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The Mission
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Hosea 9:10-17

So we left off last time in Hosea in chapter 9 with verse 9, and we stopped there because going forward there's a theme that sort of links the next few parts together. We're going to see that theme here in the rest of chapter 9 and also in chapters 10 and 11. And the theme is the "then and the now" if you will.

Hosea is going to tell us what Israel "was at one point in history" and "now what they've become today". And he's going to give us three or four examples going forward.

He's going to be looking back at what God has done in the past for Israel, and what they were at one time to God, and then He's going to tell us where things went tragically wrong, and what follows from that.

And to help you understand what we're going to be looking at, just think about people you've known, and we've all known them over the years, who seemed to have a wonderful family life, and on the outside looking in, they seemed to be the picture-perfect family; and they had financial success, and what appeared to be a happy marriage, and a house full of kids, and things seemed to be going well.

But then one or the other, either the husband or wife, commits adultery. And it just seems to come out of the blue, and nobody really saw it coming. There didn't seem to be any problems. But that one thing causes their entire life to unravel. And one thing leads to another and they end up

losing everything. They lose their spouse, their children, their financial security, their reputation, everything!

Well, that's the picture here that Hosea paints about Israel. Because of their spiritual harlotry, because of their spiritual adultery, they had lost everything they had gained from God. And they end up with nothing in the end.

And so he starts off in verse 10 by saying,

“I found Israel Like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers As the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season.

Now, this was the before. He's going back and he's saying, this is how God saw your fathers, the fathers of Israel. And he's going all the way back to the time in the wilderness, when God had just brought his people out of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness of Sinai, and he's getting them ready to bring them into the promised land.

Now, in the Old Testament, many times the wilderness was seen as a bad thing, where they rebelled, but sometimes it's seen as the place where there was the honeymoon between God and His people. He takes them away from the rest of the world, from the rest of the nations, and it's just Him with His people. He brings them into a covenant with Himself.

Remember when He gives the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, and He brings them to Himself? He says, I found you there, and it was like a man walking through the desert, and all of a sudden, he finds grapes. It's a sweet and a wonderful thing. It's like the first time a fig tree ever brings forth figs. And the farmer rejoices. And it's sweet and it's wonderful.

Now, he's not saying that Israel, in and of themselves, was sweet and wonderful, and that God was surprised to find such wonderful, and delightful people that He could be with. Because God reminds them, time

and time again, that when He chose them, when He chose their fathers, it's not because they were greater than any of the nations, it's not because they were wiser or smarter, or more pious than any other nation; God chose to delight in Israel because it was His good pleasure to do that. And of course, He says the same about us as the elect of God. It's only by His mercy and grace and good pleasure that He chooses us as His people.

So that was in the beginning, that was the “then”. God says, I delighted to find pleasure in you, my people. I brought you to myself. You were to be mine, and I rejoiced over you. But it didn't last long.

Because then he says in the last part of verse 10,

But they went to Baal Peor, And separated themselves to that shame; They became an abomination like the thing they loved.

You can read this story back in Numbers chapter 23 and 24, but in summary Baal Peor, or the Baal of Peor, was a local deity who was worshiped by the Moabites. And when the Israelites were following Moses to the Promised Land, when they came to the vicinity of Peor, some of them fell into idolatry, and began worship this false god, Baal Peor, which just like in Hosea's time involved sexual immorality. And long story short, as a result of their sin, the men of Israel were judged by God.

And what God is saying is that; “This is when things went bad. And going forward, he'll give us different pictures of different times when things went bad. But for Hosea's argument right now, he's saying, this was when Israel started committing spiritual adultery.

It's like we just had the honeymoon and we're still in the wilderness. And it's just you and me and I've taken you away. And I delighted over you. And we're on our honeymoon, and you go and commit adultery! You go and give yourself to this false god Baal Peor.

And then he says in that last part ,

And they separated themselves to that shame;

They became an abomination like the thing they loved.

And this is a principle we see over and over in the Scriptures. Those who worship idols, become like the idols they worship. They become hateful in the sight of God, and despised in the sight of God. And He says, and that's what Israel became. One moment, God rejoices over them. And He delights to call them His people, and His bride, and He's glad that He's purchased and redeemed them, and brought them out to be His own. But then the next moment, these same people, instead of being thankful for them, and instead of rejoicing in the God who redeemed them, they throw it all away to go after another god.

And then we'll see the effects of all that when he goes on to say in verse 11,

11 As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird—

No birth, no pregnancy, and no conception!

The name for Ephraim has the idea of being fruitful. And remember he's using Ephraim as the name of the entire northern kingdom because they're the largest tribe in the northern kingdom of Israel. And He says, this is what is going to happen to Ephraim, because they've committed spiritual adultery. "Their glory is going to fly away like a bird".

In other words, it's going to be sudden and fast. And what is their glory?

