

Dr. John Oswalt, Hosea, Session 9, Hosea 10

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Thanks for coming back after a two-week break. Good to see you again. I'm sorry to keep beating this politics drum, but it's very significant to what the book is saying.

We had had something like 46 years of Jeroboam II, and during that time, Assyria had been rather quiescent, and so both Israel and Judah during that period of time from roughly 790 until 752, they had both had a golden age very much like the time of Solomon. It looked like everything was going wonderfully. Amos was preaching during this time, and people are saying, well, the day of the Lord is coming, and Amos says, you got that right, but it will not be the kind of day that you're expecting.

It'll be a day of judgment. Now, you can understand that that message would have been unpopular, and they tried to run him out, but he stuck around. Jeroboam died in 752, and his son succeeded him.

He only lasted about six months before he was killed by an army officer, probably. He only lasted six months before another army officer killed him, and Menahem was not a nice man. On the way to Samaria to get rid of Shallum, he passed through the village of Tirzah, and they apparently tried to block him, and he killed the whole place, tearing up women with children.

Nothing changes, does it? So, Menahem then established himself almost certainly on the other side of the Jordan. This man, Peka, established himself, and so you really had kings for this period of time. Everything changed in 745.

That's when Tiglath-Pileser III came to the throne of Assyria, and the period of Assyrian quietness was all over. This man was an aggressor in the top drawer. So, almost immediately, you began to have problems.

Menahem died, and his son, Pekiah, this is the only one in this whole period of time who succeeded his father. Peka-Haza was put on the throne. Again, he lasted not more than 18 months, because Peka decided he was going to take the whole thing.

During all this time, you've clearly got two parties. You've got the pro-Assyrian party. Look, we're just going to have to make peace with them.

There's nothing else to be done. We can't fight them. They're going to soak us for huge, huge tributes, but what else are we going to do? On the other hand, is the anti-Assyrian party.

No, sir, we're not going to put up with them. We're going to fight them one way or another, and the Egyptians will help us. So, it was not only anti-Assyrian. It was pro-Egyptian.

Now, again, the similarities to our own situation are pretty frightening. These two parties clearly hated each other and would do anything to stop the other from achieving its goals. Pika was pro-Assyrian.

He made a deal with Tiglath-Pileser, but even so, Tiglath-Pileser took most of northern Galilee. He was killed by Hosea, and Tiglath-Pileser says in one of his annals that he put Hosea on the throne. Whether that's true or not is not clear, but again, yeah, with a huge, huge tribute.

37 tons of silver, a thousand talents, and ten talents of gold. Tiglath-Pileser finally died in 727, and it's apparent that Hosea immediately rebelled, expecting help from the Egyptians. Didn't get any.

So, Shalmaneser came, and that's what's being talked about at the end of chapter 10. This is the Sea of Galilee. Along the southwestern shore, the cliff is pretty much straight down.

Now, you do have the city of Tiberias here, and after the revolt in 135 BC, when Bar Kokhba, the son of the star, claimed himself to be the Messiah, and was summarily disposed of by the Romans, and the Judeans were driven out of Judah. It was a capital offense for a Jew to live in Judah after that. Tiberias became the center of Jewish thought, and a lot of the biblical work was done there, but it's a pretty steep cliff.

It then veers off to the west and then swings around. This is the plain of Galilee. This is Magdala.

That's where Mary was from. This is Capernaum, and this is Bethsaida. The great international highway came down this way and up through this pass.

This area is called Beth Arbel. This is the Arbel cliff here. To stand there is a mind-blowing experience because you can see all of this plain, Magdala, Capernaum, Bethsaida, the whole thing, and to think that was Jesus' home territory.

What the text says, if you look there in the 10th chapter, verse 14, "...the roar of battle will rise against your people, so that all your fortresses will be devastated, as Shalman," that's Shalmaneser, "...devastated Beth Arbel on the day of battle, when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children." This should be a very

defensible place. It's a pretty narrow pass coming up through there. The cliffs are high.

