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Hosea 4

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Hosea 4.

Topics.

- There is no faithfulness or love and no knowledge of God in the land.
- The LORD contention is with the priests and prophets of Israel.
- A lack of knowledge destroys God's people.
- The more the priests and prophets increased the more they sinned.
- The priests and prophets feed on the sin of God's people.
- Like people, like priest; God will punish and repay them for their deeds.
- Israel seeks counsel from pieces of wood.
- Judah is warned not to go the way of Israel.
- Israel is like a stubborn heifer and joined to idols.

INTRODUCTION: Hosea has been called the "death-bed prophet of Israel" because he was the last to prophesy before the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria (about 722 B.C.). His ministry followed a golden age in the Northern Kingdom, with a peace and prosperity not seen since the days of Solomon. Unfortunately, this prosperity led to moral decay, and Israel forsook God to worship idols. So God instructed Hosea to marry a prostitute, whose unfaithfulness to her husband would serve as an example of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Hosea then explained God's complaint against Israel and warned of the punishment that would come unless the people returned to the LORD and remained faithful to him. The book shows the depth of God's love for his people, a love that tolerates no rivals.

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FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

HOSEA 4:1-2

There is no Faithfulness, Love or Knowledge of God in the Land.

- **Hosea 4:1-2:** Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; ²there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

The sins of Israel at this time:

- Israel has left God to cherish idols and pagan gods.
- Israel is sacrificing on the tops of mountains and under trees.
- Amongst Israel is no faithfulness toward God.
- The peoples love is fickle in affection, intentions and in loyalties.
- No-one has any knowledge of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the God of Israel.
- The people are using offensive words that blaspheme the LORD.
- There is lying, stealing, adultery and even murder in the land.

The LORD contention is with the Priests and Prophets of Israel.

- **Hosea 4:3-5:** Therefore, the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens, and even the fish of the sea are taken away. ⁴Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse, for with you is my contention, O priest. ⁵You shall stumble by day; the prophet also shall stumble with you by night; and I will destroy your mother.

The word, "therefore" refers back to the previous verses listing Israel's corruptness and gross sins in their land, because of these sins their land does not produce crops, their livestock does not produce healthy cattle and their flocks do not multiply and they lack fish and birds to eat. The LORD tells the working class or common people not to blame each other because it is the priest and the prophets He is against; the following verses clearly explain why this is.

HOSEA 4:6

A Lack of Knowledge Destroys God's People.

- **Hosea 4:6:** My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you (the priests and prophets) (v4-5) have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Notice the focus is still the priest and the prophet. God says His people are destroyed because the priests and the prophets have rejected the knowledge of God and forgotten His law and therefore caused God's people to go the wrong way (i.e. worshipping idols and pagan gods). It is a natural rule of law when religious leaders do and teach the wrong thing their followers are led astray and spiritually destroyed. This is what has happened to the entire nation of Israel, because the priests and prophets have no knowledge of God, are prideful, hypocritical and corrupt and not doing or teaching the right thing.

The priest and the prophet are held to account before God because they have been given their gifts and talents. The Priest's especially are without excuse, they have the time they are in full time ministry being looked after by the people's offerings, so they have all the time in the world to learn study and know God's word, whereas the average person does not. Nevertheless all who belong to God's Kingdom are all called to sacrifice some leisure time (i.e., TV, internet, social outings etc.,) to study what they have been taught to show themselves approved, but double responsibility is on teachers and leaders because they have the time to study and the potential to influence multitudes and lead them astray as the priests and prophets have done in the time of Hosea.

HOSEA 4:7

The more the Priests and Prophets increased the more they Sinned.

- **Hosea 4:7:** The more they (the priests and prophets) (v4-5)) increased, the more they sinned against me; I will change their glory into shame.

Notice the focus is still the priest and the prophets, the more the priests and prophets increased (presumably in power, wealth and riches) the more they sinned against the LORD and consequently the more they led the people astray. This could be likened to ministers today who twist and distort the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to appeal to their listeners to enlarge their global congregations and their power, riches and wealth.

The Priests and Prophets Feed on the Sin of God's People.

- **Hosea 4:8:** They (the priests and prophets) feed on the sin of my people; they are greedy for their iniquity.

The expression, "The priest feed of the sin of God's people," means the more the common people sin the more they will bring offerings to the Temple for atonement and forgiveness of sin. It is in this way the greater the people sin the richer the priests get. The principal is similar to some ministers today who teach the LORD will only bless those who bring their 10% tithe and their seed faith offering of \$100 etc., into the church. Obviously, the minister gets enormously rich (especially if he has a global ministry) and therefore believes what he is teaching is true, but though a few may see a blessing in their lives, multitudes that are doing the giving simply get into greater debt. Though blessing under the Old Testament covenant did rely on Israel keeping certain rules and laws of giving and tithing it is not so today.

Today we are under a New Covenant of grace and not law. Under the Old Covenant it was law for Israel to give ten-percent of their income which was always food given as sacrifices to the LORD which almost always became food for the priests and their families. Ten-percent was the only tax system the people of Israel had to pay and the priests were not to own properties, businesses or land because the LORD was their inheritance. It was a totally different system to what Christians are under today. This is because the death and resurrection of Christ utterly abolished the ceremonial and religious laws of the Old covenant and introduced a totally New Covenant of grace. The LORD'S blessings today do not rely on our material wealth or upon how much money we give to a church, but on our love and faithfulness toward Him, often blessings come to us in spite of what we do or don't do, such is the love and grace of God that comes to us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: this does not mean God will not bless those who do give if they give from a willing heart and in faith, but if they are giving because they believe by their giving God is bound not only to return their giving, but to multiply it they are truly being deceived. Added to this giving to the Lord is not bound to money it can be giving time to help others, giving labour, giving encouragement, friendliness, hospitality etc. For further information on giving, see "Tithing" (ON WEBSITE MENU).

