

Dr. John Oswalt, Hosea, Session 6, Hosea 7

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Well, I think each time I've begun, the last three weeks, I've begun talking about the situation in Israel, and I finally got it onto a PowerPoint. So, after the long reign of Jeroboam II, some 42 years, he was replaced by his son Zechariah, who only ruled probably, actually, maybe six months. If you remember, the biblical accounting is, if you reign any part of three years, all three years got counted.

So here, this would be, if he ruled, that should be 752, 752 to 750, 18 months perhaps, before he was killed by a man named Shallum. Shallum ruled for a grand total of one month before he was, in turn, killed by Menahem. Menahem came to the throne, so in a year, in the year 750, you had three kings.

And almost certainly, Pekah, who had been an officer for Jeroboam, almost certainly began to rule across the Jordan on the east side, so that you actually had, for all of Menahem 10 years, Pekah was also ruling at the same time. So, there was a dual kingship, if you will. Menahem was the one king who was succeeded by his son in these 30 years.

Pekahiah ruled again for not more than six months before he was killed by Pekah. Pekah then took over the whole thing and ruled for a total of twenty years. At this point, Uzziah, who had been king of Judah, died.

Jotham had been his co-regent for probably 15 years, because Uzziah, remember, had leprosy and was confined to the palace. So, in 539 to 739, Uzziah died and Jotham became full ruler for about five years. He was pretty clearly forced to take his son Ahaz as a co-regent in 735.

Then, in 730, Hoshea killed Pekah and took over what was left of the kingdom. By that point, it was basically the city of Samaria and its immediate surrounding environment.

That was about all that was left by that time. And in 722, the Assyrians had had it with him. He initially, it appears, was put on the throne by the Egyptian cohort in the government but almost immediately made an alliance with the Assyrians.

And then, somewhere toward the end, he tried to make a new alliance with the Egyptians. And the Assyrians had had it by that point. And they simply took over the whole thing.

Now, this is going to be especially significant in chapter 7, which we're looking at this evening, as God talks about this situation. And he says you made kings that I never chose. And they have treated you as you deserve.

So that's the situation there in the country. And Hezekiah was put on the throne with Ahaz. So, you've got from Uzziah down through Hezekiah, you've got at least four co-regencies, where again and again, the various factions in the government seemed to be forcing the sons on the older king, as their foreign policy shifted back and forth.

Well, those will help us. No, they didn't. Okay, those will help us.

No, they didn't. Well, let's do it. So, Hezekiah came to the throne about 726, and Ahaz ruled for another 10 years until 716.

So, that's the situation during this time period when Uzziah is prophesied. Questions or issues there? Fair enough? This is your day. Okay, so we talked a little bit last time about the fact that it's not quite clear where chapter 6 ends and chapter 7 begins.

But nevertheless, if we begin at chapter 7, verse 1, Whenever I would heal Israel, the sins of Ephraim are exposed, and the crimes of Samaria are revealed. They practice deceit. Thieves break into houses.

Bandits rob in the streets. But they don't realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them.

They're always before them. What do the people seem to be thinking? God doesn't see. God doesn't know what's going on.

God doesn't see what's happening here. Now, surely anybody who believes in God would know that God knows what's going on. So, what's Uzziah talking about? They didn't really care.

They are acting as though God doesn't know. They're acting as though there is no ultimate punishment. They're acting as though there is no God.

But that's a very, very foolish position to take. Perhaps you remember Blaise Pascal's wager. He said, if you bet that there is no God and lose your bet, you're in eternal trouble.

If you bet there is a God, and it turns out there is none, you've lost nothing. You better bet there is a God. If it comes down simply to that, then you're on safer ground if you assume there is a God.

But these people assume that if there is a God, he doesn't know, doesn't care, and isn't able to do anything about it. But notice what it says. God, verse 2, I remember all their evil deeds.

If I remember, why not, I know. What do you think? All right, bring it back, Lama. He's willing to forgive if we repent. He's willing to forgive if we repent if we remember.

Okay? Okay? Anything else? Okay, he remembers all of their sins from the very time when he called them out as a nation. There's a difference between remembering and just knowing. You're right, what is it? It's a heart or a... It's a deeper... Yeah, remembering is more significant.

It's more significant than just knowing, yes, yes. It's part of the engagement. Okay, correct.

You're engaging. Mm-hmm. Knowing may only be the presence of remembering towards the whole one.

