

## *Second Baptist Church of Doylestown*

### *Bible Study Notes: Book of Hosea*

*3/29/17*

#### *Hosea Chapter 3 & 4*

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Hosea's Reconciliation With His Wife - Verses 1-4**

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." <sup>2</sup> So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. <sup>3</sup> Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you." <sup>4</sup> For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. <sup>5</sup> Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.

**3:1** This short chapter pictures the nation's exile and return. Israel would experience a time of purification in a foreign land, but God would still love the people and would be willing to accept them back. God commanded Hosea to show the same forgiving spirit to Gomer. Although Hosea had good reason to divorce Gomer, he was told to buy her back and love her. God asked Hosea to do something almost unthinkable—to buy back his adulterous, unrepentant wife and to continue to love her! When those who knew about Gomer's adultery heard Hosea say that God loved idolatrous Israel as much as Hosea loved Gomer, they must have been amazed. The people had heard God's words many times, but they felt the impact of those words when they saw them acted out in Hosea's merciful love for his wife.

**3:2** Apparently Gomer was on her own for a while. Needing to support herself, she must have either sold herself into slavery or become the mistress of another man. In either case, Hosea had to pay to get her back—although the required amount was pitifully small. Gomer was no longer worth much to anyone except Hosea, but he loved her just as God loved Israel. No matter how low we sink, God is willing to buy us back—to redeem us—and to lift us up again.

**3:3** After this, Gomer is no longer mentioned by Hosea. This is explained in 3:4. Gomer's isolation showed how God would deal with the northern kingdom (5:6, 15). It is dangerous to rebel against God. If he were ever to withdraw his love and mercy, we would be without hope.

**3:4** God would separate the Israelites from their treasured idolatrous practices. The sacrifices and sacred stones were elements of idol worship. Here the ephod is not the official vest of the priest, but an item used in idol worship. The "household gods" mentioned here (literally teraphim) were family gods, which were strictly forbidden for God's people.

**3:4-5** The northern kingdom had rebelled against David's dynasty and had taken Jeroboam as their king (1 Kings 12-13). Their rebellion was both political and religious. At that time, they reverted back to the worship of gold idols. "David their king" refers to the time of Messiah's rule when all people will bow before him in humility and submission. Those who won't accept Christ's blessings now will face his power and judgment later. How much better it is to love and follow Christ now than face his angry judgment later.

## Chapter 4

### The Charge Against Israel - Verses 1-11

<sup>1</sup>Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. <sup>2</sup>There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. <sup>3</sup>Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away. <sup>4</sup>"But let no one bring a charge, let no one accuse another, for your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. <sup>5</sup>You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you. So I will destroy your mother—<sup>6</sup> my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. <sup>7</sup>The more priests there were, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful. <sup>8</sup>They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness. <sup>9</sup>And it will be: Like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. <sup>10</sup>"They will eat but not have enough; they will engage in prostitution but not flourish, because they have deserted the LORD to give themselves <sup>11</sup> to prostitution; old wine and new wine take away their understanding.

**4:1** In this chapter, God brings a charge of disobedience against Israel. The religious leaders had failed to turn the people to God, and ritual prostitution had replaced right worship. The nation had declined spiritually and morally, breaking the laws that God had given them. The people found it easy to condemn Hosea's wife for her adultery. They were not so quick to see that they had been unfaithful to God.

**4:1-3** God explained the reasons for Israel's suffering. Their lawless behavior had brought the twin judgments of increased violence and ecological crisis. There is not always a direct cause-and-effect relationship between our actions and the problems we face. Nevertheless, when we are surrounded with difficulties, we should seriously ask, "Have I done anything sinful or irresponsible that has caused my suffering?" If we discover we are at fault, even partially, we must change our ways before expecting help from God.

**4:2** This verse may allude to the assassinations of kings during Hosea's lifetime. Shallum killed Zechariah (the king, not the prophet) and took the throne. Then Menahem killed Shallum and destroyed an entire city because it refused to accept him as king (2 Kings 15:8-16). God pointed out that even murder was being taken casually in Israel.