It would seem that you could stop anyone who's coming through there, but they were unable to stop Shalmaneser. As I commented in the background, it's interesting that this is the same place where Saladin defeated the Crusader army in the last great defeat. A very smart man.

The Crusaders were all up here with their war horses and their armor. The Arabs, of course, had no armor whatsoever. So, Saladin waited down here all day, a hot sunny day, while the knights cooked in their armor.

Late in the afternoon, the Arabs came roaring up through the pass, and the knights could not stop them, and that was the end of the Crusades. So, that pass has been significant a couple of times in history, and more than that, I'm sure, but that's what's being talked about there. We're talking about them sometime in the last five years of Israel's existence.

722 is when Shalmaneser finally captured Samaria. He died almost immediately, and his successor, Sargon, claims in his annals he took Samaria, but it's almost about 98 percent certain that it was Shalmaneser who did it, and Sargon perhaps finished up, and it may well be that Sargon managed the exile after the defeat. But this is the situation.

So, we're talking here in Hosea 10, in the very last years of Israel's existence. Questions or comments there? Have I buried you? Okay. All right, let's look at chapter 10.

Israel was a spreading vine. He brought forth fruit for himself. Okay, so far so good.

As his fruit increased, he built more altars. As his land prospered, he adorned his sacred stones. Their heart is deceitful.

Now they must bear their guilt. The Lord will demolish their altars and destroy their sacred stones. Let's look back at Deuteronomy chapter 6. Moses pretty clearly saw this kind of trend.

Deuteronomy 6, verse 10. When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you a land with large flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, vineyards and olive groves you did not plant, then when you eat and be satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, back to Hosea.

What's he describing? The people have forgotten. In other places in the book of Hosea, he says, I gave you oil and grain and new wine. And what did they do with it? They offered it to the Baals.

They took God's gifts and used it to worship the pagan idols. Now, does that have any bearing on us? I think again and again of, I don't know what the figures are now, but 15 years ago, a survey that was done said 8% of Americans tithe. 54% of us go to church.

8% of us tithe. The question is not how much of my money God demands. The question is how much of God's money he lets me use? A fundamental change has to occur in our understanding. Why are we saying this is my money? Why do we say that? We earned it.

Yes. I worked hard. 50, 60, 70 hours a week.

Yeah. How dare God say that's his money? What about it? Is it true? Is it God's money? Who gave you the job? Who gave you the health? Who gave you the ability to work hard? So this is what has to happen to our thinking this week. This week.

Thanksgiving. I've been increasingly impressed with Paul's sort of wind-up to the Thessalonians as he's been talking to them about what a sanctified life looks like. And he says three things.

Rejoice, always, and pray.

All the time. And in everything, give thanks. What he's talking about is a life that is focused upon the reality of God.

I've done it with you here before. I know. But I love that old chorus.

Old in the 70s. A golden oldie. Joy is the flag flown high from the castle of my heart when the king is in residence there.

Yes. Yes. There's the source of joy.

Not where everything is going well in my life. No. My Lord has come and taken up residence here.

Joy. And so, prayer is the natural. Simply to talk with the one who's present.

Not getting down on your knees and folding your hands. And out of that, thanks naturally flows. Oh Lord, what have you done? What have you given? How can it be that I should have been born in this blessed country? How can it be that I had

Christian parents? How can it be that my dad loved to go to revival meetings and took his young son with him? How can it be? How can it be? How can it be? When our lives are focused on rejoicing and praying and thanksgiving, it's his money.

Every bit of it. And he does gladly like a father.

Say, yes, honey, spend it. But don't forget where it came from. As his fruit increased, he built more altars.

Now, we've talked about this a lot, but I want to try to fix it in your mind. Why do they do that? As they become richer and more comfortable, why do they spend their income on idols rather than on the Lord? Or I should say, on idols and an idolatrous attitude toward God. Why do they do that? Control.

Give the man a gold star. There it is. There it is.

