

Christ in the Sacrifices 16-02-07a

This is Sunday, the 7th of February, 2016. Our passage this morning will be an overview of the book of Hosea, beginning at chapter 1. This is the next and almost final installment in our study of Christ and the sacrifices. We have looked at the book of Hosea not terribly long ago in our study of kings and prophets.

But we are going to look at it from a different standpoint, watching for those statements within it and those targeted truths that refer to priestly function and sacrifice. You remember Hosea, you remember God commanding him to marry Gomer, and in that we looked at the relationship of God to Israel as God presents it in a husband and wife context. You remember the children that are born and the names that are given to them, and that was the emphasis.

And in the historical context of the kings and prophets study, we saw the reflection of the impending judgment upon the northern kingdom and the warning to not follow her sister in judgment to Judah. This was in the day shortly before the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom in 721 B.C. This morning we are going to revisit Hosea, but we are looking at it from the perspective of our study of the sacrifices and offerings, what they reflect, what they were intended to convey between the people of Israel and the God of Israel. We'll take a moment to dedicate our time and our fellowship to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, looking for and cultivating the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, all in obedience to and appreciation of our Heavenly Father.

Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for the privilege and the opportunity and freedom to pursue our relationship with you together as a body of believers, as brothers and sisters in Christ, united in our love for you and our appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on our behalf, His work in standing between heaven and earth and making a way through the veil, which was His flesh, partaking of our humanity and creating that narrow road, opening that straight gate that leads to life. We thank you for Him. We thank you for the opportunity to spend this time together in the study of your Word, recognizing how important it is to have substance for our faith to grasp, to lay hold of and to cling to tenaciously through the storms of this life, through the distractions of this life, through the challenges and tests that we face.

We know that it is the lamp for our feet and the light for our path. We pray this morning as we look at this portion of your Word that your Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart, help each of us to see clearly the truth that you have for us that will sustain us, that will equip us and qualify us for an inheritance with the saints in the light. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

The Lord Jesus Christ anticipated in the sacrifices. We raised the question last time, could there be an actual view of the individual person of the Lord Jesus Christ by Old Testament saints given the rather limited revelation that they had to work with, especially in the earlier days. You look at the patriarchal period when there is no written canon.

The Word of God is communicated verbally, communicated orally within the family, within the tribe, within the clan. And later you have the books of Moses and for many generations it was just the Pentateuch it was the law and the history of Genesis, the law given in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, the review and rehearsal, the second statement of the law, Deuteronomos. After the conquest you have a period of time where there is something of a disorganized status.

People are quietly growing and multiplying in the land but there is not an organized government, there is not organized worship. The assembly at the tabernacle falls into disarray and disuse so that by the time of Samuel with Eli and Hophni and Phinehas it is in a very decrepit state. And yet in the lifetime of Samuel you move from that into the monarchy under Saul and shortly after the death of Samuel and the death of Saul you have the arrival of David the king.

And David is going to be mentioned as king in the passage under our gaze this morning which is the book of Hosea. Starting at that beginning point of the monarchy and extending through 721, 722, 721 B.C. the northern ten tribes after David and Solomon and then the division of the kingdom with Jeroboam and Rehoboam you have that duality, you have the ten northern tribes, you have Judah and Benjamin in the south and there are two thrones. There is sort of a choice, where do you want to live? The north, there is no Davidic dynasty, it is a succession of kings that either take the throne by force or by murder or by default and it is nevertheless a place where the people of God live and they are still called to fulfill their covenant obligations despite the falling away, despite the lack of recognition of God's man on the throne in Jerusalem, God nevertheless works with them and deals with them and sends them prophet after prophet after prophet.

One of the most significant and memorable prophets in the Old Testament is Elijah and where does Elijah minister? In the north, who is his successor who gets the mantle and the double portion of his spirit? It is Elijah and where does he largely minister? It is in the north. Time after time, prophet after prophet, many of the writing prophets address their prophecies to the north, Hosea is one of them but Hosea is one of the last. If you look at the beginning of this book, Hosea chapter 1, the word of the Lord came to Hosea the son of Beri in the days of Uzziah, we were just talking about him on Thursday night, his little funerary garden and those who wind up being planted in it, plants that don't apparently rise, at least they haven't yet, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah kings of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel.