Well, their glory here is their children. If you'll remember; that was part of the covenant promise God gave to Abraham: He said, "I'll make you a great nation. I'll make your children like the stars of the sky for number,

or like the sand on the seashore that can't be numbered.” That was Israel's glory, and God had blessed them with children.

But God says, I'm going to take all that away. He says, from now on, because of what you've done, there'll be no births, and there'll be no pregnancies, and there'll be no more conception.

And so they thought to themselves, “We'll just worship the fertility gods and they will make us fertile. And not only will we have all these crops and all these other blessings we've been enjoying, but we'll also have many children.”

But God says, no, you won't. He says, “I'm going to take it all away. Not only your crops and your great harvest and all those other things, but also your children.

Verse 12

12 Though they bring up their children, Yet I will bereave them to the last man. Yes, woe to them when I depart from them!

He says, Even if a child is born, I'll take them away to where you have no men left, no people left. He says, This is what it looks like when God leaves. God says, and when you commit adultery, I leave.

Verse 13

13 Just as I saw Ephraim like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place, So Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer.”

Tyre was an island. And on this island, they also grew trees. And so they had protection from the sea, because it's out there in the middle of the water, but they were protected, because of these trees. And so they grew as a kingdom. And He says, Tyre, as a small kingdom, grew and it seemed to prosper. But then God brought judgment upon them and destroyed them.

And he says, just like Tyre, I set you apart. I put you in a pleasant place. I brought you into the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey and I protected you. But no more. He says, “The judgment is coming”. And your children will be brought out to the murderer.

And the idea is that Assyria is about to come in and destroy them. And when they do, they won't just kill men and women, they'll even kill the little children. They'll destroy everything and everyone in their path.

Verse 14

14 Give them, O Lord— What will You give? Give them a miscarrying womb And dry breasts!

So, what is Hosea saying here?

Well, he's either saying, yes, God, let it be. Give them a miscarrying womb, and give them dry breasts. Don't let them have anymore children as punishment for their sin.

Or he's saying, Lord, have mercy on these people. He's saying, if it's really going to be this bad, Lord, then it would be better if your people never had children again.

Because the only thing worse than not having children, is to have them, and then see them slaughtered. I think that's probably what Jesus was saying when He was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem; when He said it would be better in that day for women to have never have had children, to have never have been pregnant, because of how terrible it's going to be in the end.

And if you have children, you understand this. You can deal with somebody doing something to you, but don't let anybody hurt your children, because the worst thing that can happen to you, is for something terrible to happen to your children.

And it's as if Hosea is pleading with God, because he knows He can't take away the curse. And he knows the people deserve it. And so he says, well, just give them mercy. Just let them have no more children, so they don't have to sit and see the horror of seeing their children die when the Assyrians come take their children away and or slaughter them before their own eyes.

Then he goes back to God. And again, showing the consequences of their spiritual adultery, it says,

15 “All their wickedness is in Gilgal, For there I hated them. Because of the evil of their deeds I will drive them from My house; I will love them no more. All their princes are rebellious.

Gilgal, if you'll remember, is where the Israelites first asked for their own king. Remember, everybody else had a king and so they wanted a king too, so they would be like all the nations around them. And so they chose Saul, because of his appearance and of course we know how that worked out. And of course Samuel was the judge at the time, and he was mad about it, but God told him, He said, “Don't be mad. He said, They're not rejecting you, Samuel, as the judge. They're rejecting me as their king”.

And this was no doubt the beginning of their idolatrous hearts and worship which, throughout history, only got worse with time. And so God points back to this time, a time that the people would no doubt know about, and he says, your wickedness began here, in Gilgal.

And then He says, “And because of that, I've hated them”.

Now remember, that was then. He loved them then. He delighted over them in the wilderness. But when they committed spiritual adultery, now He says, **“Now I hate you.”**

Now what changed? How did they go from being loved of God and accepted by God to being hated of God and rejected?

Well, God certainly didn't change. Did He?

No, they changed. They're the ones that turned from God. He didn't turn from them.

It's like when that marriage started out as a wonderful marriage, and then one or the other committed adultery, and everything changed, and the one who cheated lost everything.

It wasn't the innocent spouse that changed. They loved their spouse when all that went down.

But now, because of what the other spouse has done; now the dynamic of that relationship has changed. And now that wronged spouse no longer loves that cheating spouse like before. And more than likely has a hatred for them.

And that's what God is saying to His people. He says, I loved you. But You abandoned me. You rejected me and went after other gods. And now I hate you.

Now, unlike us, when God says He hates Israel, He's not talking about hate, as in the opposite of love, as we would suppose. He's talking about withdrawing His favor, and or executing judgment. Or withdrawing His blessing and instituting a curse.

God is love, and that's one of His unchanging attributes, and so He is and will always be a God who loves, but He hates sin. And because He is a Holy God and cannot look upon or tolerate sin, He has to eventually judge all sin.

And so He says in the last part of that verse we just read, verse 15,

Because of the evil of their deeds I will drive them from My house; I will love them no more. All their princes are rebellious.