I feel like I can control this idol. I feel like I can give him presence or withhold presence. I can dress her up, put makeup on her, and I can make them do what I want.

This is what is so frightening about biblical religion. You can't make God do anything. All you can do is dare to believe his word that he is good.

But look at this counter-evidence, and look at that counter-evidence. Is he really good? And that's where faith comes. Yes, yes, there is evidence in your word, in your care for the people of Israel.

And by the way, some of you have heard Dr. Hamilton and I blathering along on Sunday nights. For me, one of the strongest evidences that the Jews are still the people of God is their existence. How can it be that the Jews still exist after 2,000 years when we Christians have been trying to get rid of them every way we could? And they not only live but prosper.

How can that be? Well, that's free. So, this is the bottom line. Am I willing to surrender control of my life to someone whom I cannot see and cannot control? Most people are not willing to do that, but there it is.

There it is. All right, let's move on. Verse 3 and 4. Then they'll say, we have no king because we didn't fear the Lord.

But even if we had a king, what could he do for us? They make many promises, take false oaths, and make agreements. Therefore, lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a wild field. Does that sound familiar? So, what attitude are they taking toward their political leaders? Adversarial? Cynical? They don't trust them.

And they probably got a pretty good reason. What's the danger in that? What's the danger in taking a cynical adversarial role toward our leaders? Yeah, we're to honor them. So, this means that we tend not to honor them.

But they're not honorable. Pray for them. Pray for them.

Yes. Upset the love cycle. Yes, yes, yes.

Not to stand back and say, well, they do this and yeah, what can you expect? No. To pray for them. That's hard.

You've heard it said, and many have said it recently: a people get the government they deserve. Oh, Lord, do we deserve this? Yes, we deserve worse. Yes.

But remember, Paul, authority has been put in place by God. Authority structure, I think, is really what he's saying. And what happens to me when I begin to undercut that authority structure in my heart? I become the authority.

I become the authority. And there is the danger. And I'm confident that's why Paul says, for instance, in Romans 13, the things he says.

Now, it's clear. He's not saying obey the authority even when they fly in the face of God and God's commands. He got killed because he wouldn't do that.

He wouldn't declare Caesar was God. But, he's saying it's very easy for us to become insubordinate if we, in fact, live in a negative attitude toward governmental power all the time. Now, of course, this is a democracy.

And that means not only should we be praying for them, we ought to be involved in the political process. And that's not always easy. But there it is.

The call for us as Christians is to be supportive of the authority structure that God allows to exist. Supportive within the context of our Christian faith. But nevertheless, learn obedience.

It's very easy to learn disobedience. Yes. Righteousness, conviction, and judgment.

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yes.

Yes. Making fun of those in authority and dragging them down to our own level.

So, there it is. They are taking God's gifts and using them in a false way to give them a sense of control. They have mocked those who are in authority one way or another.

And notice what they say. We don't have a king. Well, yes, you do.

No, no, not these guys who killed one another and everything else. So, in verses 5 and 6, really 5 through 8, the people who live in Samaria fear for the calf idol of Beth Avan. Remember, that's a mocking way of talking about Bethel, where the southern of the golden calves is located.

Dan has already been lost, probably 20 years earlier than this, and that calf idol has been carried away. But there's one left. They fear for the calf idol of Beth Avan.

Its people will mourn over it, and so will its idolatrous priests, those who had rejoiced over its splendor because it is taken from them into exile. It will be carried to Assyria as tribute for the great king. Ephraim will be disgraced.

Israel will be ashamed of its foreign alliances. Now, again, we've talked about this a lot, but you've forgotten. Not all of you.

When we talk about being ashamed, what's the sense there? It is the idea that you have trusted something. It has failed. You are shamed.

Over and over in the Bible, that's the sense of it. It's not embarrassed by, oh, I'm just ashamed of you. That's not it.

It is; I am disgraced because I mouthed off about something really being trustworthy, and it has failed me. So, what has failed these people? The calf has failed them. What else? What does the verse say? They trusted in an idol.

