

The Party's Over

Hosea 9

I am sure we all have met people who always seem to live in the negative. The kind of person that every time you see them, they have some story of woe is me to tell you. No sooner have they recovered from one catastrophe than the next one sets in. Do you know that kind of person?

Well Hosea 9 kind of reflects that. It starts off with the people of Israel planning to enjoy life. The harvest has been gathered in and it appears they, like the rich fool in Jesus' parable, plan to sit back and enjoy the riches they have gained. However, along comes Hosea to basically tell them "The party is over."

Let's dive right in....

Do not rejoice, Israel; do not be jubilant like the other nations. For you have been unfaithful to your God; you love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor.

Let me put this into context here. Their harvest of grain and grapes has been gathered in and it is plentiful. It may even be the largest crops they have ever brought in. The people plan to enjoy the fruits of this harvest with a great festival. It appears that everyone has helped bring in the harvest and they are now planning to relax and enjoy life. Then Hosea arrives and delivers the prophecy given to him by God. It is possible that Hosea was invited to deliver a sermon at the opening of the festival as this was common at the time. However, Israel certainly didn't get the message they were expecting.

Hosea tells them, "Do not rejoice" for judgement is coming because you have been unfaithful. The reference to prostitution here shows just how immoral this celebration was. Many of the men used the opportunity of the harvest festival to engage prostitutes and to participate in fertility rites of the pagan god Baal. They were having sex with prostitutes while they were bringing in the harvest right there on the threshing floor. Can you picture that?

The people of God were never to give themselves to the immoral celebrations of the pagan nations around them at the time of harvest. Remember that The Canaanites had been driven out of the promised land so that the people of God might possess it. Now the people of God had embraced the pagan deities and practices of the Canaanites and for that they would be punished. They were not to attribute the blessing of harvest to pagan fertility gods but to the true and living God who had brought them out of slavery from Egypt into freedom and blessing the land of promise.

² Threshing floors and winepresses will not feed the people; the new wine will fail them. ³ They will not remain in the LORD's land; Ephraim will return to Egypt and eat unclean food in Assyria. ⁴ They will not pour out wine offerings to the LORD, nor will their sacrifices please him. Such sacrifices will be to them like the bread of mourners; all who eat them will be unclean. This food will be for themselves; it will not come into the temple of the LORD. ⁵ What will you do on the day of your appointed festivals, on the feast days of the LORD? ⁶ Even if they escape from destruction, Egypt will gather them, and Memphis will bury them. Their treasures of silver will be taken over by briars, and thorns will overrun their tents.

So as a result of their actions God totally rejected them. God cursed their harvest and told them that not only am I going to cast you out of the land He had given them but also that they would only have enough food to barely survive. The Israelites are now forced to eat unclean food and there would be nothing for them to sacrifice to God. Well, I would say that having sex on top of the grain and grapes made the food unclean, right? God is giving back to them exactly what they were trying to sacrifice to Him.

In essence everything which marked them out as the people of God would be removed from them and they would become like the nations around them, because that is how they were behaving. They have completely lost what made them Gods chosen people and now be and now be adrift in all their sinfulness.

What a shock this must have come to them. You will no longer dwell in the land of milk and honey and now must return to Egypt and Assyria where you will live in slavery. I am sure that even at this point they were probably thinking that Hosea was out of his mind for even delivering such a prophecy to them. However, God had warned them about all of this in Deuteronomy 6.12-15.

¹² be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹³ Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. ¹⁴ Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; ¹⁵ for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.

Let me stop right there for a second and relate this to today. We are all Christians, right? We have been brought out of the land of Egypt and slavery to our sin. We have been given the land of milk and honey through salvation. We have been called to live a different life. So then why would we ever live and do things like those who don't know or follow Christ? How many so-called believers out there today live and act like the world? I certainly hope and pray that we never do.

Heed the words that God spoke through Hosea here. God will remove you from the land of promise if you live as a citizen of slavery and not of heaven.

⁷ The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac. ⁸ The prophet, along with my God, is the watchman over Ephraim, yet snares await him on all his paths, and hostility in the house of his God. ⁹ They have sunk deep into corruption, as in the days of Gibeah. God will remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins.

You know the saddest things about the people of Israel at the time of Hosea was that they appeared to be totally ignorant of the judgement of God that was about to fall upon them. Not much different today, is it? They even think that the prophet that God has sent to deliver this message is a fool. They wanted the type of prophet described in Micah 2:11.

¹¹ If a liar and deceiver comes and says, 'I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,' that would be just the prophet for this people!

There are many of these types of prophets even today and they are in leadership roles within the church. They simply tell people what they want to hear. Remember in Acts that Paul warned the young Timothy that a time would come when men and women would not listen to the sound teaching of the Word of God

but gather preachers who would tickle their ears and massage their egos. These things happened in the day of Hosea, in the day of Paul and it is happening today.

It says in verse 8 that God has set His prophets as ‘watchmen’ to warn Israel. A watchman stood on the highest point possible to see as far into the distance as he could and warn of coming danger. This was a job of great importance because the lives of the people were in his hands. If the people did not heed the watchmen when he warned of impending danger, then he was innocent of their blood but if he failed in his duty then he was guilty of their blood.

That is how God pictured His prophets – warning the people of the coming judgement if they did not repent of their ways and turn back to Him. Hosea was innocent of the judgment that was about to fall on the people of Israel because they dismissed him as a fool, even a maniac, as they had the other prophets. Israel was completely engulfed by their sin.

