

The Case Against Israel

Hosea 4

As we move into chapters 4-10, we will see the real life of Hosea and his marriage to Gomer fade away as the emphasis shifts to Israel's unfaithfulness. Just as Gomer left Hosea to be with another man, Israel left God to worship pagan gods. Now we will hear God's case against Israel and His judgment of them.

Read Hosea 4:1-3.

You can almost picture God stepping into a courtroom and reading the charges against the nation of Israel.

1. What was the main charge God brought against them? (v. 1)

2. **THINK:** What do you think happens first in this progression: no truth, no mercy, or no knowledge of God, and why?

3. What does Proverbs 9:10 have to say on this matter?

What is truth? This has become an increasingly difficult question to answer for some. Today, most people operate under the understanding that each of us has our own truth, and one person's truth isn't necessarily the same as another's.

Truth – certainty, assured; firmness, faithfulness, reliability

4. **THINK:** If truth is certain, then what is the problem with the premise that each of us can have our own truth?

5. Read the following verses and record what the Bible has to say about truth.

Truth and God

Deuteronomy 32:4 _____

Isaiah 65:16 _____

Titus 1:2 _____

The importance of truth

Psalm 43:3 _____

Psalm 91:4 _____

John 8:32 _____

1 Peter 1:22 _____

Truth and the Bible

Psalm 119:160 _____

Truth and Jesus

John 1:14 _____

John 14:6 _____

Truth and the Holy Spirit

John 16:13 _____

1 John 5:6 _____

Believers and truth

Proverbs 12:17 _____

Ephesians 4:25 _____

1 John 3:18 _____

Truth and Satan

John 8:44 _____

6. **THINK:** Summarize what it meant when God charged Israel with having no truth.

God chose the nation of Israel to be the nation from which the Messiah would come. This incredible privilege made them special and came with specific responsibilities. Responsibilities that they were well aware of.

7. Read the following verses and record their responsibilities to God.

Exodus 19:6 _____

Joshua 22:5 _____

Jeremiah 13:11c _____

8. When the other nations looked at Israel, they were supposed to see a picture of who God is and how He relates to individuals. How is God described in Exodus 34:6?

Yet, when God looked at the nation of Israel, He saw that there was no mercy.

Mercy – kindness (especially as extended to the lowly, needy, and miserable)

9. What did God observe instead? (Hosea 4:2)

“There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.” This was the root of the problem – no knowledge of God.

10. According to Jesus, what are the two most important commandments? (Mark 12:30-31)

11. **THINK:** Why do you think love for God is necessary when it comes to loving or showing mercy to others?

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

- 1 John 4:7-8

12. What is eternal life? (John 17:3)

13. According to Acts 17:26-28, what is God's desire for each of us?

14. Read the following verses and record how we can know God.

Joshua 1:8 _____

Colossians 4:2 _____

Proverbs 2:1-6 _____

15. Hosea points out the danger of lacking knowledge of God. What are some of the benefits that come from the knowledge of God? (Colossians 1:9-12)

16. How does God want to use our knowledge of Him?

2 Corinthians 2:14 _____

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 _____

17. Consider what you have learned about the importance of **you** knowing God. What will you do, starting today, to know Him better?

Most of us know about God, but that is quite different from knowing God.

- Billy Graham

18. What would be Israel's punishment for their actions? (Hosea 4:3)

19. To whom did the land belong? (Lev. 25:23) And what did God promise to do if they defiled it? (Lev. 18:24-25)

Read Hosea 4:4-14.

One could say that the problem of idolatry had even spread to the priesthood, but a closer look at history reveals that the problem may have started there.

20. Read 2 Chronicles 11:13-15. Summarize what happened with the Levites (the tribe from which the priests came) in Israel after the Kingdom of Israel split in two (Israel to the north and Judah to the south), and how Jeroboam fixed the issue.

Idolatry was present from the top down; false prophets, corrupt priests, and unrestrained people had left Israel blind, stumbling around day and night. The more they increased, the more they sinned. Proud of it, they set their hearts on iniquity, meaning they willfully directed their hearts to desire it.

21. **THINK:** How is our nation a lot like the nation of Israel in Hosea's day?

As a faithful and good husband, God had sent Elijah, Elisha, and Amos to call Israel to turn from their idols and serve the true God, but they refused. Now it was time for judgment. God would "destroy their mother" (the nation of Israel).

