

Hosea 4:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.

Analysis

God's ironic judgment declares 'they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase.' The Hebrew structure emphasizes futility: eating without satisfaction, sexual activity without fruitfulness. This inverts Levitical covenant blessings (Leviticus 26:5, 'you shall eat your bread to the full') and applies covenant curses (Leviticus 26:26, Deuteronomy 28:38-41). The phrase 'they have left off to take heed to the LORD' (ki eth-YHWH azvu lishmor) explains the futility: because they abandoned covenant faithfulness (shamar—keep/guard), their activities produce emptiness. Augustine's principle applies: souls made for God find no satisfaction in created things pursued as ultimate ends. When humans reject God as their supreme good, everything else fails to satisfy the God-shaped void.

Historical Context

Israel's prosperity under Jeroboam II (mid-8th century BC) was accompanied by spiritual bankruptcy: elaborate religious rituals at Bethel and Dan, syncretism with Baal worship (fertility cult promising agricultural abundance and many children), and pursuit of political alliances. Despite material wealth, inner emptiness persisted. The Baal cult's sexual rituals (temple prostitution) promised fertility but God promised the opposite: spiritual adultery yields barrenness. Within decades, Assyria destroyed this prosperity, demonstrating that prosperity divorced from

covenant faithfulness is illusory. Jesus later warned against storing earthly treasures that moths and rust destroy (Matthew 6:19-21).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What pursuits in my life promise satisfaction but leave me empty because they substitute for God?
2. How do I respond when God withholds the fruit I expect from activities pursued apart from Him?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת	אָכְלָה	וְאֵת	אָכְלָה
For they shall eat	H3808	and not have enough	they shall commit whoredom
H398		H7646	H2181
וְאֵת	אָכְלָה	וְאֵת	אָכְלָה
and shall not increase	H3588	H853	to the LORD
H6555			because they have left off
וְאֵת	אָכְלָה	וְאֵת	אָכְלָה
to take heed	H8104		

Additional Cross-References

Micah 6:14 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.

Leviticus 26:26 (Parallel theme): And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.

Haggai 1:6 (Parallel theme): Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

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