This is Jeroboam the second. Let's just read and absorb what the word of the Lord is to the divided kingdom through Hosea keeping in mind and paying special attention to a particular aspect and that is in the light of our study, where is the role of worship through sacrifice? Worship through those ministries that the priest performs. Where is the only authorized place for that? Where is that supposed to happen? In Jerusalem at the temple that Solomon built almost 300 years before, 250 odd years earlier that temple was established.

In this country what was going on 250 years ago? You take 2015, go back to 1815, take another 50 years off, it's before the founding of our country, right? My math is right, is that 1765 or so, thanks. It's a distance. You think about the founding institutions of our country that happened in the ensuing decades under Washington and Adams and Jefferson and Madison and those early Quincy Adams and so on, the establishment of the national financial system under Hamilton and so on.

Those things happened at about the same distance as Hosea speaks from going back to the days of the temple. It is something that was a founding institution, something that is defining to the nation and yet very early there was a departure from it. So keeping that in mind and watching for two things, this is what I want you to watch for.

This will come back, we covered this not that long ago at least in overview and in sort of a skimming fashion, but watch for two things. Watch for references to worship in general and specifically to sacrifice and to priests. We're going to rip through this at my oral reading speed.

Hosea chapter 1 verse 2, When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, Go take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord. Now harlotry, what is this? This is being wedded to the Lord, having a covenant relationship with and then going to someone else and committing adultery, going to a harlot. This is compromise of the relationship.

This is breach of covenant. This is breaking your promise, forsaking all others. I am true to you.

It's part of most wedding vows. Forsaking all others. Well, they're running to others and forsaking the God of covenant.

That's the picture. So Hosea goes and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Then the Lord said to him, Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu and bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.

It should come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. What else do you know about the valley of Jezreel? No. This is not the last time a judgment is going to take place in that particular valley, is it? You know what the valley of Jezreel is? It's the valley of Megiddo as well.

She conceived again and bore a daughter. God said to him, Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away. Racham is one of the Hebrew words for mercy.

And Lo means no. No mercy. I will take them away, yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow nor by sword or battle, by horses or horsemen.

Cursed is the man who puts his trust in man, who makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. He shall be like a shrub in the desert and shall not see good when it comes. One of my greatest blessings is having been born and raised in my early childhood in the desert and I know what a shrub in the desert looks like.

It's what happened to a lot of my mom's plants in our backyard in Barstow. They became a shrub in the desert and were dead by the time the rain came. That's just what happens.

I will save them by the Lord their God, not by bow nor by sword or battle, by horses or horsemen. Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son, two children, then a third. Two children, then a third.

Two, then three. This is the way the book begins and that theme is going to recur. Call his name Lo-Ami.

Am means people, lo means no, e means my, not my people. Call his name Lo-Ami, for you are not my people and I will not be your God. You depart the covenant, so will I. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.

Conflict. What is the word of the Lord to Abraham? Abraham, look up at the sky. See the stars that you cannot number? So shall thy descendants be.

Your descendants will be as the sand on the seashore. But God says they are no longer my people. Well doesn't this bring into conflict the fulfillment of God's promises? And it is addressed by God here.

Even though there is this judgment, even though I am disowning you as my people and I am withdrawing my mercy and there is judgment in the Valley of Jezreel, this promise still stands. So the judgment will be an interlude. It is not final.

It shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, you are not my people. There it shall be said to them, you are the sons of the living God. Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together.

This broken and divided kingdom will be healed and united. Shall appoint for themselves one head and they shall come up out of the land for great will be the day of Jezreel. Say to your brethren, my people and to your sisters, mercy.

The low will go away. It will be my people. It will be Raham.

It will be mercy. But in the meantime, verse 2 of chapter 2, bring charges against your mother, bring charges for she is not my wife, nor am I her husband. Talking to people who is the mother, it is the nation represented by the national government, by the leadership of the elders and the priests, everyone that is in charge that forms the national identity is indicted here.

Let her put away her harlotries from her sight and her adulteries from between her breasts,

lest I strip her naked and expose her as in the day she was born and make her like a wilderness and set her like a dry land and slay her with thirst. I will not have mercy on her children, for they are the children of harlotry. Their mother has played the harlot.

She who conceived them has behaved shamefully, for she said, I will go after my lovers who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink. I have material prosperity and I assign its presence and the enjoyment of it to these things that I have substituted for my relationship with God by forsaking the covenant and forsaking God. Look at these pleasures that I have.

