

The Minor Prophets - Part 5 (Hosea)

6-13-18

1. The guilt of the Northern Kingdom is the main theme of this opening indictment. The people and their leaders (prophets, rulers, and esp. priests) were the objects of God's displeasure.
2. Hosea begins this portion (Chapter 4) with a charge against the nation for breach of covenant.
3. The basis for this judgment was the covenant God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai. (Exodus 19:8)
4. However, that promise was soon broken. Just as Gomer didn't take her marriage vows seriously but went to live with another man, so Israel broke her promises to God and turned to pagan idols.
5. There was no faithfulness (truth) in the land, no loyal love to the Lord.
6. There was no mercy in the land, no love for one's neighbor, no compassion for the poor and needy. People were falsehearted toward God and hardhearted toward one another.
7. The basic sin was ignorance; there was "no knowledge of God in the land." This means much more than knowledge about God; it refers to a personal knowledge of God. (Hosea 4:6)
8. In verses 4-14 we see God's indictment against the priests.
9. When Jeroboam I set up his own religious system in Israel, many of the true priests fled to Judah; therefore, the king ordained priests of his own choosing. (2 Chronicles 11:13-15)
10. Of course, these unqualified priests knew neither the Lord nor His law.
11. They were primarily interested in having an easy job that would provide them with food, clothing, and pleasure, especially opportunities to be with the shrine prostitutes.
12. Basically Hosea said; "Don't blame the people for what's happening, because they're only following your bad example!"
13. Next Hosea turns to the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah who were carefully watching events in Israel. Hosea's warning is clear: don't meddle in the affairs of Israel because their doom is sure! (Hosea 4:15-19)
14. The people of Judah were supposed to worship in Jerusalem and not go to the idols in the northern kingdom of Israel at Gilgal and Bethel. (Hosea calls Bethel "Bethaven," which means "house of evil or deceit." Bethel means "house of God.")
15. Israel was like a stubborn heifer, not a submissive lamb; and God's whirlwind of judgment would sweep the kingdom away.
16. Israel and Judah were weak, sick nations. Instead of turning to the Lord for healing, both of them turned to the king of Assyria for help. (Hosea 5:13)
17. They needed prayer and repentance, but instead, they trusted politics and useless treaties. All the Lord could do was withdraw and wait for them to seek His face in truth and humility.

18. When you read chapter 6 you get the impression that the nation is sincere - repenting and seeking the Lord, but when you read what God says, you get another picture. (Hosea 6:1-3 and 7:10, 13,16)
19. To begin with, their concern was for healing and not for cleansing. They saw their nation in difficulty and wanted God to "make things right," but they did not come with broken hearts and a surrendered will.
20. They wanted happiness, not holiness, a change of circumstances, but not a change in character. They shed tears of remorse over their suffering - but not tears of repentance over their sin.
21. The people saw forgiveness and restoration as a "mechanical" thing that was guaranteed and not as a relational matter that involved getting right with God.
22. The Christian life is a relationship with God, and the relationship is not based on mechanical cut-and-dried formulas.
23. Read Hosea 8.
24. How could Gomer ever question her husband's love? Did he not demonstrate it by seeking her out, pleading with her to come home, and paying the price to set her free?
25. How could Israel ever question God's love and refuse to respond to it? After all, the nation had not only broken the Law of God; they had broken the heart of God.
26. In the closing chapters of the book, Israel is reminded of God's love and compassion for His people.
27. Though His people may turn away from Him, God will not abandon them, even though He disciplines them, for He is true to His covenant and His promises.