

Minor Prophets Summer 2025 - Lesson 3

Indictment of Israel's People and Priests - Hosea 4:1-6:3

Theme Verse: "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him" Hosea 6:2 (ESV).

The Lord's Controversy

Chapter 4 begins with the Lord's controversy with the inhabitants of the land. God lists three complaints:

- No faithfulness - This word can also be translated as "truth." The Lord God is true or faithful. The Lord puts truth or faithfulness into our hearts.
- No steadfast love (or mercy) - This is the kind of love God has for His people. The Lord shows steadfast love or mercy to them, and they in turn show it to one another. In Israel, there is no mercy.
- No knowledge of God - To know God is to know that we are in a loving relationship with Him and receive every good thing from Him.

The three complaints are a summary of the Ten Commandments, which Jesus Himself summarized as loving God and our neighbor. Hosea continues by listing five words, which summarize the second table of the Law: swearing, lying, murder, stealing and committing adultery.

1. Read **Hosea 4:1-1**. How does the absence of faithfulness, mercy, and knowledge lead to the complete disregard of the Ten Commandments?
2. This is both a result of sin and a punishment for sin as the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish are taken away. Sin takes away man's dominion over the earth.

Complaint against the Priests

Although the people are guilty for their own sins, the Lord holds His priests accountable for their failure to perform their duty. In Hosea 4:4, the Lord indicates that it is not so much that the people refuse to hear and obey the priests as it is that the priests are not doing their duty. Hosea 4:6 notes that God's people are destroyed for a "lack of knowledge." Luther writes, "The priesthood of God is where there is true knowledge of God. There we have a warning about both the present and the future punishment" (AE 18:21).

3. Why is it important for pastors to preach the true knowledge of the Lord, even when the message is not popular, whether in the world or in the Church? How is the same true for all believers?

4. Read **Hosea 4:12-13**. The Lord calls people's worship of created things, such as wood and stone, playing the whore (re: Hosea 1:2). While a walking stick or an idol made of wood or stone may seem silly to us, a god is anything in which a person puts his or her trust. What sorts of gods do we have that are just as powerless as a walking stick?

A New Cult

Hosea 5 begins a new oracle/message against Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom).

5. Read **Hosea 5:1-2**. In Israel, the priests teach falsely and the political rulers pass laws that encourage immorality. Both the priests and the kings bear a greater responsibility than the people. Yet the people are punished for their sin. No one will escape judgment. How does this show that sin multiplies sin and that we are all slaves to sin?
6. Read **Hosea 5:10-12**. In comparison to Israel, Judah looks good from the outside, but they are rotten on the inside and will receive God's wrath as well. How can secret, hidden sin be just as destructive as obvious, outward sin?

God's Word for Today

Sin and judgment is a dominant theme in this section of Hosea. The people lost the knowledge of God and broke the Ten Commandments. Nevertheless, after proclaiming the Law, the Lord woos His people back with the Gospel.

7. Read **Hose 6:1-3**. Verse 2 is a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection. How and why was Jesus torn and stuck down (Hosea 6:1)?

In Closing

- Pray for all pastors and teachers to remain faithful to God's Word and to preach and teach it boldly.
- Read Hosea 6:4-7 for next Sunday with Pastor Mike Kasting.

Prayer: O God, creator of heaven and earth, grant that as the crucified body of Your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with Him the coming of the third day, and rise with Him to newness of life, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, on God, now and forever. Amen.

This study is based on:

"God's Word for Today: Hosea, Joel, and Amos - Faithfulness amidst Unfaithfulness."