**4:4** We often blame others if we fear punishment for wrongdoing. Hosea warned the priests not to blame anyone else; the nation's sins were largely their fault. Israel's priests pointed out the people's sins, but God would not allow them to overlook their own irresponsible actions. Instead of instructing the nation in religion and morality, they had led the way toward idolatry and immorality. Their failure to lead the people in God's ways placed most of the blame for Israel's destruction on them. Knowing that God will not allow us to blame others for our sinfulness should cause us to admit our own sins. We are responsible for our own sinful actions. Beware of the tendency to blame others because it can keep you from feeling the need to repent.

**4:4-9** Hosea leveled his charges against the religious leaders. Who were these religious leaders? When Jeroboam I rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam and set up a rival kingdom in the north, he also set up his own religious system (see 1 Kings 12:25-33). In violation of God's law, he made two calves of gold and told the people to worship them. He also appointed his own priests, who were not descendants of Aaron. At first the residents of the northern kingdom continued to worship God, even though they were doing it in the wrong way; but very soon they also began to worship Canaanite gods. Before long they had substituted Baal for God and no longer worshiped God at all. It is not surprising that Jeroboam's false priests were unable to preserve the true worship of God.

**4:6-9** God accused the religious leaders of keeping the people from knowing him. They were supposed to be spiritual leaders, but they had become leaders in wrongdoing. The people may have said to one another, "It must be OK if the priests do it." Spiritual leadership is a heavy responsibility. Whether you teach a church school class, hold a church office, or lead a Bible study, don't take your leadership responsibilities lightly. Be a leader who leads others to God.

**4:8** The priests were glad when the people sinned. Every time a person brought a sin offering, the priest received a portion of it. The more the people sinned, the more the priests received. Because they couldn't eat all of the offerings themselves, they sold some and gave some to their relatives. The priests profited from the continuation of sin; it gave them power and position in the community. So instead of trying to lead the people out of sin,

**4:10-12** The chief Canaanite gods, Baal and Asherah, represented the power of fertility and sexual reproduction. Not surprisingly, their worship included rituals with vile sexual practices. Male worshipers had sex with female temple prostitutes (or priestesses), and young women wishing to bear children had sex with male priests. But God said their efforts to increase fertility would not succeed.

### **The Charge Against Israel - Verses 12-19**

<sup>12</sup> My people consult a wooden idol, and a diviner's rod speaks to them. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God. <sup>13</sup> They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery. <sup>14</sup> "I will not punish your daughters when they turn to prostitution, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery, because the men

themselves consort with harlots and sacrifice with shrine prostitutes—a people without understanding will come to ruin! <sup>15</sup> “Though you, Israel, commit adultery, do not let Judah become guilty. “Do not go to Gilgal; do not go up to Beth Aven. And do not swear, ‘As surely as the LORD lives!’ <sup>16</sup> The Israelites are stubborn, like a stubborn heifer. How then can the LORD pasture them like lambs in a meadow? <sup>17</sup> Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone! <sup>18</sup> Even when their drinks are gone, they continue their prostitution; their rulers dearly love shameful ways. <sup>19</sup> A whirlwind will sweep them away, and their sacrifices will bring them shame.

**4:12** The “diviner’s rod” was a way of attempting to tell the future. By divorcing themselves from God’s authoritative religion centered in Jerusalem, inhabitants of the northern kingdom had effectively cut themselves off from God’s word and from his way of forgiveness. The drive to be free from all restrictions can move us completely out of God’s will.

**4:15** God sent a warning to the southern kingdom of Judah that its priests should not become like those in Israel. Israel’s priests who remained in the north had forgotten their spiritual heritage and had sold out to Baal. They were promoting idol worship and ritual prostitution. Israel would not escape punishment, but Judah could if it refused to follow Israel’s example.

**4:17** Ephraim is another name for Israel, the northern kingdom, because Ephraim was the most powerful of the 10 tribes in the north. In the same way, the southern kingdom was called Judah after its most powerful tribe.

**4:19** The whirlwind that would sweep Israel away referred to the Assyrian invasion that would destroy the nation about 20 years later.