22. Read Hosea 4:6, 10e, 12d. What specific reasons does God cite for the nation's demise?

The Lord wasn't looking to punish the women for prostituting themselves in pagan worship; they were no worse than the men who were taking up with them. Israel's ruin came because they failed to understand God. They rejected the knowledge of Him, forgot about Him, and stopped obeying Him.

23. How can we, as believers, do these very same things today? (Be specific)

Our dedication (in study and obedience) to the Word of God is critical. It is the substance of our personal walk with God and our witness and testimony of Him to the world. Israel fell deeper and deeper into sin because of their lack of knowledge and compromising leadership. Likewise, our society suffers when the body of Christ does the same. If God's own children won't heed His Word, why would the world around us?

24. What is God's expectation for us as believers today? (Act 1:8, 1 Peter 2:9)

Read Hosea 4:15-19.

At this point, the Lord turns to the gallery (metaphorically) to summarize His charges against Israel and to speak to the onlookers from Judah—Israel's relatives to the south.

25. What four instructions were given to the people who lived in the southern kingdom of Judah? (v. 15)

Offend – be or become guilty, trespass

Gilgal – the first campsite of the Israelites as they waited to cross the Jordan River and take the Promised Land; the place where Saul, the first king of Israel, was made king, but now had become a place of illicit sacrifice

Beth Aven – a place of idol worship in Israel

26. God hoped to keep the people of Judah from following in Israel's footsteps. Why do you think He instructed them to stay away from Gilgal and Beth Aven?

27. Read 1 Corinthians 15:33 and record how this relates to us today.

28. Can you recall a time in your life when you were influenced negatively because of the places you went and the people you associated with? If so, summarize what led you to that place and how you can avoid making those same mistakes in the future.

29. In verse 16, God refers to Israel as a stubborn calf (cow), but now they will forage like a lamb in open country. Record some of the differences in how and where a cow grazes with how and where a lamb typically grazes. (Try reading this verse in other versions.)

The people of Israel had mistaken themselves for people who did not need God's guidance or protection; they felt comfortable being left on their own. But now they would be left as lambs far from the protection and help of their Shepherd.

Ephraim – the largest of the northern tribes of Israel, thus the name Ephraim is sometimes used in reference to Israel

30. Ephraim (Israel) had been led astray by the spirit of harlotry, and they had joined themselves to idols. What was the consequence of that choice? (v. 17)

31. Read 2 Kings 17:5-18 and summarize what Israel did and what happened as a result of God leaving them alone to face the consequences of their actions.

We can so easily be carried away. For Israel, their drink of choice was rebellion. They dabbled in it until it opened its mouth and swallowed them whole. You cannot play with sin. Soon it will wrap you up in its wings and carry you off, away from God.

32. Identify the areas in your life where you are dabbling in things you should not—those places in your life where you make excuses and justify what you are doing. Now consider where they could lead. Be honest with yourself. Then, as an act of destroying these areas of potential idolatry, write a prayer of confession below. Turn from your idols AND serve the true God.

A Closer Look at the Consequences of Sin

Hosea 4

In our study of Hosea, we learn about the consequences of Israel's sins against God. And while God is always long-suffering, there were consequences to their sins.

33. Skim through the first four chapters of Hosea and list the sins recorded in these verses.

34. Now skim through and list the consequences of their sins.

35. Finally, skim through and list God's grace displayed in these verses.

God's holiness is such that He cannot tolerate evil. The prophet, Habakkuk, said, "You (God) are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness." – Habakkuk 1:13a, b

Sin separates us from God, "*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.*" - Isaiah 59:2
Consequences are necessary to draw us **to** God or to draw us back to God.

36. Read the following verses, and record the penalties of sin for those who choose not to believe.

Romans 6:23a

Romans 1:18-32

Ephesians 4:17-19

While the wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23b goes on to say that, “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!”

37. What is the promise of Romans 10:9?

Praise God that when we believe in Him, we are no longer under the penalty of death. However, we will still stumble and fall from time to time, and there can be consequences. Therefore, we must take our sin seriously.

There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor any health in my bones because of my sin.

- Psalm 38:3

38. What do the following verses teach you about the consequences of sin?

Galatians 6:7-8

Hebrews 4:13

39. Can you think of a time when you experienced a direct consequence of a sinful action? What did you learn from it?

My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.

- Proverbs 3:11-12

40. What should our response be when we undergo God’s discipline?

Ephesians 4:20-24

1 John 1:9

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

- Hebrews 12:11