lord's land,
But Ephraim shall return to Egypt,
And shall eat unclean things in Assyria.**

**4 They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord,
Nor shall their sacrifices be pleasing to Him.
It shall be like bread of mourners to them;
All who eat it shall be defiled.**

**For their bread shall be for their own life;
It shall not come into the house of the Lord.**

**5 What will you do in the appointed day,
And in the day of the feast of the Lord?**

**6 For indeed they are gone because of destruction.
Egypt shall gather them up;
Memphis shall bury them.
Nettles shall possess their valuables of silver;
Thorns shall be in their tents.**

**7 The days of punishment have come;
The days of recompense have come.
Israel knows!
The prophet is a fool,
The spiritual man is insane,
Because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity.**

**8 The watchman of Ephraim is with my God;
But the prophet is a fowler's snare in all his ways—
Enmity in the house of his God.**

**9 They are deeply corrupted,
As in the days of Gibeah.
He will remember their iniquity;
He will punish their sins.**

You know the thought among many church goers today is this. "I'm not so bad and God's not so mad."

And that's how a lot of folks live their lives. I'm not really as bad as the Bible says I am, and God isn't really as mad at my sin as these preachers make Him out to be. And here in this passage of scripture we're going to see

that that was the same kind of thinking that was going on in Israel during this time.

But I believe we need to honestly consider whether that's true or not. Because if that's your kind of thinking and that kind of thinking is leading you to live a life of sin, and not be ready for the judgment, then that's a very serious mistake your making. A person is gambling with their eternity when they have that kind of attitude.

When they believe in the back of their minds that it's not really like the Bible says it is, and think, "I'm really not so bad and God really isn't so mad at my sin" and that in the end, God's not really going to punish anybody for their sins, then they're making a big mistake. Because the Bible is not just a warning to try and get you to live a nicer life; but no matter what, everything will be okay in the end.

No, the Bible is very clear, that God hates sin, and that He cannot and will not tolerate it. And sinful, unrepentant, unsaved people, who have never truly been born again, will go to hell for eternity to pay for their sins. And it's a debt that will never be paid off and they will never escape the horrors of hell! They will last for an eternity!

But that was the thought of the majority of Israel during this time. And that's no doubt the thought of many in America and all around the world today. That I'm not so bad and God is not so mad. And so he starts off in verse one and he says,

1 Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples,

Now this was probably during the time of the harvest. Back then, most all societies were essentially agrarian. They were farmers. And so the time of harvest was a time of great joy. It was when they would reap the rewards of their hard labor. And every year when the harvest would come in, it

would be kind of like when you and I get our paycheck every week, or every two weeks, or once a month or whatever.

When you get your paycheck, that's the happy day, right? You finally got paid for your labor.

Well, back then you didn't get paid weekly or even monthly. If you were a farmer, your paycheck came in when the harvest came in. And whatever you made at that time had to last for the rest of the year. And so in all of these societies, this would be a time of great rejoicing on payday, and they would give thanks to their God for the harvest, and for His blessing.

But here, during the harvest, Israel is being warned, that they shouldn't rejoice like all the other people.

And the reason they shouldn't rejoice He says also in verse one, is because **you've played the harlot against your God.**

He says, you shouldn't be rejoicing, because you've done something you shouldn't have done. You've been seeking after the other gods, when you should have been seeking after me. You should have been giving me thanks, but instead you're sharing your thanks to me with all these other false gods. You're pretending to give me thanks, but at the same time, you're giving thanks to the Baal, and these so-called gods of fertility and of the harvest.

And then he says in the last part of verse one, **you've made love for hire on every threshing floor.**

Verse 2 The threshing floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail on her.

Now, in the ancient Near East, the threshing floor was a place where a lot of sexual immorality would take place.

Now, we might have a hard time understanding that. When we think of places where sexual immorality take place, we think of cities with red-light districts, or bars, or honky tonks, or strip clubs, or sleezy motels, or whatever, but we would probably never even consider a threshing floor as a place where these things would take place.

Now, just to be clear, the threshing floor was a place in the field where they would separate the grain from the straw and husks.

In biblical days there was no machinery, and so after the harvest, the grain would be separated from the straw and the husks by beating it manually.

They would clear off a flat surface in the field and they would make sure it was smooth and that the ground was hard, and this was known as the threshing floor. And then they would spread the sheaves on the threshing floor and then they would bring in the oxen, or the cattle, and they would just let them walk back and forth over the sheaves. And that walking back and forth would break up the plant and cause the edible part of the cereal grain to separate from the scaly, inedible part, which was called the chaff, which surrounded the fruit.

And then they would take their pitch fork and they would scoop up the grain and the straw and the husks and they would throw them up into the air, and let the wind blow away the chaff. And because the chaff was lighter, the wind would blow it away and what was left on the threshing floor would be the good grain.