The foreign alliances. They made deals with Assyria. They made deals with the Egyptians.

And when they did that, when you're dealing with a national alliance, you are also making an alliance with their gods. God will never put you to shame. That's the insistence of the Bible.

Now, there may well be times when we say we're trusting God and we really aren't, and God can't help us, but that's not God's failure. That's our failure. So, this is the great thing about not having an idol.

Your enemies can't carry it off. I can imagine, I can imagine, when the Babylonians broke into the temple in Jerusalem, and they said, there's nothing in there but a box. Who wants a box? They will live in fear for the calf idol.

Now, again, as I've said to you before, I'm pretty certain that this was not a little bitty calf. This was a big imposing bull, and calling it a calf is mockery. Now, a yearling is called a calf.

So, it could be a yearling bull, but again, it's a bull. It's not a calf. And there it is in all its power.

No, its people will mourn over it. So will its idolatrous priests because they had rejoiced over its splendor. It was taken from them into exile.

It will be carried to Assyria as a tribute to the great king. What is the danger in religious symbolism? We substitute it for God—the great empty cathedrals of Europe.

We can imagine the amazing devotion involved in building those things. But in the end, what is a building? It's pretty easy for me to say because of my particular position, but I've said to a lot of my friends in the United Methodist Church who have anguished over, well, we're going to have to give up our building. And my response is good.

The church is not the building. Now, it's easy for me to say I'm not a pastor. I don't have a congregation that has put a lot of money into a building, but I still say it.

I think I've told this story here. I love it. A lot of churches in the first half of the 20th century were built on the Akron plan.

Have I told it? All right. Well, I'll tell it again then. The Akron plan, there's the pulpit.

The floor is raked. That is, it's lower here than here. So, it is a marvelous preaching place.

It's designed for preaching. So, my friend was appointed to the mother church, the Akron church that was first built on that design in 1907. And he discovered those people worship that building.

One of the elders came to him and said, or one of the administrative board came to him and said, would you please stop preaching the Bible so much? And he said, what do you want me to preach? Well, the newspaper, current events. And my friend said you got the wrong boy. Well, he was eventually moved.

And one Saturday night, that building burned to the ground. I called him up on Monday and asked where he was on Saturday night. Were you anywhere near that place where the gasoline cap? He said, no, no, I've got a good alibi.

But here it is. The church raised \$18 million and rebuilt the building exactly as it was—the calf idol of Bet-aven.

So, this is the challenge. Does God love beauty? Yes. Does he love things? Yes.

But we can think of the temple in Jerusalem. One of the things that became so very clear to me in my work on the books of Kings is that the opening chapters of the first Kings are about the building of the temple. After Solomon's glorious dedicatory prayer in chapter eight, God appears to him for the second time.

First time was at Gibeon, when he gave him the promise. God appeared to him the second time and said, hey, I like this place. This is the Living Oswalt version.

And I'm going to put my name here. And I will bless this people unless they turn away from me. And in that case, I will make this thing a pile of rubble.

And the last chapter of the book of Kings is about the Babylonians destroying the temple. It's called inclusio. Building the temple, destroying the temple envelope. And that tells us then how we're to read the middle part of the book. So, there it is.

Absolutely right. It can become wrapped up in rituals, church polity, or doctrine. And this was the situation in Wesley's day.

The Anglican church in England was orthodox. It's as orthodox as hell. Hell is very orthodox.

The devils know who Jesus is. But it was dead. We are inveterate idolaters.

We like to turn things into idols that we can manage, that we can control. Am I a real Christian? Yes. I have the 39 articles memorized.

Memorized. That's not true of me, but anyway. Yes.

So, there it is. And that's the thing that he's driving at. Verse 7. Samaria's king will be destroyed, swept away like a twig on the surface of the waters.

The high places of wickedness will be destroyed. Again, we've talked about high places. Those shrines where the gods and Yahweh were worshiped.

Thorns and thistles will grow up and cover their altars. Then, this is the end of verse 8, and they will say to the mountains, cover us. And to the hills, follow us.

