



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for 10 June 2007
Released on Wednesday, 6 June 2007**

“Hosea Preached God’s Message”

Printed Text: Hosea 4:1-4; 7:1, 2; 12:8-9

Background Scripture: Hosea 4:1-4; 7:1, 2; 12:1-9; 14:1-3; 2 Kings 15:8-10

Devotional Reading: Hosea 14

Hosea 4:1-4

1 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Is’ra-el: 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.

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

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.

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

Hosea 7:1-2

1 When I would have healed is’ra-el, then the iniquity of E’phraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Sa-ma’ri-a: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, *and* the troop of robbers spoileth without.

2 **And they consider not in their hearts *that* I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.**

Hosea 12:8-9

8 And E’phra-im said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: *in* all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that *were* sin.

9 **And I *that am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as *in* the days of the solemn feast.**

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes God gave His prophets very difficult assignments. Such was the case with Hosea, to whom God gave the command to marry an adulterous woman (Hos. 1:2). It is possible she was an adulteress before they married. It might even be that she had been involved in the sensual rituals that were part of Baal worship. It also might be the case that she became adulterous after the marriage. The text is not clear about this; so we can only speculate. We do know for certain that she left Hosea at some point in their marriage (3:1).

The first three chapters of this book give us personal information about Hosea. Beginning at chapter 4 we read his prophetic discourses, which continue until the end of the book. The unfaithfulness of Hosea's wife became an object lesson that described Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Hosea was to warn them of the punishment coming if this continued.

LESSON BACKGROUND

To put Hosea's words in context, it will be helpful to understand what the people of Israel had done to their religion. In some cases they had rejected God and their traditions outright. In other cases they had merged the religion of the one true God with a regional religion that worshiped a god named Baal (Hosea 2:8). This greatly disturbed Hosea and the other prophets.

Hosea probably began his prophetic ministry just as Amos's ministry (last week's lesson) was drawing to a close. Hosea thus prophesied between about 760 BC and the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC.

This period of time seemed like a golden age to the people living in it (compare Isaiah 2:7; 3:16). Yet Hosea saw it, as did Amos and Isaiah, as anything but a golden age. Yes, there was prosperity, but the rich took advantage of the poor. Yes, there were religious observances, but they were corrupted by paganism and sensuality.

Hosea's name means "salvation," and he certainly preached that the people were in need of that! Yet the people did not see themselves as vulnerable—"Salvation from what?" they probably asked themselves. The relatively stable reigns of Uzziah in the south and Jeroboam II in the north bred complacency.

But the prophets of God were not fooled. Just as Amos had seen the truth, so did Hosea. As a patriotic dweller of the north, he warned the people of the problem. And his warning would later prove to be valid.

In some ways Hosea is the most intriguing prophet in the Old Testament. Hosea's tumultuous family life, as noted in Hosea 1:2-11; 3:1-3, became almost a metaphor of what was happening between God and His people. God had commanded Hosea to marry a woman who would prove to be unfaithful. This was so that Hosea's family could be an example of God's willingness to love and take back His faithless people. Thus Hosea's own family became a kind of object lesson of human faithlessness and God's forgiveness.

The book of Hosea itself can be studied in three divisions. The first division, chapters 1-3, describes the personal information about Hosea and his family life.

The second division is chapters 4-13; this contains the oracles, or sermons, of Hosea. These messages are very tough condemnations of what was going on in Israel. The lesson for today is taken primarily from this section.

The final section is chapter 14. It deserves its own designation because, while it also contains sermonic material from Hosea, a bit of hope is introduced.

TODAY'S AIMS

Facts: To examine how sin took over the nation of Israel when they departed from God.

Principle: To see that God will punish His people when they forget His principles of mercy, truth, and knowledge of Him.

Application: To understand that when indulgence in sin replaces God in our lives, we will face His judgment.

God's Warning (Hosea 4:1-4)

1. What does the word "hear" mean in Hosea 4:1?

In reading the first three chapters of Hosea, you will find that he was given an assignment by God to marry an adulterous woman. This analogy was used to depict Israel's unfaithfulness to God. In Chapter 4, Hosea is addressing the children of Israel as if they are in a courtroom setting. Hosea charges them to "hear" the word of the Lord. The word "hear" in this passage not only means to listen but to listen intelligently with the implication of responding to what is being said. This opening statement (4:1) is a charge to the children of Israel to change their sinful ways and return unto God by fulfilling their part of the covenant He had established with them.

