

Message #12**Hosea 10:1-15**

What exactly is our purpose in life? What exactly should be the big goal of our life? Is it happiness? Is it health? Is it prosperity? Is it ease? Is it success? Is it a long life? What is the goal of our lives?

Well King David seemed to have one goal and it was this: “One thing I have asked from the LORD that I shall seek that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life” (Ps. 27:4).

The primary goal of David was to love God, learn about God and serve God and fellowship with God all the days of his life. Unfortunately that is not the primary goal of most of God’s people and it certainly was not the goal of Israel back in the days of Hosea.

GOD EVENTUALLY WILL COMPLETELY DESTROY HIS OWN FAMILY MEMBERS WHO HAVE FAITHLESS HEARTS BECAUSE OF THEIR GREAT WICKEDNESS, SO THEY NEED TO IMMEDIATELY SEEK THE LORD.

REALITY #1 – God’s peoples’ physical condition. **10:1**

The physical condition of the people of God looked impressive. They were like a “luxuriant vine.” Some translations say an “empty vine.” The reason for this is that the Hebrew word used here (baqaq) can mean to be luxuriant or to be empty. Actually both are fitting here. Israel looked like a luxuriant vine, but she was empty of having a real relationship with God. These people were not interested in producing fruit for God; they were interested in producing things for themselves. In fact, they produced their own false gods.

Notice what she did. She produced fruit for herself, not for God. The more fruit he produced the more altars he made and the richer the land, the more sacred pillars and idols he made. The more money these people made, the more they spent it on things other than God.

For God’s people the economy was good and they completely lost sight of the One who made it good. These people had their building projects and they built impressive altars and idols. They constructed grand cathedrals.

So the actual physical condition of this group of people looked good, but all the religious stuff from God’s standpoint was empty and anemic.

We cannot help but think of that church in Laodicea. It was a wealthy city and wealthy church. They had so much money in their account that they actually said we don’t need anything and they donated money to the beautification of the city. But spiritually speaking they were bankrupt and Jesus Christ said, “I will spit you out of my mouth.”

REALITY #2 – God’s peoples’ spiritual condition. **10:2a**

Notice what God says about His own people: their hearts are faithless. The Hebrew word “faithless” (chalaq) is one that means they had hearts that were smooth. They had hearts that were slick and slippery.

These people were real spiritual game players. They were slick. They went through all kinds of religious motions, but they did not have hearts that were interested in being right with God. They were slick religious hypocrites. Outwardly they gave you the impression that they were very concerned about God and His Word, but inwardly they were living a lie and they were smooth and polished and impressive.

REALITY #3 – God’s peoples’ arrogant verbal condition. **10:3-4**

These people are arrogant. They don’t think they need a godly leader. In fact, they say, “we have no king” and we don’t need a king. **The reason they said this is because they did not reverence God.** They revered themselves. So the point is we do not acknowledge or need any God-appointed king because if the truth is known, we don’t fear and reverence God. What possibly could a God-appointed king do to us or for us? He could point you in the ways of God.

There are some churches that think this way. We don’t need leadership. We don’t need what God has said in His Word because we think more highly of our own denomination. I have known of some churches that say, “we don’t need a pastor/teacher” we can all share. I have known of some denominations who say, “We don’t need to follow God’s pattern for leadership. We don’t need Elders and Deacons; we will invent our own and call them trustees.” In all reality, any way you slice it, it is a refusal to bow to the authority of the Word of God.

Verse 4 is intriguing because one of the indicators that these people really don’t fear the Lord is that they make legal promises and then never follow through with them. One of the key symptoms that one does not fear God is that one is not a person of his word.

They speak words and swear worthless oaths and promise things that mean nothing. They do not make righteous judgments. Their judgments are worthless. As a result, judgment was growing like a poisonous weed and would destroy them.

REALITY #4 – God’s people will receive the chastising judgment of God. **10:2-10**

Now there are four immediate and futuristic chastising judgments here that are aimed at Israel. In fact, there is a description here of what His people will actually do in the Tribulation:

Chastening Judgment #1 - God will break down and destroy their places of worship. **10:2b**

Now this judgment is still operative right now. Look at the remains of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Since A.D. 70, that place has been leveled. In fact, when Jesus was here on earth He told His disciples that not one stone would be left that would not be torn down.

The only remnant of that Temple is an outer wall. This prophecy literally came true (Matt. 24:2). When God allows places of worship to be destroyed, it is a chastising judgment from Him.

Chastening Judgment #2 - God will cause people in key political cities to fear. **10:5-6**

Now specifically what is referred to here is Samaria, which was the capital of Israel. Beth-aven is Bethel and refers to the pagan and political religious system. Beth-aven means “wicked Bethel.” The big shots lived in Samaria. It is kind of like Washington D.C. where the big political players live. I just talked to a woman this week who used to live in Washington D.C.. I asked her why she moved and she said because of the cost of living. She said to live in that city you have to have a lot of money. That was Samaria and Ephraim. The big shots lived there and they had money. God says I will bring it all down and the big shot leaders will be afraid (**10:5**).

The people will mourn not because they have sinned against Me, but because their calf idol has been destroyed. The false religious priests will cry out and all the glory will be gone.