Look at Luke chapter 23, verse 30. 23. Jesus is on his way to the cross.

The women are weeping for him. They mourned and wailed for him, says the end of verse 27. Verse 28.

Jesus turned and said to them, daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed. They did not have children to be killed.

Then, now look here, this is a direct quote of Hosea. They will say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us. What's he talking about? He's talking about 70 AD, 40 years later, when Jerusalem is going to be taken apart stone by stone.

Now, turn to the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 6, verse 16. So, in 722, people are going to be saying, let the mountains fall on us.

In 70 AD, people are going to be saying, let the mountains fall on us. And in Revelation chapter 6, verse 16, it's not a direct quotation, but it's a clear allusion. Verse 15, then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

They called on the mountains and the rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. Now, again, I like to use verses like this when people talk to me about, oh, I don't like the Old Testament. It's got all that wrath in it.

I love the New Testament. It's just about love. Hide us from the wrath of the Lamb.

So, in a real way, you've got these three eras: the destruction of Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world. And in everyone, there will be people saying not to repent but just to hide me. Let me escape from what is coming.

What that means to me is, am I in the habit of repenting when the Lord corrects me? When the Lord points out, attempts to control him, attempts to use him, attempts to make him in my image? Am I in the habit of repenting and saying, God, forgive me? If so, then in the end, I won't be hiding in the rocks. I'll be receiving his grace and forgiveness. But the hardening of the heart is a very easy disease.

Back to Hosea. Since the days of Gibeah, you have sinned. And what he's talking about here is that awful situation at the end of the book of Judges.

We don't know for certain that those last chapters, 17 to 21, are chronologically later than chapters 1 to 16. They may have occurred at an earlier time. But as far as the book is concerned, it's saying, here's where this whole thing led.

And the story of Gibeah is exactly like the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. And then, the rest of the tribes got all self-righteous, and they went in and killed all the Benjamites. And then they thought, oh, wait a minute, we're supposed to have 12 tribes, aren't we? Hmm, what are we going to do? Well, there are 600 Benjamites left.

There's a festival over here in the spring when all the virgins come out to dance around the maypole. That thing goes back a long way. So, we'll tell the Benjamites to go over there and grab some of those virgins, and we'll keep the tribe alive.

To which we say, dear God. So, he says, since the days of Gibeah, that's 600 years earlier, you've sinned, Israel, and there you have remained. Will war not overtake the evildoers in Gibeah again? And I think it's clear here that he's not merely talking about Gibeah.

You people are Gibeah. Expect that the same thing that happened to Gibeah is going to happen to you. When I please, I'll punish them.

Nations will be gathered against them. And I raise the question, here's the lordship of history. Who is bringing Assyria? Oh, Assyria thinks they are.

And again, I think of the amazing faith of these people. Here's this little country, as I've said to you many times, about the size of Jesmond County. That's Judah.

Let's put together Jesmond County and Madison County for Israel. Our God is the one in charge of Assyria. Wow.

I think that's going to become more necessary for us unless the lord gives us a great worldwide revival. As the church contracts, it's going to be easier and easier for us to say, well, I guess our God isn't God of the whole world. That wasn't a problem for these people, these Hoseas, these Amos.

When I please, I will punish them. Nations will be gathered against them to put them in bonds for their double sin. Then, notice verses 11, 12, and 13.

Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh. Well, you simply have a stake in the middle of the pile of cut grain, and the heifer has a rope on her halter leading to that

stake, and she is driven around on top of the pile of grain. And of course, as the cord twists, she's moving in closer and closer to the stake.

Then you change the halter around, and she's moving now outward. Well, that's not heavy work. Also, as the Bible tells us, you shall not muzzle that cow, that ox.

If they want to eat a little wheat on the way, you let them. Well, that's not bad. Oh, but look, I'll put a yoke on her fair neck.

The yokes were heavy. I will drive, Ephraim. Judah must plow.

