

Adultery With Your Stomach

Chisholm on Adultery (Hosea)

Hosea lays out the Israelites as adulterous. That isn't really a new accusation. However, there are a few things that Chisholm points out that give pause for thought. Israel is specifically called an adulteress, that is the *female* who is committing adultery. What are the motivations for adultery for a female?

“Because she was so obsessed with her lovers, whom she regarded as the source of her food and clothing”¹

According to Chisholm adultery from the “woman’s” point of view is not necessarily thrust forward by lust. It is not some passion that she can’t contain and must satiate. Chisholm says she wants food and clothing. These are good things to want. After all, a wise woman isn’t afraid of the cold for her family because she has scarlet to go around.² But this is precisely what the Israelites are going after. This causes one to ask the question: what does God consider adultery? According to his short summary here, God considers it adultery when you go looking for sustenance from places other than him.

This is an important consideration, especially for the male mind which tends to think of adultery as a sin of passion, and lust, or onset by the eyes. A visual sin. The male mind cannot comprehend the female motivation. But consider how the Lord instructs us to seek sustenance in this world.

In Matthew 6:19-34 the Christian is admonished to go to God as the source of everything. The Christian is instructed to seek sustenance from the Lord. The Christian is even instructed ***not to worry*** about whether there will be food or drink. In addition, we are told that the gentiles seek

¹ Chisholm, R. B., Jr. (2002). [*Handbook on the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Minor Prophets*](#) (p. 343). Baker Academic.

² Proverbs 31:21

those things eagerly (Mt 6:32). The connection between worshipping gods other than God and worrying about the things of this earth starts to take shape. It becomes increasingly difficult to only think of this passage as “don’t worry, be happy”. We know that worry is a type of faithlessness, but to go looking for needs outside of the providence of God is outright worship of other gods.

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 8:3-4, later quoted by Jesus, the Israelites are told that they were humbled so as to learn to depend on God. “Man does not live on bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”. While this particular passage is highlighting the reason for discipline, it is nonetheless telling that the Israelites complained along the way, but God provided food and clothes for them. (He also says here that he did not allow their clothes and shoes to wear out. Which is significant in a harsh, desert environment).

“After all, Israel was “pure” at the time she entered into a covenant with the Lord”³

Based on the previous argument here it seems that Chisholm is contradicting himself. He says nothing to defend or nuance this, so it is likely that he does not have the connections I have in mind running through his mind. The Israelites were already enamoured by other gods before God called them out of Egypt.

The first time we see the Israelites complain is about water.⁴ Wandering around for 3 days without water will help you complain about it. A more severe complaint, and a harkening back to Egypt is found a little later when they say, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt where we say by pots of meat and as much bread as we wanted”.⁵ Again we see the people of Israel complaining, like a nagging wife, about there not being enough food in the house. It gets worse

³ Chisholm (p. 337)

⁴ Ex 15:22-24

⁵ Ex 16:2-3

in the book of Numbers when they start reminiscing about the varieties of foods and flavors that were available to them in Egypt.⁶

Chisholm has called them “pure”, but all the Israelites showed was a strong memory and longing for the gods of old - because of food, shelter, and clothing. One more quote to drive the point home.

She (Israel) insisted on worshiping Baal, the Canaanite storm and fertility god, for she thought he was the source of her prosperity⁷

Chisholm once more makes this connection between adultery and seeking food and clothing. This quote is more in line with what is generally thought of as idolatry. Another god is clearly named, and the motivation clearly given. It was a common practice to sacrifice your child to a god in order to secure a blessing in the form of plenty of food. Jesus makes a similar connection when he says that you will only be able to serve one master, either God or Mammon.⁸

Prosperity is the besetting sin of our culture in general. It is a culture driven entirely by lust for what it does not have, or covetousness. Advertisements, thirst traps (in the sexual and non sexual sense) are designed to invoke desire, or at least to appeal to it. Social media would not be the economic powerhouse that it was without advertisement. In the earlier era of television it was the same. (New tech, same sin). Is there something that could be worse than inciting covetousness?

The most common defense for aborting a child is that it will keep a woman from achieving prosperity for themselves. The words usually used to describe prosperity are usually wrapped up in career and self fulfillment. But ultimately what is being sought is the ability to get

⁶ Nu 11:4-6

⁷ Chisholm (p. 343).

⁸ Mt 6:24

as much food and clothes and shelter as possible. Coupled with the bombardment of appeals to your covetousness, sacrificing your child to get it seems like the right way to go.

Concluding Thoughts

In case it wasn't clear enough - adultery against God happens when you seek food and drink from sources other than God. This plays out in searching out for food, clothing, and shelter. These desires grow into things like lust for money and for power. Having food, shelter, money and power have the effect of not needing to worry about the "simple things" in life. Ultimately it means that you are seeking to have the feeling of being taken care of by someone other than God. God is the provider for every human on earth. Pagan worship, that is worship of other gods, is characterized by seeking these earthly needs. Christian worship is characterized by living not only on bread, but on every word, command, and providence of God.

Chisholm's plain explanation and translation of a section that is associated with adultery has opened up, for me, an avenue by which to view my own actions and fully convince me of being an adulterer with God. A man needing to provide for his family can easily be drawn into believing that if he just does this one thing or that his family might be taken care of. Often this motivation can lead to sad and terrible decisions. The male impulse for adultery on earth may be a visually motivated endeavor, however the adulterous impulse is ultimately found in seeking provision from something other than God. The impulse and summary stated by Chisholm has opened up an area which I have not considered before. A moment like this calls me to repentance. It is good to recall that God calls to repentance, and promises resurrection.

**He will revive us after two days,
and on the third day he will raise us up
so we can live in his presence. (Hosea 6:2)**