Well, because this was a time of great rejoicing, there would also be wine involved. And so folks would inevitably drink too much, and they would get drunk, and because the harlots in the area knew there was a party

going on, well they would come and do what they do for a portion of the grain.

And so the threshing floor in more ways than one, separated the good from the bad.

And of course it's used many times in scripture to show how God will one day separate those who have trusted in Christ as their Lord and Savior from those who have rejected Christ and His offer of salvation and eternal life in heaven.

And again this just reinforces the original theme we were introduced to in the beginning of this book; which was the relationship between Hosea and Gomer and their marriage.

And just like Gomer did Hosea, Israel has done God by having an adulterous relationship with Baal, and all these other fertility gods. And so that's God's problem with Israel. He says, you're committing spiritual adultery just like many of the Israelite men might commit adultery at the threshing floor during the harvest. And you're committing adultery against Me by worshipping all these false gods.

And He's like, and because of that, even though you think I've blessed you because you've got your grain, and you've got your new wine for the coming year, he says, you're not going to be able to eat of them or drink of it.

He says, yes, you have a whole harvest of all the things you need. You have wheat and grain and you have wine, and in the wine press they would also press the oil, and so you have your oil. And you have all these things that you think are the necessities of life. And you have them in abundance right now, but I can take them every one away.

And so they were rejoicing. And they thought, God can't be that mad at us, because look at all the blessings we have. If God was mad, there'd be no harvest. There'd be nothing here. But God's given us this great harvest, and so I guess what we're doing isn't so bad after all.

And so why should we change?

We'll just keep going along, doing what we're doing and we'll give God a little worship, and we'll give Baal a little worship, and we'll party on the threshing floor, and we'll enjoy all of our good blessings' and we'll just have the best of both worlds.

But God says, you're a fool. He says, I can take all that stuff away in the blink of eye. In fact, I am going to take it all away from you. And all these blessings, and this great harvest you've received, you're not gonna be able to enjoy any of it.

And then he goes on and he says in verse 3,

**3 They shall not dwell in the Lord's land,
But Ephraim shall return to Egypt,
And shall eat unclean things in Assyria.**

He says, not only will I take away all your grain and your new wine and your oil, so you won't have that to live off of, He says. But I'm going to remove you out of the land. He says, because it's my land. I gave it to you as an inheritance. I gave it to you as a gift. I brought you out of Egypt. I drove out the Canaanites and the people of the land, and I gave it to you for your possession; as long as you were faithful to me.

But you've been unfaithful. You've played the harlot. So now I'm gonna take you out of the land. I'm going to remove it all. You won't have it anymore, because you won't be there any longer.

And where will you go? He says, **Ephraim shall return to Egypt and shall eat unclean things in Assyria.**

He's using Egypt and Assyria both as examples here. He doesn't mean that geographically you're going back to Egypt. He's just reminding them of how it was in Egypt when they were slaves. And He says, you're going back to slavery. You're going back to captivity.

But that captivity isn't going to be in Egypt, it's going to be in Assyria. That's why He says you'll eat of unclean foods, you'll eat of these things in Assyria, because that's where you're going.

The Assyrians didn't keep kosher law, and so they would be forced to just eat whatever food was there. And when you're a slave, you don't normally have your own food supplies. You eat whatever is given to you, if you want to survive. And since they wouldn't be able to go the temple, because there wouldn't be a temple, they wouldn't be able to sanctify any of their food. And so all of their food would then be deemed unclean.

And then He says,

**4 They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord,
Nor shall their sacrifices be pleasing to Him.
It shall be like bread of mourners to them;
All who eat it shall be defiled.
For their bread shall be for their own life;
It shall not come into the house of the Lord.**

He says they won't offer their wine offerings to the Lord, nor will their sacrifices will be pleasing to the Lord.

Why?

Well, again, they're not in the land anymore. They can't come to the temple to worship or sanctify their food. And then it says, "And their

sacrifices won't be pleasing to the Lord, because it'll be like the **“bread of mourners”**.

The bread of mourners, was when someone was eating bread, while they were in the house of the dead.

In the Old Testament, anybody who had been in contact with a dead body was ceremonially unclean. And anything they ate would also be deemed unclean as well. And so if you were unclean in the house where someone had died, then anything you touched would be unclean as well.

And what He's saying is that you're going to be like mourners in the house of the dead, because you're going to be outside of the land. And you're going to be defiled, and anything you touch is going to be defiled. And since there will be no temple to sanctify anything, there will be nothing you can bring to the Lord that will be acceptable.

It's like trying to live in sin in the world all week long, and then come in here and offer up to God your worship without confession and genuine repentance. He's not going to accept that.