2. What was the Lord's controversy with Israel?

The Lord's controversy with Israel centered around their sinful way of living. The Lord had a case against Israel that caused Him to lay a judicial charge upon them. He was indicting them, that is, accusing them of wrongdoing in their relationship with Him. It was a courtroom scene in which those present were called upon to hear the charges that were being laid against them, and the charges were coming directly from the Lord Himself. God had a spiritual lawsuit pending against the children of Israel, and they were about to hear the specific charges.

3. What was Hosea's initial message when he addressed Israel? (4:2)

When Hosea addressed Israel, his initial message clearly expressed their sinful lifestyle which indicated they had no relationship with God. There was no truth, mercy, nor knowledge of God being shown in their way of living. To say there was no truth in the land, the Lord was speaking on Israel's faithfulness, fidelity, honesty, or reliability. The Lord also said there was no mercy in the land. We know that our God is a merciful God. He is compassionate, loving, kind, good, etc...We know Israel was called to be God's chosen people, however they conducted themselves contrary

to God as if they had no knowledge of Him. It wasn't that they didn't know God existed, but rather they were not mindful of Him and what he required of them (see Hosea 4:6a). In place of their knowledge, the people (Israel) have substituted a meaningless ritual. They acted as if there would be no consequences for their behavior. God saw them swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery, murders etc... They clearly violated most of the Ten Commandments which was an indisputable proof they (Israel) were not obeying the Lord.

4. What did Hosea say Israel's reaction would be when they heard these charges? (4:3-4)

After Hosea's initial address to Israel, he also gave a graphic portrayal of the judgment from God for Israel which would come in the form of a drought. Hosea said the land would mourn because of its dryness and inability to produce. The people, animals, and birds would waste away because of the lack of food. The fish also would perish because the drought would cause the rivers and lakes to dry up. The entire environment would be in ruins. Hosea went on to give Israel their reaction to God's judgment. In Hosea 4:4, Hosea refers to the people's resistance. They would go to any length to claim they are innocent. They would even go as far as to place the blame on others instead of taking responsibility for their own sins. It would do no good for the people to protest and claim their innocence.

5. Why could Israel not protest their innocence?

Israel could not protest their innocence because they were guilty as charged as given to them by Hosea in 4:1-2. If they knew of God being a just and truthful God, they would have known they were guilty of all that was told of them because God is not one who can lie. He is truth – and because He is the source from whence we were created, He knows what lies in the heart. God knew the hearts of the children of Israel and unless a change took place there, nothing was going to keep Him from carrying out His judgment as mentioned by Hosea. We are again reminded that what God says will be done. A claim of ignorance or innocence will not spare sinners.

God's Awareness (Hosea 7:1-2)

6. What did God discover when He wanted to restore Israel to the place of blessing they had once known? (Hosea 7:1)

Hosea wrote that although God wanted to restore Israel to a place of blessing, He could not when He discovered how much iniquity and wickedness her people were guilty of. The sinfulness of the people was so rampant, it (sin) went right to the top of government (Samaria), which was the capital city of Israel. The people practiced deceit on a regular basis. In other words, it was common practice for Israel to sin. The sin of stealing was so common that there were bands of robbers wandering around stripping people of their belongings.

7. What did God say about the wickedness Israel thought was hidden from Him? (7:2)

Our God is omnipresence, omniscience, etc...He is everywhere and knows everything. God expressed in 7:2 that He is fully aware of everything Israel has done. He is also aware of everything we do. There is no such thing as secret sin before the face of God. We can do nothing in secret nor can we hide things from God. All sin is in

plain view before the face of God. Psalm 90:8-9 says – “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.”

Israel’s wickedness was so consuming that God described the people as being totally surrounded, or engulfed, by it. We get this description from the phrase “beset them about” (Hos. 7:2). The Hebrew word that has been translated into this phrase means “to revolve, to surround, or to border.” From this we realize that God was describing constant wickedness revolving around the center of their lives to such an extent that their lives were surrounded by iniquity.