HOSEA 4:9-11

Like People, Like Priest; God will Repay them for their Deeds.

- **Hosea 4:9-11:** And it shall be like people, like priest; I will punish them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. ¹⁰They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the whore, but not multiply, because they have forsaken the LORD to cherish ¹¹whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding.

The LORD through Hosea is saying followers become like the leaders they trust and look up to (this principal is especially true of those who in their hearts exalt their leaders) this is an extremely dangerous thing to do. The people of Israel gave their minds and trust over to their priests and leaders who instead of leading the people toward God were leading the entire nation to destruction.

NOTICE: the people are not excused or exempt for their sin or from the punishment that is coming to the priests and rulers because they were led astray by their leaders to worship idols and pagan gods. God holds everyone to account; we are all held responsible for our own actions.

This is why Phillip said:

- Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation* with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philip. 2:12-13).

And why the apostle Paul wrote:

- Now these Jews (in Berea) were *more noble* than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see if these things were so*. (Acts 17:9-13).

It is interesting to notice that Paul not only commends those who gather together in their homes to study the Scriptures and check out if their priest, paster, minister, or teacher is teaching the right thing, but actually calls them more noble than those who simply accept what they are being told without question. Sadly, in some churches should brothers and sisters of Christs gather together to question their ministers teaching rather than being commended they would be considered rebels and, in many cases, told to stop their meetings or leave the church.

HOSEA 4:12

Israel Seeks Counsel from Pieces of Wood.

- **Hosea 4:12:** My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles. For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the whore.

This verse shows the power of deception and the stupidity false belief can lead people into. The people of Israel were seeking counsel from blocks of wood. Once a person denies the existence of God and leaves the LORD'S counsel and His wisdom as revealed in the Bible, the human mind is open to almost anything, at the very extreme, worshipping and bowing down and seeking counsel from a block of wood that has been carved in the shape of some type of god or creature. Deception is powerful because the human nervous system does not have a mind of its own and therefore cannot tell if an image on the mind is real or false. The emotions and nervous system respond to the mental movies and images played out on the imagination whether they are real or false. These images are given power by belief in them, the stronger the belief the more real they seem to those who believe in them even though they are only images created by the imagination and false teaching. For a greater understanding of the mind and deception see the title:

- Demons in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

HOSEA 4:13-14

The Sins of Israel.

- **Hosea 4:13-14:** They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore, and your brides commit adultery. ¹⁴I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with prostitutes and sacrifice with cult prostitutes, and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.

These verses show how far Israel has fallen from God:

- They sacrificed on the tops of mountains and under trees that gave good shade and not in the temple of God.
- Teenage girls and even brides are committing adultery.

NOTICE: the LORD holds the men just as guilty as the women because they are having sex with prostitutes and offering sacrifices to temple cult prostitutes.

People without understanding shall come to ruin: means trouble and calamity will eventually come to those who do not have the wisdom to foresee the end result or the future ramifications of their actions or their choices that they are making in the present moment. One of the great aspects of wisdom is having the foresight to see how an action or decision made in the present moment will end when it reaches its final outcome.

HOSEA 4:15

Judah is Warned Not to Go the Way of Israel.

- **Hosea 4:15:** Though you play the whore, O Israel, let not Judah become guilty. Enter not into Gilgal, nor go up to Beth-aven, and swear not, "As the LORD lives."

Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) is warned not to offend God by going to Gilgal, or Beth-aven and say before the altars set up there, "As the LORD lives."

Gilgal: was near the northern border of Judah. It is certain that the Twelve altar-memorial stones that Joshua set up at Gilgal as a reminder to the people of Israel that God dried up the Jordan River so the people could cross on dry ground and enter the Promised land became a pagan shrine of later years against which Hosea and Amos warned the people. (Hosea 4:15) (Amos 4:4) (The story is found in Joshua chapter 4).

Beth-aven: a town on the north boundary of Benjamin, the name Bethaven is used by Hosea to reveal the fallen condition of Bethel due to the idolatry, vanity and illicit worship introduced by King Jeroboam who had set up a golden calf and established a worship center there.

Swear not, "As the LORD Lives," is a warning to Judah not to enter the land of Israel and call their gods the LORD, or they will become guilty of their sins.

HOSEA 4:16-19

Israel is like a Stubborn Heifer and Joined to Idols.

- **Hosea 4:16-19:** Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn; can the LORD now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture? ¹⁷Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone. ¹⁸When their drink is gone, they give themselves to whoring; their rulers dearly love shame. ¹⁹A wind has wrapped them in its wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

Heifer: in this context carries the idea of being stubbornly strong, powerful, determined and hard to turn from the path it is on.

Lamb: carries the idea of being humble and easy to led.

Ephraim: became such a leader in the new Northern Kingdom (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) that in addition to their more common name Israel, the kingdom also became called Ephraim. The Canaanites of Gezer lived in the midst of the ten tribes, because Israel did not drive them out of the land.

Ephraim's territory included worship centers at Bethel and Shiloh. God is basically saying is it possible for such a stubborn nation to turn from their enormously strong stubbornness toward God to become a humble people led by Him.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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