So there will be nothing you can bring to the Lord that will please him, because you're bringing things that are defiled, because of the consequences of your sin.

He says your bread will be for your own life, but it won't come into the house of the Lord. In Israel you would bring the first fruits of your labor, and you would bring the grain offering, and the bread offerings, and you would consecrate everything to the Lord, and then you would receive it back and you could use it.

He says, but now your food will only be for the basic nourishment of your body. It'll just be to keep you alive. It'll be enough for your physical nourishment, but it won't do anything to satisfy your spiritual nourishment.

It'll just be food to keep you alive, but it won't be sanctified, because you're going to be far away from the temple. You've been cast out. You're cut off from God.

And then in verse 5 he says,

**5 What will you do in the appointed day,
And in the day of the feast of the Lord?**

So he asks a rhetorical question. He says, what will you do in that day, in the feast days, the three great feast days when all the males of Israel are supposed to come to the temple to worship? What will you do?

Well, you won't be able to come and worship, because you'll be in captivity. Your access to God will be cut off.

And then I'll say, "Not only am I cutting off your blessing, and not only am I taking away your new wine, and your oil, and all the grain, and not only am I removing you out of the land into exile, but you're also cut off from me. You're no longer my people".

Now, remember back to the children of Hosea, those who were born early on? They had a daughter named Lo-Ruhamah. Remember what her name meant? It meant "no mercy". And then their second son, his name was Lo-Ammi. Remember what his name meant? His name meant "you are not my people".

Well, the names of these children were signs to Israel?

And now those signs are about to become a reality.

And God's saying, I'm not going to show you any mercy, because you're not my people anymore! You're going to be cut off. And that's going to be the consequences of your sin.

And then in verse 6

**6 For indeed they are gone because of destruction.
Egypt shall gather them up; Memphis shall bury them.
Nettles shall possess their valuables of silver;
Thorns shall be in their tents.**

And so here he uses the term Egypt again, but this time he could mean someone who would literally flee to Egypt. And if they flee to Egypt, what will they find? They'll find nothing, but death. And Memphis; this isn't Memphis, Tennessee, okay? This is one of the great cities in Egypt, which was known for its cemeteries. And he said, if you flee from Assyria and flee to Egypt, just know what you'll find in Egypt? Death, that's all you're going to find.

In other words, when my destruction comes upon you; you're going to lose everything, and all you're going to find is death.

And then it says, nettles shall possess their valuables, thorns shall be in your tents.

This gives a picture of this destruction. This isn't going to last for just a day or two. They're not going away for a few days and then return to Israel and find all their stuff there when they get back. Their valuables, their keepsakes, their treasures, their homes, nothing will be there when and if you do get back.

When you get back, if you're one of the ones fortunate enough to get back, all of your stuff will have been overgrown with nettles or weeds and thorns, and everything is going to be gone.

It's the picture, if you will of riding back down to your great great granddaddy's old home place and nothing but a chimney is still standing. The weeds and the trees have grown up all around where the house used to be and it's hard to even recognize what it used to look like.

Well, that's the picture here. Many generations will pass before they return. And when they do return, they won't even recognize the place.

In verse 7 he says,

7 The days of punishment have come; The days of recompense (or repayment) have come. Israel knows!

He says, the days of punishment have come. In other words, it payday, but not the kind you look forward to.

It's literally the day of visitation, when God visits His people and He repays them for their evil. And He gives them what they deserve. And what do they deserve? They deserve His wrath and His curse, because they've not kept His covenant and they've not walked in his ways and they've refused to repent and return.

God had told them, if you keep my covenant, when I return, when I visit you, I will visit you with blessings. I will shower you with blessings.

But because you have rebelled against me, because you have played the spiritual harlot, and gone after other gods, and because you've not kept my covenant, when I visit you, I will give you what you deserve. And what you deserve is exile. And what you deserve is destruction and that's what you're going to get.

And then he says, and Israel knows. And what he's saying is that in that day, when the judgment finally comes, Israel will know. They'll know exactly what has happened and they'll know why it happened. They won't be wondering, how could something like this happen? They'll know.

They'll know when the Assyrians come and conquer them that this is their punishment from God. In other words, it will be a moment of clarity for them.

This whole time when they were thinking, I'm not so bad, and God's not so mad, and this really isn't a big deal, and in the end everything will be okay, and God will never really judge us, they'll know in their heart that this was wrong thinking.

You know it's amazing how people can live a lie for so long that they start to believe it themselves! But then when something happens to finally bring them to their knees, they know why it's happening.

Now, that doesn't mean they'll always react properly! Sometimes they will, and sometimes they won't, but they'll **know** why things are the way they are.

