

Hos 4.1-19—The Sin of Willful Ignorance

Introduction to Hosea's Sermons in Chapters 4-14

- I. Hosea opens his prophetic message from God with three broad accusations (4.1), which then serve to structure the rest of the book.
 - A. God accuses Israel of rejecting His knowledge, 4.2-6.3.
 - B. God accuses Israel of their lack of steadfast love, 6.4-11.11.
 - C. God accuses Israel of faithlessness, 11.12-14.9.
 - D. At the end of each of those three sections, however, is a message of hope for the penitent, 5.15-6.3; 11.8-11; 14.1-8; cf. Rev 2.7.
- II. This highlights two very important messages in OT history.
 - A. Our unfaithfulness to God cannot annul His faithfulness to us, 2Cor 1.20; 1Cor 1.31.
 - B. Not all are Israel that are of Israel, Rom 9.6-8; Gal 3.14, 29.

The Lord's accusations of sin

- I. The heart of the Lord's accusations in this first section is in v.6, which is echoed in v.11 and v.14, again in 5.4, and then in the hope section in 6.3. All the accusations of specific sins which follow (in chapters 4 and 5) are all because Israel lacked knowledge.
 - A. But it's not that they didn't know. They refused to know. They rejected the knowledge God gave them, and forsook His laws. Israel was the most knowledgeable people in the world, Dt 4.5-8; Ps 144.15; but they turned their back on God and the light of His truth, 1Kgs 12.16, 25-33.
- II. The consequence of this willful, spiritual ignorance is serious.
 - A. It destroyed them, v.6, and brought them to ruin, v.14. Why? Because the rejection of God's truth and light is the rejection of the only truth and light there is. There's simply no other way to be saved, Heb 10.26-27; Jn 14.6.
- III. Sins born out of Israel's willful rejection of the knowledge of God.
 - A. The Lord exposes their sins of hatred against one another, vv.2, 7. They were guilty of breaking the entire Second Table of the Law.
 1. Their righteous dealings were to reflect God's holiness, but instead they had abandoned themselves to moral debauchery. Read Amos for a better picture of the wickedness in society.
 - B. The Lord accuses them of their sins of idolatry against Him. They were guilty of breaking the entire First Table of the Law, vv.12-14.
 1. A spirit of idolatry had led them away, 2Kgs 17.21-22.
 - C. How could they commit such great evil against one another and against the Lord? By willfully rejecting the knowledge of God. The more they worshipped idols the more blind and debauched they became, because it took away their understanding, v.10.
- IV. This is what made their actions so serious. It was a willful departure from God, Dt 4.5-9; cp. Ps 18.21. Moreover, to reject the covenant in which God's grace was found was tantamount to rejecting Christ, Dt 4.23-24; 6.12-15; 11.26-28.

The Lord's threats of judgment

- I. The Lord would take away all the temporal blessings He'd given them in the Land and curse it with the plagues of Egypt, v.3; Dt 11.16-17; 32.22-24.
 - A. He'd punish both the people, the priests, and the prophets because they're all idolaters, vv.4-5.
 - B. He'd destroy the Kingdom of Israel, vv.5-7; 1.4, and turn the glory of their idolatry into shame.
 - C. He'd punish people and priests together and cause them to reap nothing but emptiness and futility from all their false worship, vv.9-10, 14.
- II. It's a hard word. But it's a just word. Like Gomer, the people have departed from God and yoked themselves to idols that cannot save and can only destroy, Ezk 18.30; Dt 11.16-17, 26-28

The Lord's warnings to Judah

- I. The Lord warns His elect (in both Israel and Judah) to separate themselves from the false worship of Israel because their false worship will be their sure ruin, v.19. It's a call to keep far from her worship and her ways because it will all lead to shame, death, and hell, Pr 5.7-14; 6.20-29; 7.24-8.11.

Reflections

- I. As harsh as the Lord's words are, this is a sermon within the covenant of grace, Dt 11.26-28; Heb 10.19-38. God holds open the door of hope for sinners. He tells of His coming judgment so that they can repent and avert it. It's a word of judgment to avoid judgment, Ezk 18.30-32. So that's how we need to read the warnings in Hosea and in all the prophets, as God's merciful call to turn us from our sins while there's still time.
- II. We're to read the Lord's warnings to Judah as a warning just as applicable in our own day. We need to hear the Lord's words and believe with all our heart that—though the world may idolize them—all the ungodly and rebellious in our generation will be destroyed, they will come to ruin, they will be ashamed of their rebellion on that Day. Therefore do not envy the wicked, Ps 37.1-7; 73.16-19.
- III. We're to see the great danger of willful ignorance, Ps 115.8. So let us take heed of closing our ears to the preached Word and hardening our hearts against the Lord's knocking. And let us make our calling and election sure by letting these warnings drive us to Christ for safety and compel us to separate ourselves from the rebellious.