

Please have your Bibles opened up at Hosea chapter 4.

If you're someone who likes taking notes, there's an outline in the bulletin to follow.

First - let me ask God for his help and guidance in understanding His Holy Word.
Let's pray...

Recap

Before we look at today's Bible passage, let's do a quick recap on the Book of Hosea first...

In chapter 1 - God told the prophet Hosea to go and marry Gomer, who will be an unfaithful wife to him

[Powerpoint 1-Marriage]

The reason for that was so that - Hosea's marriage to Gomer would be a picture of God's marriage to Israel

Hosea like God is a loving faithful husband

The nation of Israel and the individuals of Israel is an adulterous, idolatrous, unfaithful wife, chasing after other Gods - just like Gomer is an unfaithful wife chasing after other men!

[Powerpoint 2-Punishment for Unfaithfulness]

Then in chapter 2 - as the people of Israel looked at Hosea's marriage to Gomer, then would get a sense of their unfaithfulness to God - and that unfaithfulness to God is sin - and God warns them about this unfaithfulness.

The reason God gives these warnings is because punishment follows if this unfaithfulness doesn't stop!

The idea of the punishment is not so much as a payback for unfaithfulness - but to win the unfaithful one back!

'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off then now'
(Hosea 2:7)

[Powerpoint 3-Reconciliation]

Then last week - in chapter 3 - we saw that God told Hosea to take back Gomer and be reconciled to her, even though she had been unfaithful

In the same way God would reconcile His people back to Himself. This would be done through a Promised Messiah - a Saviour - a Son of David - namely Jesus - the King of Heaven and Earth. And Jesus - through His death on a cross - would pay the penalty for sin - and bring peace between God and humankind.

So chapter 1-3 are like a helicopter view of the book

Intro

Now here in chapter 4 - our OT reading this morning - even though God has forgiven Israel of their sin and rebellion - there are consequences for their sin and rebellion

So chapter 4 begins an assessment of Israel and its society

Let's see what the society and people of Israel were like

It's almost like Israel is standing in court accused of certain offences

And the charges are read out to her

And as we hear the charges - we will see how the people of Israel and their society - is not much different to today...

The Charges (Hosea 4:1-2)

Let's see the charges then.

[Powerpoint 4-The Charges]

V1-The charge is that there are 3 things missing in the nation: there is no faithfulness - no love - and no acknowledgement of God

We've already seen in the book of Hosea so far

The people haven't been faithful to God - in fact they've been worshipping false gods

The people haven't loved God - you can't love God - by continually being unfaithful and rebelling against Him. And in turn they haven't loved one another

And in fact the people are not even acknowledging the one True God!

Then V2- continues the list of charges against Israel - there's cursing, lying, murder, stealing, adultery, breaking of bonds (which means there's no boundaries or rules - anything goes) - and bloodshed follows bloodshed

It's a sorry picture of society isn't it?

A society with no boundaries or rules - and no acknowledgment of God and His rules.

(pause)

How does that compare to our society today?

We had healthy discussion in our growth groups this week

As to whether we were hopeful or discouraged by the society and the world we live in today.

The general consensus was that - a lot of people live without hope - and with plenty of fear - and the feeling was that in general - God and His rule over everything - and God's rules for living - are pretty much being ignored!

For those who don't acknowledge God - there are philosophies like:

"Follow your own way"

"Whatever floats your boat is great - just go for it"

"If it makes you happy - then do it"

(pause)

For those who do have some knowledge of God and acknowledgement of His rules

There are philosophies like:

"God wants us to be happy" - Really? No - God wants us to be obedient and faithful - then that might lead to happiness - it might also lead to suffering - because following God - costs us something - that's what Jesus taught

Are there's a philosophy like:

"God will understand if I do ..." - Really? Will God really understand?

(pause)

Verses 1 and 2 should remind us of the 10 commandments

God's rules for living a life that pleases Him!

But it's fair to say that many of the generation coming through now - don't know or care or acknowledge the 10 commandments.

40 years ago - these 10 commandments were taught in the home and reinforced at school.

But now that's mostly not the case!

This term at Jaffa - we're teaching the 10 commandments - and that's why we're doing it - so young people know God's rules and have a knowledge of God - and acknowledge His rules for living

Never has Scripture in schools been as important as this generation!

So I'm unashamedly pleading with you - this morning - to pray and pray - for more Scripture teachers and to prayerfully consider whether God is calling YOU to teach Scripture in our local schools. If God is calling you - please talk to me after the service - and we'll organize training and accreditation!

(pause)

The Consequences (Hosea 4:3, 19)

Like any sin we commit, even though we repent, say sorry to God and are forgiven

There are consequences for sin

And there are consequences for the Israelites not following God's rules...

[Powerpoint 5-Consequences]

See v3 - We have a picture of the land - going to rack and ruin

The land dries up, the land is grief stricken - animals, birds and fish all dying

It's the same today - by not following God's rules, and not following God's command to take care of the world and the animals - creation is all messed up.

Brought about by two things

Greed and wastefulness

We take everything out of the earth without a thought for the next generation

We over-mine our land - we over-farm our pastures

We over fish our seas

We have people killing animals for trophies

We have so much wastage

We are a disposable society - we don't repair things anymore - we replace them!

(pause)

The ultimate consequence for the Israelites is in verse 19

A whirlwind will sweep them away

Finally all their corrupt worship and sacrifices to false and fake gods will be their undoing

This actually happened to Israel, the Northern Kingdom, about 20 years after the time of Hosea, when the army of the Assyrians, took the 10 northern tribes off into exile!

The Israelites were warned in Deuteronomy 28 - that they would be blessed for obedience to God and they would be cursed (not blessed) for their disobedience against God!