Yes. Yes. Knowing is at this moment, but remembering, as we said, is involving yourself at a deeper level.

It's a deeper engagement with what's going on, as Linda has said, all the way from the past. So it suggests a more personal involvement of God with what is taking place here. I remember those.

I take them to heart. I think about those. I imagine.

So, you may act as if there is no God as if what you're doing is of no importance. But God takes it all apart. God remembers.

We were talking today at the conference about our situation when people have very little consciousness of sin. How do you talk to people today who, like these people... It doesn't matter. Nobody knows.

How do we talk to them? Their conscience is seared. They don't care. Okay.

So, what do we do? We should always express hope. Come on—an expression of hope.

What would be good? Talk about His love. Talk about His love. Ask Him all things.

Let's ask Him. Has anyone you love ever hurt you? Has anyone you love ever hurt you? Share your own testimony. Share your own testimony.

What do you do with the wrong you've done? What do you do with the wrong you've done? Maybe counter the nihilism one if our actions don't matter. Like these people right here are referring to.

People whose actions don't matter. Like nihilism. Why does it matter? To show how things do matter.

Okay. To show how things do matter. As opposed to their nihilism.

The suggestion was made by Bill Pierce. That today. The great problems.

Are in. Alienation. Loneliness.

Depression. And that there is a way. And what Carol has suggested.

I think relates to this as well. That. If we can come at them.

Through those kinds of things. Then. We can begin to talk about it.

Issues of sin. And has anybody ever hurt you? Has anybody ever done wrong to you? And probably you'll get a waterfall there. And then the possibility.

How about it? Have you ever done wrong to anyone? But this is the situation. They are as today.

Saying. Who knows who cares? It doesn't really matter what I do.

And God says. Oh yes, he does. Yes, he does.

What we are seeing is. I'm afraid.

The beginning. Of something even more. Difficult. Hard for us to deal with. Notice how that second verse ends.

Their sins. Engulf them. They are.

Always people. Oh my. Culture.

In which, sin engulfs. So, the challenge for us is number one.

What about my sins? Is there any way in which I might be included in this bunch? Any way in which I am acting. As though there are things God doesn't know about or care about. So, Judgment begins with the house of God.

That's what the Bible says. So that's the place to throw you.

Okay. Verses three through seven. They delight the king with their wickedness. The princes with their lies. They are all adulterers. Burning like an oven. Whose fire the baker need not stir. From the kneading of the dough until it rises.

On the day of the festival of our king. The princes become inflamed with wine. He joins hands with the mothers. Their hearts are like an oven.

They approach him with intrigue. Their passion smolders all night. In the morning, it blazes like a flaming fire. All of them are hot as an oven. They devour their rulers. All their kings fall. None of them call to prayer.

Now, what's the imagery here? What's the repeated image? Heat. An oven that is overheated. The stones are almost red hot. Fire.

Now, what's the significance of that imagery in this context? Passion? He was talking about Israel themselves. They were on fire. Their lust and their passion were about idols.

It was misdirected. They still went about their rituals and their ceremonies. But their heart wasn't like that.

It wasn't about a covenant with God. There is passion, but it's a misdirected passion—destruction.

And you notice in the context of what? What does it say in verse 3? Entertainment. Entertainment. Yes, yes.

With whom? With the king. Yes, yes. There is a political passion.

Does that sound at all familiar? They're hot. Hot enough to kill people. Without the, if you will, gyroscope of the love of God.

You know, gyroscope, once you get that wheel spinning, it's going to keep its position no matter what. And the love of God, the love of God's ways, the love of God's truth, the love of God's law can be a gyroscope. And all around us is fire and flame and passion.

They have no gyroscope. Burning like an oven. And what about the kings? What about them? What's their attitude according to these verses? The party is about them.

The party is about them. What else? They're drunkards—their proverbial leadership.

Do their own thing. What about that opening line in verse 3? They delight in the wickedness of their people. Why would that be? Why would a king be delighted that his people are wicked? Okay, because he's wicked? They're distracted and entertained.

They're distracted and entertained. Okay, okay. He can manipulate them because of their wickedness? They're no worse than he is? They're content to hit people so against the authority. When they hit people, then, they rebel because they're content.

He has leverage for the people who are wicked. He can use it against them. No.