I like them. Therefore, behold, God says in verse six, I will hedge up your way with thorns and wall her in so that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them.

She will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, I will go and return to my first husband. For then it was better for me than now.

Does this remind you of any particular parable the Lord told about a young man who gets for himself a great amount of substance and goes and runs through it is then without it and says, I will return to where I came from. Then it was better for me than now, for she did not know that I gave her grain. I gave her new wine.

I gave her oil. I multiplied her silver and gold, which she turned around and gave to bail. Therefore, I will return and take away my grain in its time and my new wine in its season.

I will take back my wool and my linen given to cover her nakedness. Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers and no one shall deliver her from my hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease.

I will also cause all her feast days, her new moons, her Sabbaths, all her appointed feasts. What is one of the prominent features of the appointed feasts of Israel? What characterizes every single one of them? Sacrifice. Recognition at feast time of the God who instituted those feasts, who is worshiped in and through those celebrations.

But these are now occasions for personal mirth and personal pleasure. It has been perverted and diverted from being appreciation for God to enjoyment of self and enjoyment of pleasure. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees of which she has said, these are my wages that my lovers have given me.

I am enjoying these things because I have made such wonderful choices. I will make them a forest and the beasts of the field shall eat them. I will punish her for the days of the bales to which she burned incense.

She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry and went after her lovers. But me, she forgot, says the Lord. What's the significance of decking herself with jewelry and earrings? Is that a bad thing? Nobody should wear jewelry or earrings.

What's the point here? I am cultivating this bad choice. If she's pursuing lovers and the pleasure and satisfaction that comes in and through these substitute relationships, this is active pursuit. I'm not just going and hoping there's going to be a lover there.

I am taking steps to make sure I succeed. I am actively cultivating these illicit forms of worship and self-gratification. Verse 14, therefore, behold, I will allure her.

She's trying to allure these lovers. Well, after this period of judgment, I will draw her. No man can come to me except the Father draw him.

If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. God says, I will draw her. I will attract her.

I will call and expect a response. I will bring her into the wilderness and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there and the Valley of Acre as a door of hope.

She shall sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt, the days of innocence, the days of appreciation, the days of deliverance. Fresh in her mind, the bonds of slavery, fresh in her mind, the grace of God with manna and with water, fresh in her mind, the covenant promises of a permanent settled home and inheritance stability. It shall be in that day.

Says the Lord that you will call me my husband and will no longer call me my bail. She's in the symbolic picture here in Hosea. The nation Israel is worshipping bail and pretending like that's the God of Israel when it's really the bails.

And they said when they say bail, they say, well, I'm talking about God. You know, I'm worshipping God. I'm worshipping the God of my fathers, but it's actually bail.

And he says, you're not going to call me bail anymore. Bail, of course, is just the ancient Near Eastern word for Lord. But you're not going to use that term and mix me up and amalgamate me and syncretize me and pretend like I am the one you're worshipping when you're actually engaged in these idolatrous and heinously unfaithful and harlot like practices.

You will no longer call me my bail, my Lord. You will call me my husband. You will refer to me in terms of that bond of covenant relationship, not this is what I have to do to get blessings.

This is the coin I put in the machine to get the snack at the bottom. For I will take from her mouth the names of the bails and they shall be remembered by their name no more. In that day, I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air and with the creeping things of the ground, bow and sword of battle.

I will shatter from the earth to make them lie down safely. What do we know about this? I've told you about my artillery shell lamp that has the rotating band inscribed with they shall turn their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks will not learn war anymore. What day is this? What time is he talking about? Has there ever been a time when there wasn't

warfare in the Middle East? Not to my knowledge, only in moments of brute force dictatorship when the Muslims took over the area and put it under brutal martial law.

But this fulfillment takes place forward after this age and in the millennial kingdom. In that day, this is the new covenant that is spoken of elsewhere. I will betroth you to me forever.

Yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice. Betrothing you to me forever means we're not again going to have one of these harlotry episodes. It's going to be the millennial kingdom and then it is going to be the kingdom of the father.

And I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and mercy. You remember our memory verse this morning? What are the three things that God appreciates? Loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness. What do you have here? Righteousness, loving kindness, and mercy, and justice, judgment.

I will betroth you to me in faithfulness and you shall know the Lord. How many times does God say, then you will know that I am the Lord? It shall come to pass in that day, verse 21, that I will answer, says the Lord, I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, with oil.

