

# The Indictment of Israel

*Hosea 4:1-6*

Pastor Michael Lynn / West Hampden Baptist Church

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Introduction: Have you ever been called to serve on jury duty? If so, you have seen first-hand the inside of a courtroom. If you have not, then I'm sure you have seen a court room scene on a T.V. program. As we come to Hosea 4, we have the Lord taking His own people, Israel, to court. He has a "*controversy*" with His people. The word used here refers to a legal case, suggesting a dispute or lawsuit. The charge against Israel is their illegal conduct as well as their breaking of His covenant law. We have noted previously that Hosea's home-life served as an "active sermon" of God's dealings with His people Israel. Last week we examined chapter 3 to find the humanly "impossible" command (Hosea to reclaim his wife Gomer from the slave market), & the improbable compassion (of Hosea for Gomer). Gomer's unfaithfulness & adultery illustrated the spiritual adultery of Israel against her God. In chapter 4 God indicts His people & then pronounces judgment upon them. This morning we will consider the indictment of the nation's condition & then the indications of the nation's collapse. As we do so, I think we will see the unfortunate parallel in our American society today.

## I. The indictment of the nation's condition (:1-5)

### A. The "controversy" of Israel's condition (:1) [There are 3 particular charges.]

1. "*No truth*" >
  - a. The word refers to reliability, faithfulness, fidelity, or truthfulness.
  - b. "God's point is that His people were not dependably faithful to obey Him & conduct themselves according to His covenant marriage with them. The nation was not a 'true' wife, in the sense that a good friend is a 'true' friend" (Rude).
2. "*No mercy*" (Hebrew word "*hesed*") >
  - a. The word combines the ideas of love & loyalty; devotion.
  - b. The word has been described as "affectionate covenant loyalty."
3. "*Nor knowledge of God in the land*" >
  - a. The word suggests that which is experience oriented rather than mentally oriented, to know through personal encounter more than to know intellectually" (Rude). See Genesis 4:1.
  - b. This suggests a personal relationship with the Lord, more than an intellectual acknowledgment of the Lord. See Hosea 6:6 & compare John 17:3 with James 2:19.

### B. The characteristics of Israel's condition (:2) [There is breaking of 5 of the Ten Commandments.]

1. "*Swearing*" > Third commandment, "*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain*" (Exodus 20:7).
2. "*Lying*" > Ninth commandment, "*Thou shalt not bear false witness*" (20:16).
3. "*Killing*" > Sixth commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill*" ("do no murder") (20:13).
4. "*Stealing*" > Eighth commandment, "*Thou shalt not steal*" (20:15).
5. "*Committing adultery*" > Seventh commandment, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (20:14).

### C. The consequences from Israel's condition (:3-5)

1. There will judgment upon the land, the animals, & the people ("*mother*" is the nation).
2. There is the principle of "sowing & reaping" – Galatians 6:7-8.

Summary: "As goes spiritual leadership, so goes the church; as goes the church, so goes morality; & as goes morality, so goes the nation. God's people are both salt & light in society (M. 5:13-16); when they are corrupt, society becomes corrupt" (Wiersbe).

## II. The **indications** of the nation's **collapse** (4:6; 8:12; & 13:6)

### A. The Word of God was **neglected** by Israel (4:6).

1. The **lacking** of "*knowledge*" >
  - a. A personal lack of knowledge. [see Deut. 6:4-6]
  - b. A parental lack of knowledge (not passed on to the children). [see Deut. 6:7-9]
2. The **forgetting** of God's law >
  - a. Forgetting their place of responsibility ("*priest*" – cf. Ex. 19:5-6).
  - b. Forgetting their place of authority (cf. Isa. 43:10-11).

### B. The Word of God was **rejected** by Israel (8:12).

1. The **revelation** of God's law to Israel >
  - a. The basis of God's love – Deuteronomy 7:6-8.
  - b. The benefit from God's law – Deuteronomy 6:24.  
Summary: He who created man knows what is best for man.
2. The **rejection** of God's law by Israel >
  - a. They closed their ears to the message of God's prophets (cf. Amos 2:12).
  - b. They closed their hearts to the message from God (cf. Isa. 5:20-21, a perversion of moral distinctions).

Illustration: Video lesson for Kindergarten students promoted by Maine Dept. of Education.

### C. The God of the Word was **rejected** by Israel (13:6).

1. Israel "enjoyed" material **prosperity** > "*they were filled*"
  - a. There was satisfaction with material comforts.
  - b. There was substitution for spiritual considerations.
2. Israel exhibited spiritual **pride** > "*their heart was exalted*"
  - a. There was self-sufficiency.
  - b. There was self-worship.

Summary: "...*Therefore have they forgotten Me.*" "Forgetting involves a conscious & willful decision to refuse to acknowledge or think about something. It equates with rejection" (RSB).

**Conclusion:** Note the 3 stages in Israel's downfall, leading to spiritual adultery & apostasy. First the people of Israel neglected the Word of God; then they rejected the Word of God; & finally they rejected the God of the Word. Do you see any parallel to America today? After the indictment of Israel by God He then pronounces His judgement. But even in judgment God's love is revealed. His desire is to bring the people of Israel back to Himself. Nearly 250 years before Hosea's time, God promised revival to His people in II Chronicles 7:14, "*If My people, which are called by My name...*" Israel failed to experience lasting revival. But Hosea will prophesy the ultimate restoration of Israel in chapter 14, which we will consider tonight. The opposite of God's indictment in 4:1 will come to pass: truth, mercy, & knowledge of God will be found in the people of Israel.

But what about the Church today, particularly us as individuals? Are you demonstrating truthfulness (faithfulness), mercy (covenant loyalty), & a sincere, personal knowledge of God? Do you have a personal relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ His Son? "There is something about knowing God experientially that produces behavior that is pleasing to Him. To know God is to fear God. To fear God is to love God. To love God is to keep His commandments" (RSB). Is your knowledge of God reflected in your behavior? Are you desirous to please the Lord in all that you say & do?