Can he use their wickedness against them? Leverage? None of them can judge him. None of them can judge him. Exactly.

If the people were adhering to the covenant they would be in a position to demand that the king adhere to the covenant. So that would not be good. But if they are deeply admired in wickedness then they're going to be in no position to challenge his perversion of leadership.

Chapter 4. Okay. A byproduct of Chapter 4, where the priests were not teaching the covenant. And so now, where are we? We're in this kind of situation.

Now it's possible as I commented in the background that verse 5 may be this festival of our king maybe they are delighting over the murder of somebody. They're having a party. Well, we got rid of that guy.

Again, this tragedy is when ethics and religion are separated from one another. I think again and again about our situation here. How many policemen does it take to enforce the law when the people have finally come to the place where they do not have an inner inclination to obey the law? As you have heard, several of the big companies are pulling out of New York, San Francisco, and a couple of other places because of the uncontrollable theft.

Really? Home Depot lost a billion dollars last year through theft. There was one chain that was working with people inside and with people outside, and a pastor made one million dollars last year by selling stolen Home Depot tools on eBay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over and over as you talked about that burning of, and it's the same framework that Malachi gives when the Holy Fire comes with the burning of distorted sin. Sin is distorted relationship. He will destroy.

He is the one who can dwell with the eternal burning, as the text says. But here is passion and the amazing, amazing capacity of the human being to constantly up the ante. If this gives me a thrill, how about that? And if that gives me a thrill, how about this? So theft by itself is not enough.

You've got to steal more. So he's describing a situation that is, I think, frighteningly like the one which we are increasingly facing. And the question is, will I be caught up in the maelstrom, or will I, we, will we nurture our relationship with the covenant so that we have whatever is going on around us, that gyroscope that enables us to stand and everything else is a cesspool of lies, and here it is.

I don't care whether anybody's watching. I don't care whether there's a policeman around. I'm not going to do that.

Why? Because I love Jesus. God remembers their sins. They've forgotten.

So, look at verse 7. They devoured their ruler, whom all their kings called. None of them calls on me. What is it about this situation that makes it really dangerous to be a ruler in that situation? This leads them in any way.

You're out. If we don't believe in God, what do we expect of our rulers? We believe them to be God. We expect them to provide for us what only God can provide.

And they will necessarily fail. So, what do you do then? Kick the bums out. Again, I'm more political than I'd like to be this evening, but I see this in them.

Oh, Trump didn't do it. Biden will. Biden can't do it. Somebody else will. We expect these human beings to be Messiah and they cannot be. They cannot be. They will necessarily fail. Oh, this one will do it. Oh, he didn't do it. Kill him. This one will do it. Kill him. Ah, this one's very good.

All of them are as hot as an oven. They devour their rulers. All their kings fall. And none of them calls on me. Is there none of the kings or none of the kings? I think both.

I think none of them from top to bottom. And you see, if we know that our lives are in God's hands, we can allow people to fail. We can allow people to experiment with possibility.

That's what Joseph knew. It's so fascinating to me the way the book of Genesis ends. Jacob has died.

And the brothers say, oh man, we're in for it now. Old Joe, yeah, he treated us good while the old man was alive. The old man's gone now.

You know what he's going to do to us? What are we going to do? Oh, let's concoct a lie and tell Joe that before Dad died, he specifically asked Joe to be good to us. And Joseph saw straight through it and started crying. He thought I was that kind of guy.

He thought I was a guy who was fooled by a need to revenge myself. No. I don't need to get revenge.

Why did he not eat his brothers? Because he knew his life was never in their hands. He knew that his life was in God's hands. So, he didn't have to hate them.

Wow. That's freedom. That's freedom.

So, we don't have to expect a president to be super devious. If we do, we'll be disappointed—and we will.

Or we have to lie about him and say, well, he really didn't do it. So, you people think he did, but he didn't. God raises up kingdoms and tears them down, but he's still in control no matter what.

Yes. But they've forgotten that. They're not calling on God.

They're not trusting him. So then, verse 8. Faced with that political crisis, what do they do? They give up on the foreign countries. Ephraim mixes with the nations.

Ephraim is a flat loaf that has not been turned over. It is half-baked, burnt on one side, and doughy on the other.

Foreigners sack his strength. But he doesn't realize his hair is sprinkled with gray. That's interesting, isn't it? But he doesn't notice.