As a nation, we need to be warned and aware of this

We will be blessed for obeying God and not blessed for disobeying God!

(pause)

The Causes (Hosea 4:4-14)

So we've seen the charges and the consequences -

What about the cause of all this?

The causes of all of this - they are in verses 4 to 14:

[Powerpoint6-Causes]

The 1st cause is the religious leaders, God's appointed priests - they are supposed to be guiding the people in the way of God

But see verse 6

The reason the people are destroyed is because of the lack of knowledge of God - because the priests - God says - have rejected the knowledge of God and ignored the law of God

And verse 7 - the more priests there are - the more sin there is against God

The priests have fallen into the mistake of pleasing the people and not pleasing God

And now it's not clear who the priests are and who the people are in verse 9

Who's following who?

It's the tail wagging the dog?

It's the blind leading the blind - and leading the people over the cliff!

But God is not putting all the blame on the priests - the people are just as much at fault - in verse 9

The people should know better - they've experienced God's faithfulness before, they do know what's right and wrong - they've just gone along with the priests corrupt teaching and worshipping - as much as the priests have gone a long with the people's corrupt worshipping

Is this the same today?

Well it can be - if the leaders of a nation - have no knowledge of God and no acknowledgment of God - and continue to make decisions on behalf of the people - that are contrary to God's word - and the people just go along with it - and don't stand up for God's Word and God's rules

And let's be honest - it's not easy to stand up!

Ask Margaret Court how easy it is - after standing up against SSM this week?

The same thing happened when people stood up against the so called Safe School's programme in NSW - but praise God - the NSW government scrapped it

The same happened earlier this year when people stood up for Scripture in our schools - there were wild accusations that SRE teachers were brainwashing the children and teaching secret codes

Let's also be honest the churches haven't always got it right either -

For example - protecting children - The Presbyterian church and other churches now have stricter child protection training and background checking of teachers and leaders - so that children are properly protected

But if our society continues to blatantly disregard God's rules and continues to not acknowledge God in our society - we will end up like the Northern Kingdom of Israel in Hosea's time

(pause)

The 2nd cause for Israel's problems in Hosea's time is prostitution

It's there in verses 10 to 14

This is both literal prostitution where people slept with temple prostitutes to supposedly gain favours from the false and fake gods like Baal. They thought this prostitution would lead to more crops, more food, more children and more blessings

Then there was spiritual prostitution. This can be defined as the unworthy or corrupt use of worship for personal gain. So the people worshipped false gods to hopefully get things - rather than trusting and worshipping the one true God - they betrayed the one true God!

We might say that doesn't apply to us today?

But perhaps we need to pause and think for a minute.

Can't we water down our worship to gain more for ourselves?

Can we water down our faithfulness to God to please ourselves?

For examples - do we put our personal pleasure and entertainment before worshipping God - and justify it by saying God will understand? Will he? Did he understand the Israelites?

Can I use my title "Reverend" to open a few doors and win a few favours? Is that what God would expect from me as a minister?

Can we water down the Gospel in our churches to attract more people - teaching a gospel that says - if you give the church more money - God will bless you with a better job, better house and car!

All of that stuff is spiritual prostitution - selling ourselves to the highest bidder instead of relying totally on God for everything and obeying His Word.

The Challenges (vv15-18)

The Southern Kingdom of Israel, Judah, is given some advice in verse 15 to 18 - to basically not to be like the Northern Kingdom

Don't fall into the same trap!

[Powerpoint 7a-Challenge 1]

And that same warning applies to us - today -

Don't fall into sin and rebellion and unfaithfulness like the Northern Kingdom of Israel did!

- a. Take heed of the lesson - that they had to learn the hard way

[Powerpoint 7b-Challenge 2]

- b. Return to the missing ingredients of verse 1 - faithfulness to God, love of God and others - and the acknowledgement of God. Reading and studying the Bible and spending time with God are vital for us to return to these missing ingredients in our lives -

Hebrews 11:6 says this about the missing ingredient of faithfulness to God:

⁶ ...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Mark 12:30-31 says this about the missing ingredient of love:

³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ ...and... 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

And 2 Timothy 3:15-17 says this about the missing ingredient of knowledge of God and acknowledgement of Him:

...from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

These 3 core ingredients in our lives bring us closer to God and lead us to: obeying God, pleasing God, loving God, loving others and they save us for a life with God forever!

[Powerpoint 7c-Challenge 3

- c. Which leads us to our need for someone who can help us as we try to meet this challenge and reestablish these 3 core ingredients in our lives. And we get a hint of who this help is - in verse 16 of Hosea chapter 4 where it says: [The Israelites are stubborn, like a stubborn heifer. How then can the LORD pasture them like lambs in a meadow?](#) You see the Lord is like a Shepherd - who just wants to pasture and shepherd us, His lambs, in a meadow. But like Israel we can be stubborn Heifers (Jerry's story). God wants us to be little "lambies" that follow Him and totally rely on Him - that He can nurture. He doesn't want us to be stubborn heifers doing our own thing!

[Powerpoint 7c-Challenge 4

- d. The final challenge is to heed the advice of the Apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus - in our NT reading from Acts 20:28 - [28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.](#) So for the leaders of our church (local and statewide) we need to keep watch over ourselves and the flock God has given us - by embracing these challenges - and note Paul says it's the Holy Spirit that has

made them leaders, so it's the Holy Spirit - that will help them and guide them. All of us, who believe in Jesus, have that Holy Spirit living inside us.

So the question is -

Are we following God's Holy Spirit as He leads us and teaches us and guides us and helps us with these challenges - or are we following our own inclinations - or following the temptations and trappings of our society - leading us in the wrong direction.

Who are we following?

(pause)

Let's pray...