When it talks in verse 9 about Gibeah it is talking about one of the most disturbing and heinous events in scripture. The men of the town demanded that a visitor be given to them for their pleasure and when that did not happen, they took her by force and gang-raped her until she died. The result of their actions lead to civil war that nearly annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin.

That event was considered by the people of Israel to be a dreadful stain on their history and yet here God says to them that they had been behaving in similar ways. The consequences would be that God would punish them for their sins and wickedness.

¹⁰ “When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree. But when they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved. ¹¹ Ephraim’s glory will fly away like a bird— no birth, no pregnancy, no conception. ¹² Even if they rear children, I will bereave them of every one. Woe to them when I turn away from them! ¹³ I have seen Ephraim, like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place. But Ephraim will bring out their children to the slayer.” ¹⁴ Give them, LORD—what will you give them? Give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that are dry.

In these verses we are seeing God having a conversation with Hosea and when we get to verses 13 & 14 we see Hosea agreeing with the judgement that God is laying out.

Look at these scriptures' kind of like an old coin. You find the perfect one and you polish it up, so it is shiny and new. You take it out now and then to look at it but over time the shine is gone even if you polish it again. That is the picture painted in verses 10-14 by God of the people of Israel. At one time they brought great delight to God. They were like grapes found where they were not expected, in the desert and before the harvest. They were like the joy of finding such an unexpected refreshment in a dry land. God draws their attention to their history and how they had been brought into a covenant relationship with Him and the mutual joy they had one with another.

I would imagine that Hosea was looking at this through the eyes of his own marriage. In the beginning he had great delight in Gomer but it faded because of her unfaithfulness. God was saying to these people – remember the past days when there was delight and refreshment in our relationship? Remember when all seemed so hopeful and hope filled? But those days are gone because of your unfaithfulness.

The people of God surrendered the ways of God to their own perverse lusts and shameful idols. In Psalm 115:8 it says that, *“⁸ Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.”*

God had warned that that which you worship you become like and trust. The same is true today. Just think of the world and its views on sexuality. It is worshipped almost as if it were a god and excuses are made for the immorality which pervades our society and our churches. People become what they worship and make trust in it or make excuses for it.

Now, because of all their sins Israel will experience barrenness and bereavement. Hosea even has sort of an angry prayer to God in verse 14. Give them Lord, then he stopped and did a little bit of a heart check and concludes with “What you will give them.” As opposed to saying, “All that they deserve.” In the end, he asked for miscarrying wombs and dry breasts. Why is that?

Because what Hosea was doing here was really praying to God for mercy. Knowing the coming judgment, he prayed “LORD, give them few children so those children will not have to face the horrors of Your coming judgment.”

Let’s finish up ..

¹⁵ “Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, I hated them there. Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house. I will no longer love them; all their leaders are rebellious. ¹⁶ Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring.” ¹⁷ My God will reject them because they have not obeyed him; they will be wanderers among the nations.

As mentioned before in Hosea 4:15, God despised the city of Gilgal as a center of idolatry in Israel. At one time, [Gilgal](#) was a place where prophets were trained under Elijah and Elisha ([2 Kings 2:1; 4:38](#)). But now in Hosea’s day it had become a center of false worship. God hated what Israel had done there and is now bringing to the front as part of their judgement.

Israel had disgraced God’s land and His house, and they are getting evicted. They yield no fruit for God and have withered at the roots. At this point they were much more like a weed in the sight of God. Now remember that one of the major reasons Israel went after idols like Baal and Ashtoreth was because those gods were thought to bring fertility and fruitfulness. God reminds Israel that He is really the LORD over the womb, and that He will turn their fruitfulness into barrenness. God goes as far to say that if they bare children that He will kill them. God has fallen out of love with His chosen people and He hates them for it. Now all they can do is wander in exile and barely survive.

I don’t know where you would see yourself in this chapter. I would like to see myself as Hosea but the truth is I am more Ephraim at times than I care to admit. Don’t we all embrace too readily the gods of this world and the ways of this world and we never think of the consequences or how God would judge us based on our actions.

So many people, far too many for me to count, have started out well with God. They crossed the river Jordan into the land of Promise but somewhere along the path they started to embrace the gods and practices of this world. Oh they

still come to worship on Sundays' and some still talk the talk but their hearts and their lives are in the ways of this world.

I have seen and heard people talk of their sorrow for their sin and how things would change but with no real brokenness or turning from the past – just like Gomer and the people of Israel.

We need to heed the words found in these scriptures this morning. Listen to the warning that if you walk after other gods and live a life which is unfaithful, immoral, and unfruitful then God will remove His love from you. Hear God's footsteps of judgement coming into your life today and heed the call to do what is required of you. If you need to repent, then do it now!

You may be thinking that none of this applies to me. But let ask you this morning 'where is your heart?' What is the love of your life? What consumes most of your time and thoughts? What dictates most of your finances? To what do you give most of your time? How much time in this past week did you spend reading your Bible? Praying? Or in fellowship with other people? You see we all have plenty of other gods in our lives because anything that comes before God in our lives is our god.

You may think I don't live an immoral life. But let me ask you, "have you lied this week?" Have you been angry with people this week? Have you used foul language this week? Have you entertained immoral thoughts about someone? Have you broken promises this week? The list could go on and on – getting more and more personal but even at that superficial level it shows how immoral we are as people. Heed these warnings and repent today before it is too late. Repent everyday if you need to and ask God to help you do better.

The last thing we want is to run around with a woe is me attitude. We must live a life that is fruitful and honors God. Never forget that He rescued you from captivity and has the Promised land waiting for you. Don't be foolish and squander it. Don't let the party be over in your life.

How quickly things can be reversed when people wander from God into the pagan ways around them – take heed.