Israel's arrogance testifies against him. Despite all this, he does not return to the Lord, and he's not forsaken. So, both, it could be, like some of the languages we're writing here.

Judges thought they needed a king. They knew exactly what they needed. They had a king, right? But then you talked about, in Judges, they thought God had got answers until they had a king.

And they said, well, we're very quick. And then, this is like you see in verse 7. And this is about a clinical showing a king's answers. You have a king that you're all going to have.

But then you see him pointing out there's something more. Judges is at the beginning of the process. This is 800 years later.

God, you got what you asked for. It's taken 800 years for you to come to that place. So, what are they doing? The kings have failed them.

So, what are they doing? Aligning themselves with the foreign nations. Exactly. Yes.

If the kings can't do it, then foreign nations can do it for us. And what are the foreign nations doing? Slowly taking over. They're taking all their money.

Yeah, we'll make a deal with you. Give us all your money. Now, what's going on in verse 9? Their hair is sprinkled with gray.

What is that? You know, I don't like people talking about other people like that. It's a gradual process. It's like a man in a midlife crisis.

He's going down but he doesn't know it. His form of a stalwart is being brought down by others. I like the furniture disease.

His chest has fallen into a drawer. I'll say it. The analogy is he's like himself.

Central is like a fading flower. It's at the head of the valley, but here it is. Someone said it first already.

Like a foolish old man who thinks they're still young and invincible. And how do the foreign alliances contribute to that, do you think? Maybe they thought that they could bring new life into them. I think you're right; I think it's okay, yeah, we'll make a deal with Egypt, and I'll be young and strong again.

And in fact, he says, no what Egypt will do to you will sap out the last bit of your youthful strength. And you won't know what's happening to you. Yeah, I need to increase my strength.

And I'll go, not to God, I'll go to Egypt, or Syria, or, or, or. I think it's very interesting that George Washington said, be careful of entangling yourself in foreign alliances. I just, oh, when I see that, I always wonder how long have you been reading Moses? Oh yeah, Israel is trying to make it align with the Earth.

Yeah. When you think about what Egypt meant to Israel, and they're going to Egypt, like, how far will they go to avoid going to God? They're going to Egypt, which is like the pinnacle of the suffering of their people. It's a great example of their long-suffering.

The last place you want to go. But where else are you going to go? I mean, Syria has taken everybody else. Egypt is all that's left, so we've got to go to Egypt.

And Isaiah, in chapters 28 to 33, just mocks this. Just mocks this. He says, you know, Pharaoh is flush.

His horses are flush. What's he going to do for you? God is a spirit. What's the matter with your hands? You don't get it.

And so, here it is again. But, when you have ruled out God, the alternatives, as terrible as they really are, begin to look pretty good. But, God? Isaiah? Hosea? And these guys are contemporary.

Do you want us to just trust God when Assyria is about to eat us alive? You want us just to trust God? You've got to be kidding me. But I think we've got to think about this in our own situation. It's very, very easy to make God the last resort.

We need to make all our plans and figure out all our ways of taking care of ourselves. Finally, when those don't work, then maybe turn to God. Or maybe it'll be too late.

But if you're not taught about God, then you have nothing else. You have nowhere to go. Yes, the priests have failed you in their teaching mission.

Alright, verses 10 and following all the way to the end of the chapter. There's something they do not do. Do you see it? They don't turn to God.

He does not return to the Lord his God or search for Him. That's verse 10. Verse 14.

They do not cry out to me from their hearts but wail on their bed. The bottom part of verse 14, the last part of verse 14, states positively, they turn away from me—verse 16.

They do not turn to the Lord his God. Remember that the word the Hebrew word is shub which means to turn around. That also then is very common in English.

I have chosen my way and I'm going to go that way even if it kills me. I'm going to go that way even if it saps my strength. And God is saved.

God is saved. For heaven's sake, turn around. Turn around and go back toward the true source of your strength and of your life.

If that's God, we'll love him. They have not called on the Lord yet. But four times, three negative and one positive, they did not.

Why not? They don't want to. Why don't they want to? Do they enjoy their sin? I don't know. I didn't know.

All right. All right. It's not even a live option in their thinking.

Verse 11 in the New Living says the people of Israel have become like silly witless doves. They've got no sense. They just are kind of flitting around from whatever to whatever when they've lost all of their moorings, all of the anchors that they had when they came out of Egypt.

