

Hosea 4:1 ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.*

At this point the LORD takes the focus off Hosea's family and speaks directly to the people of Israel, the Northern Kingdom. He directly rebukes the people because they no longer act according to truth or with kindness, and they no longer act according to any true knowledge of God.

Deuteronomy 32:4 "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

Psalms 31:5 "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth."

Psalms 18:25 "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright...."

Proverbs 3:3 "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:"

Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

The prophet Micah was declaring the same message though worded differently.

Micah 6:2 & 8 "Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel....He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Hosea 4:2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

Hosea 4:3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

Verse 2 lists the evidence against the people regarding their lack of knowledge of God. Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and adultery characterized the culture. The NLT gives a good translation of the last part of that verse: *"There is violence everywhere, with one murder after another."*

The LORD declares that it is because of their sin that they will face judgment and the land made unproductive and desolate. Note that this judgment will come through God's manipulation of nature and the environment. For some reason the people of today seem to ridicule the thought that the Creator would actually

interfere with the forces of nature that He established to try and bring mankind to a position of repentance and humility before Him. The scripture is very clear in teaching that He will and often does do that very thing.

Again the prophet Micah mirrored the message of Hosea.

Micah 7:2 "The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net."

I could not help but be reminded of the words of Jesus describing the end times: *Matthew 24:12 "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."*

Iniquity, or sin, only abounds because of lack of knowledge and understanding or just plain rejection of the God of love and truth.

Hosea 4:4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people *are* as they that strive with the priest.

Hosea 4:5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

Again, I like the NLT translation for verse 4: *"Don't point your finger at someone else and try to pass the blame! Look, you priests, my complaint is with you!"*

The priests and prophets are identified as those most responsible for the moral condition of the people and the coming judgment upon the nation. Because they had not provided spiritual guidance in accordance with their established position before God...

Malachi 2:7 "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."

... the people had fallen deeper and deeper into sin.

Hosea 4:6 ¶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Hosea 4:7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me: *therefore* will I change their glory into shame.

Hosea 4:8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.

God clearly and explicitly holds the priests accountable for the spiritual poverty of His people. Their spiritual leaders had rejected the LORD, and the LORD is now declaring His rejection of the priests. Because they had rejected God, God was now going to reject their children. They had abused their position and become puffed up in pride in light of their authority. God is determined to punish that pride by reducing them to a position of shame.

Again, I like the NLT translation of verse 8: *“The priests get fed when the people sin and bring their sin offerings to them. So the priests are glad when the people sin!”*

I am also reminded that the priests profited from the sins of the people by accepting bribes regarding matters of judgment in direct defiance of God’s word.

2 Chronicles 19:7 “Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.”

Again the prophet Micah provides further enlightenment: *Micah 7:3 “That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward....”*

I couldn’t help but think of those in the position of “priests” today in the church, the pastors. More and more pastors in “Christian” churches are being lured by the love of money and the luxuries of the world. Fewer and fewer pastors are declaring the whole counsel of God for fear of offending someone by identifying sin. They would rather fill their churches with bodies and be able to profit from a “feel good” message rather than declare that we are sinners in need of a Savior. They justify themselves with the excuse that love and kindness are more effective in bringing people to salvation. They are only half right. People will never recognize their need for salvation unless they are made to realize that they are sinners. If only taught that God loves without being taught that God judges sin, people will suffer the judgment of hell because of “lack of knowledge.”

Hosea 4:9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.

Hosea 4:10 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.

Hosea 4:11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

Verse 9 is reiterating the truth from the verse in 2Chronicles quoted above; the LORD God is no respecter of persons. Both the people and the priests had done wickedly and both the people and the priests would suffer God’s judgment because of their sin. Many of their wicked practices were done in hopes of being blessed by their chosen false gods. God is determined to prove these gods as powerless before Him. The land would not produce food in accordance with their needs, the birth rate would greatly decrease, and they would not be allowed to profit from their adulterous practices. God is very clear in declaring that their lack will be a direct consequence of their sin. The people had become so addicted to their adulterous ways and their love of wine that it had affected their ability to reason properly.

This is always the end result of sin and addiction in one’s life. One becomes so obsessed with feeding the flesh that the ability to think and act rationally with any type of spiritual insight is completely lost. You just become a slave to your sin. Jesus declared this same truth.

John 8:34 "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."

Hosea 4:12 ¶ My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

Hosea 4:13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof *is* good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

Hosea 4:14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people *that* doth not understand shall fall.

The NLT is very clear regarding verse 12: *"They are asking a piece of wood to tell them what to do! They think a stick can tell them the future! Longing after idols has made them foolish. They have played the prostitute, serving other gods and deserting their God."*

The LORD observes that the daughters and wives in Israel were only acting in accordance with the moral example set by their fathers, so He would not punish them any differently than their fathers. All would be judged according to their foolish actions.

It is really mind-boggling to me to think that people could actually be so foolish. I think they just wanted the freedom and justification to indulge their flesh. They were obviously living only for this world with no thought of their eternal future. The same attitude prevails in our culture today and is only getting worse as time goes on. Satan has succeeded in deluding humanity into thinking that it is this life that counts and that there is nothing to fear after death.

Hosea 4:15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, *yet* let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.

Hosea 4:16 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

God now issues a warning to the people of Judah, the Southern Kingdom. He warns them not to follow in the footsteps of the Northern Kingdom. He warns them not to even visit Gilgal or Bethaven, the centers of idol worship in the Northern Kingdom. The IVP Commentary made an interesting observation on this verse: Hosea "refers to the Ephraimite city of Bethel ("house of God") as Beth Aven ("house of wickedness"), pronouncing it an illegitimate place of worship and a source of evil within Israelite society."

God also warns them not to use His name in vain as though He were being honored by their idolatrous practices.

David Guzik made an interesting observation on verse 16: "Cattle can safely feed out on the open range, because they are not easy prey for predators. But a lamb in open country has strayed from the shepherd and is vulnerable. Hosea's point is plain: if you act like a stubborn cow, don't expect to be protected like an obedient sheep."

Hosea 4:17 Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

Hosea 4:18 Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers *with* shame do love, Give ye.

Hosea 4:19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

God now basically pronounces judgment upon Israel, referenced here as Ephraim, its largest tribe. Their rulers set the example for the people, and they are possessed by their sin. They are destined to be shamed by God's judgment when they are conquered and taken captive to live in heathen lands and the worship of their false gods proven totally foolish.

I am afraid that multitudes today are placing themselves in the same boat as the people to whom Hosea prophesied. Their hearts and minds are so possessed by their sin that they refuse to listen to those who would try to share God's truth. The scary thought is that there comes a point in time when God will give them over to their sin and its judgment. Paul declared this truth in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 1:20–25 "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."