

HOSEA'S MESSAGE FOR US

Understanding God's Love

THE PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS (Chapter 4)

This chapter is often called the key chapter of the Book of Hosea. The prophet's story of marital tragedy pictured the "controversy" between Israel and the Lord. But Chapter 4 tells us the nature of that controversy. What was the trouble between God's nation and Himself? "*Hear the Word of the Lord*" in Chapter 4!

Ignorance (Verses 1-10)

"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." That's what we read in verse 1. This is a serious charge, especially since God refers to Israel as *"the inhabitants of the land."* In Leviticus 18, God through Moses had warned the Israelites that if their sins amounted to the same as those of the Canaanite, the Holy Land would "*spue*" out Israel just as it had vomited out Canaan. The people apparently are in real trouble with God. What is the rest of the problem? Verse 6 says, *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."* Compare this statement with what was said in verse 1 about the knowledge of God. Lack of knowledge about the Lord and His ways was at the bottom of the people's problem.

This spiritual ignorance was producing a variety of sinful practices among the people, according to verse 1 (Read it). This ignorance-produced sin was going to bring divine judgment (described in verse 3).

People do suffer because of ignorance. Knowledge is essential to a good relationship with God. Please note that knowledge is not *enough* to produce a real walk with God, but it is *necessary* to it. Look up II Peter, Chapter 1. According to verses 1 and 5, we start with faith. We are saved by faith. But then *"the knowledge of God"* is the source of many blessings beyond salvation: grace (v. 2), peace (v. 2), all things pertaining to life and godliness (v. 3), escape from correction (v. 4 and II Peter 2:20), and continued growth (v. 5). The Book of Proverbs emphasizes the importance of knowledge and wisdom to a successful life (10:14, 24:5). Now it is the heart or the will that determines our standing before God. By our will, we trust in Christ for salvation. By our will, we decide to obey God. By our heart and our will, we determine what our life will be (See Proverbs 4:23). But we must *know* some things before we can *decide* in these matters. We must know how to be saved before we can decide to be saved! We must know what pleases God

before we can successfully please Him. We must know the truth before we can handle life correctly. Knowledge is very important!

Ignorance was destroying Israel. People didn't know much about the God of their fathers. They were ignorant in many cases of what was good and what was evil in His eyes. They were ignorant of His will for them.

Ignorance is destroying America. Americans do not know much about the God of their fathers. Bible standards are not only violated; in many cases they have been forgotten! Americans by the millions are unconverted simply because they do not know the plan of salvation. Christian doctrine is foreign to most of our country men. Fewer Americans ever read anything of value. More Americans do not know how to read effectively. Huge portions of our adult population know almost nothing about geography, literature, and history. Our ignorance is growing while we waste massive amounts of our time on meaningless entertainment. Truth is becoming rare in America. This is especially true of spiritual truth.

But look carefully at verse 6 of Hosea 4. *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee . . ."* Did you see that? The ignorance of the people was not caused by knowledge never reaching them; it resulted from the *rejection* of knowledge! Because they did not *like* what they knew, they *rejected* it, and in time this knowledge was *forgotten*.

Look at the progression of ignorance:

1. *"Thy people are as they that strive with the priest"* (v. 4). People start arguing with those who teach the truth. They don't like the old-time doctrines and standards.
2. *"They set their heart on their iniquity"* (v. 8). People begin to enjoy violating God's laws and principles.
3. *"They have left off to take heed to the Lord"* (v. 10). They finally put God's Word out of their thinking.
4. These knowledge-rejecters of course will not teach the knowledge they had to coming generations. Both the willingly ignorant and the untaught ignorant will suffer the consequences:

"Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night . . ." (v. 5)

"Like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways . . ." (v. 9)

In our country, this progression has taken place. Rejecters of America's foundational principles of life, politics, and economy assumed the teaching leadership in many of our educational and religious institutions around the turn of the century. These men opposed the Bible-based theology and philosophy of their fathers. Their influence on our thinking has drenched our country in ignorance of the truths our forefathers knew. We are engaged in a grand struggle to restore the old knowledge before the consequences of our ignorance destroy us.

On a personal level, each one of us should examine carefully his own ignorance. Some of our ignorance of truth is our own fault! You have a Bible. Why don't you read it? You hear sermons. Why don't you heed them? We have time to read and study. Why do we waste so much of it on senseless things? Some of our ignorance comes from the rejection of knowledge. We know but we no longer live as people who know. We don't follow the truths we have learned. Let's repent of the things that have contributed to our ignorance. Let's live in the knowledge of God!

Adultery (verses 11-19)

You will remember that the problem in Hosea's marriage was adultery. His wife was regularly unfaithful to him. Her adultery pictured the adultery of Israel. Israelites were guilty of physical adultery, as we can see in verses 2, 10, and 14, but the real problem (on top of ignorance) was *spiritual adultery*. They were unfaithful to God. In verse 12, God says that "*the spirit of whoredoms*" caused them to go "*a whoring from under their God.*" Verse 13 says that their spiritual adultery took the form of idolatry—worshiping other gods. The Lord was Israel's husband (Remember Chapter 2). To worship other gods was to commit adultery against Him. Because of this sin, the children of the idolaters would commit physical adultery, but God would to punish them. In verse 14, He says that spiritual adultery is just as bad to Him as physical adultery seems to Israel's parents. Verses 15 through 19 warn Judah (the southern kingdom) against being influenced by Israel (the northern kingdom also called "Ephraim") to commit spiritual adultery, too. Stay away from Israel, God tells them Adultery is a contagious disease.

The New Testament also speaks of a spiritual adultery. Christians are espoused to Christ and should be faithful to Him (II Corinthians 11:2 and Ephesians 5:25-27). I John 2 teaches us to love God and not to love "*the world*" (Note v. 15). James 4 calls believers who befriend "*the world*" a bunch of "*adulterers and adulteresses!*" It says that God's Spirit within us is jealous when we seem attracted to "*the world*" (vs. 4 and 5). To love the world is to commit spiritual adultery against God.

You can't worship God and Baal. You can't serve two masters. You can't be true to Christ and conform to the ways of the world. To court the favor of this wicked world at the expense of your Christian principles is to commit adultery against Christ. To turn from full dedication to the Lord and His Cause and to give yourself to the goals and values of sinful society is to be guilty of spiritual adultery.

Adultery and ignorance were the people's problems. They rejected the Lord's truth and gravitated toward the devil's lie. It happens today, too. Is it happening to you?

Weekly Verse to Memorize:

"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." (Hosea 4:1)