Do you see how degenerated these people were? These were God’s people. They were worshipping a bull. According to **verse 6**, one reason they were afraid is because their bull was carried away to Assyria. So their god becomes the pride of the great conquering king of Assyria. They put their trust in a bull and Assyria took the bull away and gave it to their king.

So at the end of **verse 6**, God says in the end Ephraim will finally be ashamed of what she did and Israel will finally be ashamed of their plans and counsel because they were all futile.

That word “ashamed” used twice in this verse means God’s people will one day see their vile condition and will mourn it and be totally ashamed of it (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 147).

Chastening Judgment #3 - God will destroy key political cities and leaders. **10:7**

Samaria was the capital of Israel. This was the place of the major politicians. God will chop it down. And cut it off. So not only do key places get destroyed, but also key people get destroyed.

Chastening Judgment #4 - God will destroy key religious places. **10:8**

This is the sin of Israel. They worship false gods at false places. On their altars will grow thorns and thistles. But for the people, it will be so scary that they will cry to the mountains to fall on them.

Now **verses 9-10** are important. God once again reminds His people of the evil since the days of "Gibeah." Notice what God says in **verse 9**: "there they stand." What that means is that they have maintained a Gibeah mindset and lifestyle since those days. In other words, the people of God are living their lives in evil depraved sin.

We saw this last week, but the story of that sin of Gibeah is found in Judges 19-21. God's people did evil and depraved things. In fact, that is the memory we have of Gibeah. There was homosexuality, gang rape and the dissecting of a human body. There are various crimes like murder, kidnapping and civil war. Those are ugly chapters.

God says I have not forgotten about the evil of those people and you are just like them. You stand in the same kinds of sin. These are God's own people. God says My desire is to chastise them for all of the evil sin and when it comes time for me to do it, I will cause all peoples to be gathered against them.

What is described here is what God will do to Israel in the Tribulation. He has kept the record of her immoral and idolatrous sin and she refuses to turn to Jesus Christ, so God will bring up the nations of the world to surround her and she will pay.

REALITY #5 – God's people need to seek the Lord right now. **10:11-15**

Now God uses a metaphor from the farming world to refer to the situation of His people. Both Ephraim and Israel love to prosper, but not so that they may bear good fruit. The only fruit that has been produced by God's own people is immorality and idolatry.

According to **verses 11-12**, God says it is time to seek the Lord. It is time to start sowing righteousness and kindness until the time comes when I will rain righteousness on you. What that means at the end of **verse 12** is there will come a day when Jesus Christ will reign as King of the Jews in total righteousness and His people will enjoy national peace.

What is amazing about **verse 12** is that in spite of their sin and evil, there was still time to seek the Lord. There was still time to get it right. So no matter how depraved one may have been or how long one has been depraved, there is still time to seek the Lord.

These people were worshipping a golden calf and involved in immoral, pagan behavior and God says turn from that and seek Me and My Word. Pursue righteousness and God will bless His people

But in **verse 13** God describes what His own people have been doing and still are doing: There are five descriptions of what His peoples' lives were like:

(Description #1) - They have plowed wickedness, not righteousness. **10:13a**

(Description #2) - They have reaped unjust things, not just things. **10:13b**

(Description #3) - They have eaten the fruit of liars, not eating the truth of God. **10:13c**

(Description #4) - They have trusted in their own way, not God's way. **10:13d**

(Description #5) - They have trusted in their own warriors and not God. **10:13e**

God gave His people plenty of time to change, but He knew what they were like and He knew what He would need to do. So God says that because they did not seek the Lord or do what is right:

(Action #1) - God will cause tumult to hit His people. **10:14a**

There are no other people on this earth who have had more turmoil than Israel. She is in constant turmoil with one nation after another. This is a judgment of God. Peace is a blessing of God; tumult is a judgment of God.

(Action #2) - God will destroy all their fortresses. **10:14b**

God describes some horrible historical event that these people were aware of which took place at Beth-arbel. It may refer to Arbela (18 miles SE of Sea of Galilee) or Mt. Arbel (two miles west of the sea). At that event Shalman, which is probably a reference to Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, came up against this place and destroyed it and killed mothers and babies. We learn in II Kings 18:9 that apparently later he went to Samaria and besieged it. So obviously God permitted these horrible things to happen to His own people because they refused to deal with their sin.

(Action #3) - God will cut off His own people. **10:15**

He will cut off His delivering power; He will cut off His blessings; He will cut off their freedoms. He will let His people be totally dominated by evil forces and won't do a thing about it.

When we look at this section, there are some things that we want to apply so we don't risk this kind of chastisement from God:

- 1) It is critical that we spot sin, face sin and confess sin in our own lives.
- 2) It is critical that we maintain our trust in God, not ourselves and not our prosperity.
- 3) It is critical that we make sure that when we come to corporate worship, it is not simply religious formality.
- 4) It is critical that when we worship we want our hearts right with God.

What is amazing about this chapter is that in spite of all of the evil stuff the people had done, God still says, "it is time to seek the LORD." No matter how far you have fallen, you may still have a relationship with God. He wants you back. Will you seek Him?