Jacob must break up the ground. You've had an easy life. It's not going to be easy anymore.

And then verse 12, two key words. Sow rightness for yourself. Reap the fruit of hesed.

Act right, live right, do right, and God will be able to pour his undeserved grace upon you. But you have planted wrong. The text here says wickedness.

It's the opposite of right, wrong. And you have reaped disaster. You have eaten the fruit of deception, and here it is because you depended on your own strength.

I don't need God. I'm doing very well. Thank you very much.

So, there it is. Make a choice. Sow right, as I say, right behavior, right attitudes, right practices.

And how do you know what those are? Well, they are God's. And what's the result? You will reap hesed, undeserved love. It's not that you earn that undeserved love as a result of this, but this establishes the conditions in which God can give it.

Gary? Okay, good. On the other hand, you sow wrong. And the word that's used there is basically godlessness.

I don't need God. I'm doing very well. That's the wrong way to live.

It's the wrong way to think. It's the wrong way to act. And you will reap.

Many translations will say you will reap evil. But the word means, well, it means evil, among other things. I think the best English equivalent is bad.

And that ranges all the way from misfortune and disaster to moral evil. One reaps life and the other reaps death. Yes, yes.

There are consequences, consequences. The roar of battle will rise against your people so that all your fortresses will be devastated, as Shalman devastated Beth Arbol on the day of battle when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children. So, it will happen to you, Bethel, because of your godlessness—what? Hosea, what's the matter with you? Bethel is the most godly place in the country.

No, it's godless because your godlessness is great. When that day dawns, the king of Israel will be completely destroyed. 722, all over.

Okay, questions, comments, observations? Questions? Have I buried you? All hearts clear? There's an instruction in verse 12 where he says, break up the fallow ground. I remember Steve Elliot preaching a masterful sermon several years ago, and there was a recurring refrain in it that said, miracles follow the plow. Yeah, miracles follow the plow.

Yes, break up the fallow ground. Yes, yes. Allow God an opportunity to work.

Well, you're talking about reaping moral evil, and it never ceases to amaze me how this whole thing on gender is just taking over the world everywhere. Yeah, and it is, again, the idea of control. I'll decide who I am.

Yeah, yeah, and again, you will reap what you sow. You will reap what you sow, and that's a fact of God's world, and it is so. Good, anything else? Just looking at the consistency in this chapter of how Israel, and as we relate it to our own lives here in America, people are always running to the created rather than the creator.

Yes. For the worship, and even to the end, they run to hide under the rocks, just as if they could hide from the one who created the mountain. Yes, turning always to the created instead of to the creator.

Making man the object of all things. Yeah, yeah, and when you do that, you reduce the world to meaninglessness. If we're the best that the cosmos can create, then nothing means anything, and that's exactly where we've come.

Yes, yes, and that's, I've talked to you before about mishpat. Shafat is often translated to judge, and then mishpat is a noun from that, often translated judgment, but in fact, I've become more and more convinced mishpat is God's order for the world, and if you live in defiance of that order, there are going to be tragic judgments that fall on you, not because of a judge saying, well, let's see, I think I'll do this to you. No, it is simply the result of living in defiance of the way God has made the world.

You do that, and there are results. I've used the example with you, the person who jumps off a tall building. Well, surely a good God wouldn't smash me on the sidewalk.

That has nothing to do with it. Your body has not been made to stand the sudden stop at the bottom, and if you do this, there are consequences. Has God judged you? Yes, but not in some arbitrary way of saying, well, I'm going to get you for doing that.

No, you have defied his mishpat, and as a result, judgment falls upon you.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word.

Thank you for its warnings that the psalmist says are so precious. We read these dark words, and we say, oh, can't we get away from that, but thank you for your warnings. Help us take them to heart.

Deliver us from a need to control our world. Deliver us from a hard-heartedness that refuses to repent when you point out our failings. Deliver us, oh God, from making idols of good things.

Enable us, Lord, to walk in love for all men and women. Enable us to worship you in everything we do and say. In your name, amen.