It's like that history just escaped them. You've done nothing smarter than that. Now look at verse 12.

What's God going to do? Throw a net over them. Bring them down. And punish them.

It isn't said here, but it's said elsewhere in the book. Why is he going to do that? Because he loves them. Because he wants to somehow bring them back to his senses.

Somehow, bring them to their senses. I think that probably would need a brain transplant. But as I've said before, as we've seen in the book, as we're going to see in the book more, the exile, the terrible thing that they are doing everything in their power to avoid, that's the thing that's going to bring them back to God.

And again, that's what's going on in Isaiah. Isaiah, I need somebody to go for me. I'll do it.

I'll do it. What do you want me to say? What I want you to say is going to harden this generation's heart. How long until the nation is a field of burned-out stumps? But out of one of those stumps will come a little green shoot.

Are you willing to be that faithful, Isaiah? No, I want to be the next Billy Graham. No, I want to go to a megachurch. Not with this bunch.

Any megachurch you build with this bunch will be a bunch of silly dogs. Nice. You don't say that very loudly in the theological seminary.

Woe to them, this is verse 13, because they have strayed from me. Destruction to them because they rebelled against me. Again, you people are ready for punishment.

You keep coming back and I keep saying the same thing over and over again. But repetition is the soul of education. Woe to them.

I'm going to get them. Destruction to them because they rebelled against me. Now, you step in front of a speeding 18-wheeler. It's not going to go down well for you.

The world is so made that if we live in defiance of the Creator, it's going to hurt. We have to keep fixing that in our heads. Well, in the Old Testament, God's always beating up on people.

Well, what he's telling them is unless you turn to me, it's going to hurt. This is not an arbitrary tyrant who says destruction to them because they rebelled against me. This is not personal.

This is the Creator saying you were made to walk in certain ways. You don't walk in those ways. It's not going to work.

It's not going to work. America, America, it's not going to work. I long to redeem them.

Now, I want to ask you about this next phrase in verse 13. I long to redeem them, but they speak about me falsely. What are they saying? Well, what are they saying? God doesn't love me.

God doesn't hear me. God doesn't care. He's forgotten me.

He doesn't provide. He has abandoned me. He doesn't see me.

He isn't there. What God, what else are they saying that's false? He can't resolve the situation he can't protect me from a serious I Want to redeem them, but I can't because their whole narrative is wrong. They don't cry out to me from their hearts, but wail on their bed Killing themselves. They slashed themselves, appealing to their gods or brain and new wine.

As I said before, in the fall, the vegetation God dies Goes down into the underworld. And the question is is he going to come back? Not unless you give him a good funeral Then you got to do a real wake here. And wakes have a long, long history About three thousand years long Warned for your dead grandpa by getting roaring drunk So See how really sorry we are but you gods are the suppliers of my needs I Think Charlie, why well because you can't enjoy God You can't make him supply it by doing a nice ritual All you can do is surrender to him and trust that he's going to do it. Oh, man. There's got to be another way than that.

I train them and strengthen their arm so that they're not slashing. I think what it is what we're talking about above talking about the false. They say all the wrong things about, Well, you know, bail. He really works about 51% of the time. No way, I think it's that sort of thing. Yes, yes, shut up the problem. Who says bad things about us?

Yeah, other thoughts there? That's how. Do they plot against God? Yes, around once Allah has possessed a land, it is his forever. Well, Allah possessed the land of Israel about 1500 years ago. So, the Jews are trespassers. I Smile a bit when I see people say, oh we need to pray for peace between Hamas and Israel. That's like praying for peace between the Warsaw Ghetto and him. Yeah, I don't think that'll work.

Okay. Anyway, we're 16. They do not turn to the most high. They are like a faulty bow. Their leaders will fall by the sword because of their insolent word.

Then his laughter it will be ridiculed. All the money you shelled out for the Egyptian alliance. You know. Okay, He finally got done talking about Plato, one of them said Professor, so we are, and you're here. And he is up, we are your, and you are if there is in any of our lives in my life in the sin In the deal. And help us, help me to declare it to you and turn from it. Help us, on the one hand, not to avoid the political process because of all its difficulties. On the other hand, deliver us from believing that the political process can ultimately solve a problem. Help us do that.

Help us to be good citizens. Help us to be men and women who joyfully obey the law, whether anybody else does not, but as a way of expressing our love for you. Thank you, Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen.