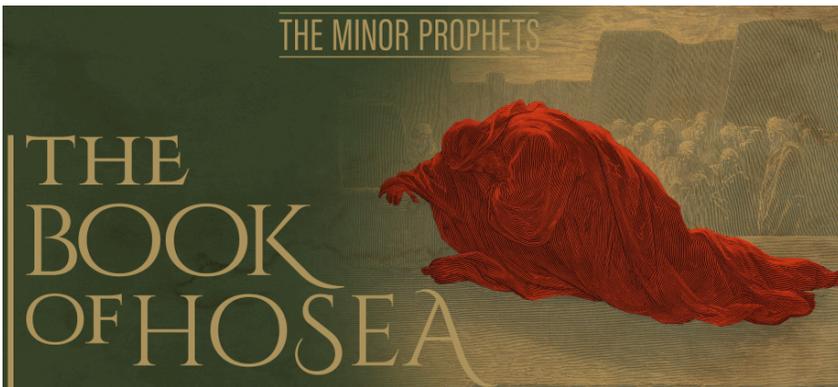


HOSEA

Faithful Love for the Unfaithful Lover

A St. Paul's Lutheran Bible Study



Before the pace picks up in our study of Hosea, we must take our time to go through verses 1-3 with steadiness.

To start, we must take note in verse 1 what the children of Israel are lacking. Yes, what is missing? The answer, there is no knowledge of God. This absent knowledge of God, though, is not a general knowledge of God's nature and will. But instead, it is a lack of understanding God's holiness and forgiveness. It is a lack of understanding His wrath and mercy. And so, when groups of people do not know the Lord, consequences will follow. It is very bad for right knowledge to be combined with wrong practices, but perhaps, what may be just as worse is bad knowledge leading to bad practice. For example, because the people of Israel did not know God, there was no faithfulness in the land and no steadfast love. Let's examine each of these a bit more carefully.

No Faithfulness: in Israel there was a lack of truth saying and truth doing. But why? Well, if God is Truth, and if people forget God, then there is no objective standard of truth. And if there is no truth, then words mean nothing – lying means nothing. And so, words and statements are only things that are used to get power and enforce control.

No Steadfast Love: if there is no God, then every human is nothing more than a blob of cells existing in a godless and

HOSEA 4:1-3

Author:

Hosea the Prophet

Date:

740-715 BC

Place:

Israel

Purpose:

Israel was like an unfaithful wife. She was attracted away from her husband (the Lord) to other lovers (idols). In the book of Hosea, the Lord calls Israel back to Himself. It is a call for Israel to forsake her unfaithfulness and be restored in the Lord's faithfulness.

Other:

Hosea is the most quoted book of the Minor Prophets in the New Testament.

meaningless universe. If there is no God, then there is no eternity. And so, if there is no God, then who cares about one's neighbor! Who cares about doing good things! If there is no God, then there is no such thing as good or bad.

As you can see, a godless society leads to godless activity. Do not let anyone tell you that doctrine does not matter. Doctrine of God drives ethics. Doctrine of God drives practice. Doctrine of God shapes the mind. Godlessness, though, leaves a void. It does not fill. It robs people of direction, meaning, ethics, and an eternal perspective. No wonder why depression is so great amongst nihilistic mindsets.

Israel had a God-void. They had a lack of truth saying truth doing, and love towards a neighbor. However, as is the case in most situations, we humans do not live in a void. Something always fills the void. What filled the void for Israel? Sadly it was swearing, lying, murder, stealing, adultery, and breaking all bounds. Quite simply, if there is no God, then there is no fear, love, and trust of God. And when there is no fear, love, and trust of God, mankind does whatever mankind wants – mankind breaks all bounds and typically lets the old Adam run wild.

It is interesting to note verse 2 and the sin that is filling the void: Swearing (2nd Commandment); lying (8th Commandment); murder (5th Commandment); stealing (7th Commandment); and adultery (6th Commandment). In the absence of virtue, vice always take its place. Indeed, when virtues are lacking, vices spread and multiplies. However, it is always important to define vice and virtue, not on the basis of public perceptions and/or opinions. As indicated in verse 2, the vice is vice because it violates a commandment of God. That is to say; sin is following the desires of the flesh, which violate God's Law. Sin, though, is never defined by that which violates a social norm or what offends the modern ear. Instead, that which breaks the Law of God reveals sin.

And so, the problem with Israel was that they forgot God, and then they broke all bounds. They burst through the restraints of the Law of God and engaged in whatever they so wished. In other words, their actions were not tempered. Like a violent thief breaks into a house, the Israelites punch holes right through the 10 Commandments with no regard. Perhaps the Apostles Paul's words would apply here – their consciences were seared. Or, to paraphrase a philosopher, "when the image of God is forgotten and the consciences are seared, mankind diminishes himself to barbaric and animalistic tendencies." Lord have mercy!

It now makes sense why the Lord brought discipline upon the people of Israel. Keep in mind that God stands behind the moral law (Ten Commandments), and He also stands behind the laws of nature.