They shall answer Jezreel. The valley of Jezreel, instead of a place of judgment and slaughter, will be like the Central Valley in California. It will burst with produce.

It will be a fruitful place of positive reflection of the grace of God. Then I will sow her for myself in the earth and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy. I will say to those who are not my people, you are my people.

And there's a wonderful anticipation that just as God initially told the Gentiles, you are not my people, we too are called the people of God. They shall say, you are my God. Then the Lord said to me, go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who looks to other gods and loves raisin cakes, the pleasures, the stimulations, the momentary satisfactions that don't last.

So I bought her for myself for 15 shekels of silver and one and a half homers of barley. I said to her, you shall stay with me many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man, so too I toward you.

You are going to be set aside. You are going to be isolated. You will not be able to pursue these practices, these idolatrous and unfaithful options.

You won't have that option. You're going to be set aside, but you're not going to be in relationship with me either. You are quarantined.

You are neutralized. You are kept in a kind of imprisonment or chains, not unlike the angels that kept not their first estate, and they are sequestered. They're out of the game.

It is a time of pause for reflection, a time for rumination and for meditation on choices and consequences. For the children of Israel shall abide many days, verse four, without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward, the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king.

They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days. Notice, they're going to be separated from their bad worship practices, their corrupt sacrifices, their corrupt forms of worship, but they are not entering into the valid worship that God prescribed for them in their first covenant. There will be no worship of any kind.

There will be no sacrifice of any kind, no guidance of any kind. They are having a quiet time. They're in the corner facing the wall, circle with their nose in it.

Neutralized. Chapter four, hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for the Lord brings an indictment against the inhabitants of the land. There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land, swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery.

They break all restraint with bloodshed upon bloodshed. For this reason, the land will mourn. Look at that again.

What is the charge? What is the cause? There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. You cannot have valid worship. You cannot have covenant relationship with its protections and with its blessings and with its future hope where there is no knowledge of God, where there is no truth.

And because there's no knowledge of God and no truth, there is no mercy. The land will mourn. Everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air.

Collateral damage because of the unfaithfulness, because of the sinfulness, because of the evil of man. There is collateral damage in nature. When you see collateral damage in nature, if you know what a COFA is in terms of animal cultivation, the condensed order for feeding animals or whatever it is, but these are the feedlots that are crammed with cows.

These are the buildings that are crammed with thousands upon thousands upon thousands of chickens in rows and columns. If you see the destruction of habitat, if you see the decimation of wildlife, if you see the disappearance of the bees, why is that? It isn't because environmentalism hasn't been lifted up to a sufficient importance. It is sin in the camp.

It is evil among the people. It is the evil that characterizes humanity. All you have to do is look at the ideal.

When was nature at its finest and at its most balanced? When man was in the garden and there was no sin. What happened once man fell? The ground is cursed and it has been cursed ever since. And the more concentrated our evil, the more we suffer, the more our fellow human beings suffer, the more everything else suffers.

And if you want to know why the environment is in such a catastrophic state, then it isn't going to get any better. It is moral evil. It's not failure to do good crop rotation or failure to do good animal husbandry or land management.

It is evil. Don't kid yourself. There is no solution except a spiritual solution.

And the sensitivity that people need to not be abusive to others as well as to animals is a spiritual issue. It's not an education issue. It's not like somebody can win a debate.

You can read debates. You can hear both sides all day long. It doesn't resolve anything.

The only thing, the only place where there is power for resolution of the presence and effect of evil is truth, justice, and mercy. And those are sourced in God. Now, application.

If you scale down to just our households, just our relationships, just our effect in our workplace or in our school or in our social contacts, in our church, in our relationship with the rest of our country, election coming up, candidates strutting and fretting their hour on the stage, what counts? What really matters? Is it who you vote for? Is it who you support? Is it who has control of the economy, whether the Fed raises an interest rate, whether somebody does or doesn't invest in this domestic or foreign opportunity? What is determinative for you and for me as the people of God? Truth, justice, and mercy, loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. God states here specifically, and the word of God is either true or it's not. If it is true, there is collateral damage in the land of Israel because of their unfaithfulness to God.

As a nation departs from the Lord, that nation is going to suffer in unimaginable ways. As a planet full of people depart from the Lord and refuse the gospel when it is presented, that planet is going to suffer. And everybody that wants to save the planet needs to first let themselves be saved.