8. What factors can cause us to think we can hide our sins from God? How do you avoid this trap?

Though we intellectually know from our study of Scripture that God is everywhere and that He knows all things, we can still fool ourselves into believing that God will not care about our sin. One way we do this is simply to deny that what we have done is sin. We have ways of rationalizing sins to the point where we feel we have not sinned. We convince ourselves of this, and thereby think we’ve convinced God.

Sometimes we hide behind the feeling that we have not committed a “major” sin. As long as our sin is not as bad as someone else’s, we are OK. We can also try to hide our sins by making ourselves the victims, blaming others for “driving us to it” instead of taking responsibility for our own actions. Discussing our situation with a spiritually mature Christian can be the first step toward correction.

God’s Action (Hosea 12:8-9)

9. To what people was Israel’s lifestyle compared, and how were they deceiving themselves? (Hosea 12:8)

Israel bragged about her wealth and felt righteous about the way she gained it which was at the expense of defrauding others in sin in order to gain wealth. Because of this deception, Israel was compared to being like the Canaanites, who were known for their cheating ways. The people of Israel claimed their riches and wealth came through hard labor and with no iniquity. Apparently, the people of Israel felt that their wealth was evidence that God was blessing them. There was prosperity in Jeroboam’s reign; so they were using this as an excuse to continue their sinful business practices. They also determined that their prosperity was evidence that God was not concerned about their way of living and not giving any thought they would be held accountable to God for their actions. In their minds, they felt they were doing no wrong.

10. In what areas do you need to repent? How did you receive God’s blessings at a time you repented?

Failure to make God first in our lives and in our churches calls for repentance; anything less is idolatry. For some, buildings, budgets, and plans have become more important than making disciples and practicing spiritual disciplines.

God has been known to withdraw His blessings because of “sin in the camp” (see Joshua 7). To truly repent and thereby receive the blessings of God may mean, in severe cases, that church leaders stand before the congregation and confess that they have not led the church in maintaining the proper priorities. It may mean going

to those who are not like us in skin color or economic class and confess that we have judged them improperly (James 2:1-4). This list can be long!

11. How would God punish them? (12:9)

Due to Israel's blatant attitudes and defiant sinning, God was going to bring down punishment upon them by making them dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast. The word tabernacles refers to the tents that the Israelites lived in while in the wilderness wanderings after they had left the land of Egypt. These were temporary dwellings; however, God was now going to use them as punishment for Israel by forcing them to give up their cozy houses and live in these tents/booths permanently and it would be as the days when they had the solemn feast.

The solemn feast here probably refers to the Feast of Tabernacles. During this festival, people set up booths or tents as a reminder of wilderness wanderings (Leviticus 23:33-44). How sad: the Israelites will return to tents not as a memorial but as a punishment (The Assyrian Captivity was coming, during which Israel would no longer be allowed to stay in their land. Assyria would remove them and resettle the land with foreigners from other countries they had conquered) unless they repent and return to God.

CONCLUSION

Holy God, Sinful People

Hosea taught that evil can become pervasive. Evil affects the fabric of society. We see in Hosea God's sense of hurt, betrayal, and disappointment. God suffers when His people sin. Hosea also discovered and taught that God is both holy and merciful. God thundered against sin, but He could be warm and forgiving to the repentant sinner.

Here is where we need to remind ourselves of Hosea's marital situation. Hosea sought out his wife, bought her out of prostitution, and took her back into his household (Hosea 3). Hosea could not understand how Israel could so callously choose not to love [lie God who had loved them so much.

Combining his own personal insight and hurts with God's revelation, Hosea realized the depth of the meaning of unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness toward another human and toward God can be forgiven, but it takes sincere repentance and profound love. Hosea's love for his wife was a picture of God's love for His people.

Looking at this, we must not fail to see that Jesus did something similar for us. He paid a price to bring us back home. He did this even though we did not deserve it. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

This is why some people say that Hosea begins to put into our minds what will come into sharper focus in the New Testament: the doctrine of grace. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

PRAYER

Forgive me, O God, for breaking Your heart. That fact would be overwhelming to me if not for the message of Your grace. Even in Your anger there is love, and even in the midst of pain You can pardon. In the name of Jesus, who embodied this truth, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER: Repentance required!

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Study Isaiah 1:10-20 "Isaiah Called for True Worship."

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