

HOSEA: LOOKING BEYOND JUDGMENT TO RESTORATION
V: God's Indictment Of Israel's Priests For Failing As Bible Teachers
(Hosea 4:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. God's punishment is very painful, but afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness, Hebrews 12:11.
- B. This was the theme of Hosea, the "death-bed prophet of Israel" and the last prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel before it fell to Assyria in divine judgment. (ESV Introduction to Hosea)
- C. Hosea 4:1-11 presents God's indictment of Israel's priests for failing in their divine calling as teachers of God's Word, and we view the passage for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. God's Indictment Of Israel's Priests For Failing As Bible Teachers, Hosea 4:1-11.

- A. In Hosea 4:1 ESV, God proclaimed that He had a charge to bring against all who lived in the land of Israel, that the people lacked faithfulness, steadfast [loyal] love and the knowledge of God.
- B. To clarify, the Lord explained in Hosea 4:2 that in place of these basic, essential characteristics in a nation, there was [false] cursing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery, each such sin being a violation of one of the basic Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. In God's view, the people thus broke all bounds of law and order to where bloodshed followed bloodshed in endless violent murders, and God had to punish the land with a severe drought in accord with the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 28:15, 23-24) so that land animals, birds and fish in the sea were dying, Hosea 4:3; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1388-1389.
- C. Nevertheless, God forbade anyone in Israel from bringing a charge against someone else for such sins, for they were all so insubordinate to human and divine institutions that for any of them to bring a charge against another was like charging a priest in defiance of God's human legal authorities, Hosea 4:4 NIV; *Ibid.*, p. 1389.
- D. Having mentioned the priests, God then charged even them with great sin for failing in their callings as priests to teach God's Word to where the nation had ended up in its terrible state, Hosea 4:5-11:
 - 1. The priests morally stumbled all of the time, that is, day and night, and the false prophets morally stumbled all of the time right along with them, Hosea 4:5a; *Ibid.*
 - 2. God thus said He would destroy their "mother," that is, "Samaria, the mother-city" where the wicked kings lived and who the priests and prophets sought to please for material reward and honor instead of pleasing the Lord, Hosea 4:5b; *Ibid.*; Matthew Henry's Com. on the Whole Bible, 1935, vol. IV, s. v. Hosea 4:5.
 - 3. The Lord asserted that His people were destroyed for a lack of knowledge that the priests were supposed to have imparted about the Lord and His ways from Scripture, Hosea 4:6a. Since the priests had rejected that knowledge themselves, God was rejecting them as priests, for they had ignored the written Scriptures of the Law of their God, Hosea 4:6b.
 - 4. Indeed, God would ignore the children of the priests just as the priests had ignored God's Word, meaning the sons of the priests would not inherit their fathers' office of priest, Hosea 4:6c; *Ibid.*, B. K. C., O. T.
 - 5. The Lord then detailed the sins of the priests in Hosea 4:7-11 (as follows):
 - a. The more the priests increased in number, instead of the greater number of priests influencing each other to live more righteously, the more they all sinned against the Lord, Hosea 4:7a NASB.
 - b. The priests exchanged their Glory, i. e. God, for something disgraceful, i. e. pagan idols, Hosea 4:7b; *Ibid.*
 - c. The priests "fed" on the people's sins, that is, they encouraged the people to multiply their "hypocritical sacrifices" that God hated due to greed in that the priests ate of these improper offerings, Hosea 4:8; *Ibid.*
 - d. Accordingly, like the people, so it would be for the priests, for both the people and their priests would be punished for their sins and repaid by the Lord for their deeds, Hosea 4:9.
 - e. The priests and people would eat but not have enough, they would increase in cultic prostitution to promote fertility but without success since they had deserted the Lord to give themselves to spiritual prostitution with its ingestion of error figuratively described as wine and new wine that take away the spiritual understanding of God's people, Hosea 4:10-11; *Ibid.*, p. 1389-1390.

Lesson: *The total breakdown of the most basic forms of law and order in Israel was the direct result of the failure of the Aaronic priests to heed and to teach God's Word. They instead tried to please ungodly kings and indulged in pagan and false religious rituals due to personal greed. Accordingly, God would severely punish the priests.*

Application: *(1) May all of us who teach God's Word realize that what we teach greatly affects the welfare of God's people. (2) May all of us teachers realize our great accountability to God to please Him and not men.*