

I. Introduction

A. Why does it matter?

1. Why does it really matter that Israel modeled intimacy with God and faithfulness (obedience) to Him in the presence of the surrounding nations?
*Why so worked up about other lovers?
2. Is God really that emotionally needy or narcissistic that He needs to be loved as the one and only?
3. It matters because ...
 - a. Sin has separated you and me from God and we will live eternally somewhere.
 - b. Only intimacy with God can make us whole and fulfilled.
 - c. There were and are people who've never heard that the solution to the most significant problems they face come down to Jesus Whom they've never heard about. They've never seen Jesus or they've never responded to Jesus full invitation.
 - d. *It matters because this life is short, sin is consequential, and Jesus is the only one Who can forgive and bring us into the family, the presence of God.

B. Israel and the Church

1. Israel and the Church are not the same, but they do share the same calling: to be intimate with God and show the world Jesus.
2. The same reasons it mattered for Israel, it matters for the Church.
3. We are very much like Israel in that we regularly play the prostitute when, in reality, we are the Bride of Christ

II. History lesson: Israel (Hosea 12-13)

A. Short history of Israel and God

1. Idolatry

- a. 10 Commandments: No other gods; don't make idols; don't take God's name in vain (no empty words or attach God to anything unworthy)
- b. As we covered in previous weeks, there was rampant worship of other gods and idolatry.

When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel, but he incurred guilt through Baal and died. And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves metal images, idols skillfully made of their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of them, "Those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!" Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window. But I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but Me, and besides Me there is no Savior. It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought; but when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot Me. (Hebrews 13:1-6)

2. Politics/ideology

- a. God's design was that He was their King, but they wanted to be like everyone else.
 - b. They placed hope and pride in kings and rulers
He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against Me, against your helper. Where now is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers— those of whom you said, "Give me a king and princes"? I gave you a king in My anger, and I took him away in My wrath. (Hosea 13:9-11)
 - c. They placed hope and pride in other nations/alliances.
Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt. (Hosea 12:1)
3. Economic
- a. Stored up treasure, taxed the people, became self-sufficient, and no longer relied on or thanked God
 - b. A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress. Ephraim has said, "Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin." (Hosea 12:7-8)
but when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me. ... Though he may flourish among his brothers, the east wind, the wind of the Lord, shall come, rising from the wilderness, and his fountain shall dry up; his spring shall be parched; it shall strip his treasury of every precious thing. (Hosea 13:6, 15)
4. Military
- a. Do not acquire horses and chariots, Israel didn't even have a standing army
 - b. Deuteronomy 17:16; Psalm 20:7-8
Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, "You shall never return that way again." (Deuteronomy 17:16)
Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. (Psalm 20:7-8)
 - c. Hosea references their trust in the military throughout the prophecy and in chapter 14
 - d. *All the ways God called Israel to remain close/intimate with Him they constantly rejected with predictable consequences - unfaithfulness always leads to destruction.
- III. What must we do? (ch 14)
- A. Return to the Lord
- 1. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:8)
 - 2. *The call of Jesus, first and foremost, is a call to intimacy. Makes sense as we are his Bride.

3. Only God can forgive our sin and make us pure. Our waywardness is incurable until God heals it (14:1-2)
Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips." (Hosea 14:1-2)
4. Repent from unfaithfulness
Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy. (Hosea 14:3)
 - a. Politics/kings/foreign lords
 - b. Military strength
 - c. Economy
5. *Our testimony to the world is that there is no political solution, there is no military solution, there is no economic solution to the world's darkness - there is only one solution and that is hearts and minds transformed by an encounter with and surrender to Jesus.

B. And He will ...

I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for My anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath My shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; from Me comes your fruit. (Hosea 14:4-8)

1. Freshness
2. Stability
3. Vigor

C. *But only when we tear out everything and allow Him to plant an entirely new crop inside of us. Repentance.

IV. Conviction: why it matters

- A. The divine love of God is not stifling or constricting. It brings life to everything it touches. *And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. ... And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.* (Ezekiel 47:9, 12)
- B. God's plan for Kingdom saturation is us. And when we aren't close to His heart and we chase other loves, we will drive others away from Him.
 1. I think we live too much in the cultures we've grown up in rather than the culture of the Kingdom of God.
 2. If someone was to evaluate what/where/who my hope and faith is in, what would they conclude? Biblical warning of misplaced trust and allegiance

- a. There is a place for government and military and economics, but we must know and be constantly reminded of this, that the solution to all that's wrong is an encounter with the risen Jesus that leaves our hearts and minds in a place where we can never be the same and there is nothing worth keeping over Jesus.
- b. Jesus says you've heard it said and eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist an evil person.
Early 90s rap: "If anyone slaps you, mamma said knock you out." Nope. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Another translation of this says pray for those who spitefully use you and spit on you.
- c. *Love your enemies that you may be the children of God. (Matthew 5:44b-45a)