Now, the next little section could mean one of two things, and I'm going to give you both; but in the end it doesn't really make a lot of difference which way we choose to interpret it, because both interpretations end up in the same place.

He says, in the last part of verse 7,

The prophet is a fool, The spiritual man is insane, Because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity.

**8 The watchman of Ephraim is with my God;
But the prophet is a fowler's snare in all his ways—
Enmity in the house of his God.**

Now the question is, what prophets are being spoken of here who are being called fools and insane?

Is Israel saying that prophets like Hosea, and Joel, and Amos, and others like Micah and Isaiah were insane?

These were the prophets who before the time of judgment came were trying to warn Israel that judgment was coming, if they didn't repent. But like we've already learned, the people didn't believe them.

And their thinking was that since God hasn't judged them up to this point for their sin, and because they still have all their stuff, all their grain and their new wine and the blessing of a great harvest. They think these prophets that are preaching judgement are madmen! And they weren't going to listen to them.

And they had enmity for these men of God, because they were telling them the truth of God's word.

And by the way, preacher's still get enmity from people, when they preach the word of God. But only from the people who love their sin more than God; and only from the people who refuse to recognize and repent of their sin.

And then it says the watchman of Ephraim is with God. So God's prophets are watchmen over the people. And it's the people who are a snare to the prophets as they try to trip up the prophets; and as they try to silence the prophets, and because they hate God, they have enmity against the house of God.

And so that's one way to look at it. It's that the madmen here, are the true prophets of God that the people hated.

Now, the other way it could be read, is that instead of the true prophets of God, it could be talking about the false prophets that the people were worshipping. And in the day of judgment, after the judgment has come, Israel will realize that all these false prophets they were listening to and following were the madmen and insane.

And it was because of the false prophets hate for God and the people Israel, that they prophesied against the word of God. And because of that, the watchmen of Ephraim, the prophet, those who should have been

looking out for the people, were instead a snare to the people, because they let the people stay in their sin.

So it could be that that's what's being spoken of here.

And so on the one hand, before the day of judgment comes, Israel looks at the true prophets, like Hosea, who say, the judgment is coming and you're sinners. And you are bad, and God is mad, and judgment is coming. And they said, these prophets are crazy men. And we reject them, because we hate having our sin pointed out.

Or it could be after judgment has fallen that they look back and they see that they were deceived by all these false prophets.

But either way, it's going to end the same for them. It's going to end in judgement, because whatever they think, they're not going to repent.

And then verse 9,

9 They are deeply corrupted, As in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity; He will punish their sins.

He says, they are deeply corrupted, and then he compares them to **“as in the days of Gibeah”**.

Now, you may or may not know what happened at Gibeah, but this was one of the most wicked, violent, terrible stories in all of the Bible. It's found in Judges chapter 19 and following. And we don't have time to read it all tonight, but it involved the rape and the murder and a young woman; and the subsequent mutilation of her body; where she was cut up into 12 pieces; and those pieces were sent out to the 12 tribes of Israel to let them know what had happened to this woman and who did it.

And the end result was that eleven of the tribes wanted to destroy the tribe of Benjamin, because this rape and murder had taken place in Gibeah which was a city that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

And what he's saying, is that Israel is no better than these people in the city of Gibeah, who had raped and murdered this young woman.

He says, but you think you're not so bad. You look at your harvest and you say, look, we're not so bad and God's not so mad, because we've still got all these crops. We've still got all these good things coming in. We can't be too bad because we're still being blessed.

And he says, but you're just fooling yourself, because this is how God views you.

When he looks at you, he doesn't see people who are trying to do what's right. He sees you like the people of Gibeah. He sees you as a rapist and a murderer and as a perverted people. And he sees you like that because, that's what you're really like. And because of that, God is going to bring his judgment down on you.

And so that's where this section ends. Again, not on a very good note, but it is what it is. God will remember their sin, and He will eventually, at a time of His choosing, and in the way He chooses, He will deal with and punish their sins.

And he says, if you're banking on God forgetting all of this, or if you think God's going to change his mind and decide not to punish you, you'd better think again. He says God will remember. And God will punish your sins.

And we serve the same God today that the Israelites served back in that day. And He hasn't changed one iota. In fact, since that time, He's sent His Son to die on the cross to make a way for us to be saved and so we have no excuse whatsoever to continue to live in sin. And when judgment day comes, you can rest assured that those who have heard the gospel and those who have been exposed to and offered the mercy and the grace of God to

the extent that we have, you can be assured that God won't turn a blind eye to folks who have rejected that free gift.

He may let you live what you consider to be a blessed life, and He may let you believe you're being blessed, because He's not mad at your sin, but He is mad at our sin and He will punish our sin if it's not under the blood of Jesus. And the only way it can be under the blood is if we confess and repent and turn to Him. Amen