You want to save the planet? Get saved. You want to have a positive effect in every area of life? Let God be the deliverer. Let God be who He is intended to be, who He is purposed to be in our covenant relationship with Him.

What has happened instead? Look at verse 7 of chapter 4. The more they increase, the more they sin against me. As the population gets bigger, this is like critical mass in uranium and other fissionable materials. The more you assemble it, the worse it gets.

I will change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of my people. They set their heart on their iniquity, and it shall be like people, like priest.

You don't want to worship properly? The opportunity will disappear. As the people disappear and as the people are judged, so will the priest. So will the opportunity to approach.

Your iniquities are separated between you and your God. Your sins have hit His face from you, and He will not hear. If God's not in a hearing mood, you don't need a priest.

The priest can do nothing. You can't bring a sacrifice that's going to be honored. Priests are out of work, out of business.

Why do you think there are so few preaching and teaching pulpits that actually bring believers to any sort of growth and maturity in this country? The priestly function in Israel was the teaching function, the communication of the Word of God function. And you can canvass this earth. You can canvass this country.

You can canvass this state. And you can canvass this community. And it is difficult, almost impossible, to find a place where your soul can get fed from the Word of God.

Why is that? Like people, like priest. Like people, like pastor. It's just a fact.

It's the Word of God. And it should be a warning. And it should be a serious wake-up call to us that the disappearance of the faithful teaching of the Word of God.

Do you seriously find beneficial, helpful material on the Christian networks, on Christian radio, on Christian television, in Christian media, on the shelves of the Christian bookstores and in the Christian aisles of the other bookstores? Do you find insight? Do you find yourself drawn closer to God? Or is it, this is how to go along to get along. This is how to make my life happier. This is how to lose weight on the Bible diet.

This is how to get prosperous on the Bible prosperity plan. This is how to be happy in my marriage on the Bible marriage plan. The Bible is not the means to the end of our personal happiness.

The Bible is the means to the end of God's happiness with us. And if God is happy with us, all of these things will overtake us. But we have the cart and no horse.

We have the objective of self-gratification and we have no dedication to God. I am the Lord, God says, and there is no other. You honor Him or you will be judged.

You will be destroyed. You will be cut off. And if you belong to Him, you are going to have corrective discipline and you will be quarantined.

Your wine and your oil and your crops will fail. And when it fails, this is God drawing us to himself in the wilderness, setting us aside, giving us a chance to clear our heads. You distracted all the time.

God will remove the distractions. Your prosperity is leading you down a wrong road. Your prosperity will go away.

You may have a lot of stuff, but you will not be able to enjoy it. Your capacity will disappear. It isn't mechanical.

We look at the Old Testament and say, oh, well, when people depart from God, there's a famine

in the land. There's a lot of rich people in northern Israel at this time, right? But their riches don't do them any good. There is no satisfaction and inner peace and happiness.

Why? God doesn't have to remove the stuff. By design, we are only satisfied in the presence of our Maker and in relationship with our Heavenly Father. And by choosing other things, it's just like choosing to eat nothing but Twinkies.

Your body's not built to live on Twinkies. And if you choose to live on nothing but Twinkies, God doesn't have to intervene. You're going to get sick.

You're going to weaken. You're going to become diabetic. You're going to be overweight.

You're going to have all kinds of health issues. And you're ultimately going to die. And God didn't actively intervene at all.

We are designed for fellowship. We are built for relationship with God. And choosing anything else, substituting anything else, has this result.

Well, this is the message of Hosea. And notice in particular the role of the priest and the role of the feast and the role of sacrifice. Those occasions that God has provided, that God has designated, that God has purposed to express heart relationship with Him.

Leviticus 1, whole burnt offering, dedication of myself to God, recognizing that I am sinful, but if I dedicate myself to God, He has made a way for atonement, for acceptability. Minkah, my work, corrupt though I am, can be sanctified, can be acceptable, can be pleasing in God's sight, coming and doing it God's way. The peace offering, I can have fellowship, I can enter in.

The Lord Jesus stands at the door and knocks. When I open that door, He comes in and there is a shared meal. This is the opportunity we have.

This is what Israel missed. Well, we'll pause here. We're in the middle of chapter four.

We're going to pick this up and finish our quick overview of the book with a focus on idolatry versus genuine sacrificial worship of God. But let's pause here and take our break.