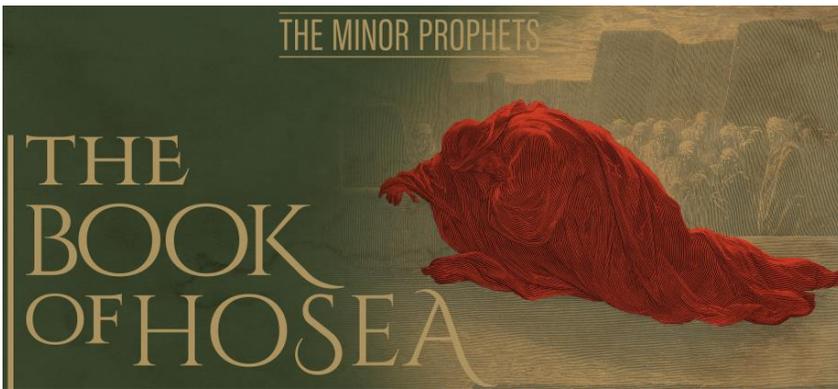


# HOSEA

## Faithful Love for the Unfaithful Lover

*A St. Paul's Lutheran Bible Study*



The land of Israel was filled with sin and immorality. And so, one would think that it would be easy to blame the people. However, Hosea 4:4-ff shows us that the 'priests' also bear a special responsibility for the people's sin. That is to say, the people of Israel are indeed to blame for their sinfulness; however, the priests are equally to blame – if not more – since they have failed to guide and teach the people rightly. Think of it this way; the sinfulness of the people of Israel is a witness to poor leadership. The sinfulness of Israel is a condemnation and charge against the priesthood.

The same application can be applied to the modern-day church. Martin Luther comments on this, saying,

“...after all, they are not to be blamed for their weakness. It is their pastors who have used tradition to take them captive....”

Again, blind followers are, more often than not, led by blind teachers. The saying is true, the blind leading the blind. In the case of Israel, the people lacked knowledge because the priests 'rejected knowledge.' When a leader denies the knowledge of God, the people will follow suit.

### HOSEA 4:4-19

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.

Often, a church will follow the pulpit; what comes out of the pulpit will shape and form the church for better or for worse. For example, in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, many churches have distanced themselves from the core identity as Lutherans. And the reason why? Many times parishioners reject Lutheranism and pressure the pastor to do the same. And in other cases, the pastor forgets the core of our Lutheran theology and inadvertently allows the church to drift into Baptist theology or things such as pietism. But regrettably, some pastors reject Lutheranism and slowly lead parishioners to do the same. They do this through their preaching and teaching in the pulpit.

In the case of the priests in Hosea 4, it is more than mere ignorance. The priests willingly rejected the knowledge of God. And the people? They were naïve and senseless. As one commentator puts it,

“The people can gain no lasting satisfaction from the eating and wine drinking... since it was a part of the Baal religion. The Israelites feasted and sacrificed to idols in the pleasant shade under the trees at the Canaanite high places while having intercourse with prostitutes to make their crops, flocks, and families increase.”

And so, the people were led away by their own lustful appetites for worshipping wooden objects (i.e., idols). Were they comfortable? You bet. Were they lost? Yes, severely. They were disconnected from reality serving the sinful old Adam in the name of ‘religion’ and worshipping pieces of wood, thinking they were doing a pious deed for a deity. What whorish foolishness!

The application of chapter 4 cannot be any clearer! Pastors must always be attentive to God’s Word so they can preach the Word of God. The pastor never preaches his own words and ideas but the Word of God as spoken in Holy Writ. Theology is a closed system, and the pastor never teaches anything new - just the Word of God, as expressed in the Book of Concord. And parishioners? They must also demand the Word from their pastors while at the same time being sober-minded. Parishioners cannot run to the convenient excuse of ignorance. Parishioners cannot resort to being babes in the woods - small children who are easy prey for predators. Parishioners cannot have empty heads following mindless crowds while giving into sweet-talking leaders with their poisonous tongues.