And again this a picture here of adultery, where the faithful spouse sends the unfaithful spouse away. He or she drives them out of the house, and says, you can't live here anymore. You've destroyed our relationship and you're not welcome here anymore.

And that's what God is saying to Israel. Those whom he had drawn to himself with the cords of love, He now casts them out because of their spiritual adultery.

And then He says, **“All of their princes are rebellious.”**

And we've seen that phrase again and again in the book of Hosea. And it's referring to the leadership of the nation; to the kings and the princes, because they're the leaders, and they're responsible for leading the people.

Then verse 16 says

16 Ephraim is stricken, Their root is dried up; They shall bear no fruit. Yes, were they to bear children, I would kill the darlings of their womb.”

The idea again with Ephraim here is one of being fruitful. And like we just explained, Ephraim will no longer be fruitful, because a curse is about to come upon them, and they're going to lose their children. They're all going to be killed off.

And then he says in verse 17,

17 My God will cast them away, Because they did not obey Him; And they shall be wanderers among the nations.

The picture here, and the imagery here, goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Just after Adam and Eve sin against God, what does God

do? He casts them out of the garden! He casts them out into the wilderness, away from Eden, and they're forbidden to return.

And then there was the story of Cain and Abel. Same thing! When Cain kills his brother Abel, God cast him out of the family, and he becomes a wanderer for the rest of his life.

And so this is the picture, and this is the message God is sending Israel, that He's about to place the same curse on them as He placed upon Cain, and they're going to end up wanderers among the nations. And the sad truth is, Israel, even to this day, for the most part, is still wandering.

I don't know this for a fact, but some folks say that if all the Jewish people alive today were to take a DNA test to determine if they belong to Abraham or not, most of those who would test positive, wouldn't live in the promised land. And that most of Israel, even to this day, is still cast out, and still wanders.

And then he tells us why God is being so ruthless with them?

Because they did not obey him. Literally, in Hebrew, it says, **they didn't hear him or they would not hear Him.** They stopped up their ears and they said, we will not listen to our God.

And so time and time again they were warned. In fact, the first two commandments both speak to their sin.

You shall have no other gods before me,” and “you're to make no graven images.”

They knew who they were supposed to worship, and they knew how they were supposed to worship, but they refused to listen.

And so the curse which God told them about, way back in Deuteronomy chapter 28, is going to come to pass. And this will be the consequence of their spiritual adultery.

It's just like a physical adulterer. There are consequences to adultery.

A man or a woman may think it's no big deal, and they may think they'll get away with it, and probably won't think much about it, until it cost them everything. Until it destroys their entire life. And they lose everything.

And so that's the wake-up moment that God has given Israel here. This is what's happened. This isn't a little thing. You've been unfaithful as my spouse, and you're cast out. You're driven out.

And what will that look like?

It'll look like the destruction of your children; it'll look like the loss of your home. It'll look like the loss of all your possessions and your peace and your everything.

And the take away for us tonight is that things haven't changed, because God hasn't change. It's the same now as it was then. There's a very high cost to pay for spiritual adultery.

And you say, well, what is spiritual adultery?

It's anytime we place our heart on anything other or more than the Lord God of Israel. It's when we say, I love anything else more than Jesus. It's when we say, I'm willing to compromise my convictions. I'm willing to break the law of God to do something else. It doesn't matter whether it's money, or sex, or friends, or popularity, whatever it is, if you're willing to give up Jesus to get it, then that's your god now. Because you've made a choice and you've said, I want this more than I want Jesus.

And the Apostle John talks about it, and James warns us about it. And Jesus warned us about it that friendship with the world is spiritual adultery. And to seek after the world in lieu of God is spiritual adultery. And God is just as serious about it today as He was then.

And He tells us, what He will do to you if you go down that road? He says, you'll be cast out. He told the Israelites, He said, you **were** my people, but because you've committed adultery against me, you'll no longer be my people.

Now, we know that one day, when Jesus returns, they will be His people again and God will restore them and a remnant will be saved, but for now, they're still not His people.

But, what does that mean for us on this side of the cross?

Does it mean we can lose our salvation if we're truly saved and we get our eyes on the wrong thing temporarily or get our priorities wrong?

No, but it does mean we'll be in sin, and not be in a right relationship with God, and we'll no doubt be under conviction, and hopefully we'll confess, and repent, and get back in right fellowship with the Lord.

But if we don't then one of two things will happen if we're truly a Christian. We'll either be chastised by God until we do confess and repent, or He'll take us home early.

Now, if a person is not truly saved, then they can go back to their old ways or their old lifestyle and never miss a beat, and not be bothered one bit by the Holy Spirit, because they never possessed Him in the first place.

But when they die, they'll spend eternity in hell.

And so if you're able to live in your sin, and not give a second thought, then you need to be on your knees praying for God to save you, because you're in a very dangerous place.

And if you are a Christian and you're putting things ahead of God, then you know what you're doing is not right. And you need to confess and you need to repent and you need to make things right with the Lord. Amen.