

## ISRAEL, THE BACKSLIDING HEIFER

**Text: HOSEA 4:1-19**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The first three chapters of the book of Hosea dealt with the prophet Hosea and his unfaithful wife Gomer. Gomer represents the unfaithful nation of Israel, who went whoring after idols (cf. 4:12b).
2. From this point in the book of Hosea, not much is said about the private and personal life of the prophet Hosea. Beginning at 3:4, the private life of Hosea fades into the background, and the emphasis is now upon the various sins of Israel, especially their idolatry (4:17).
3. The spiritual adultery of Israel, illustrated in chapters 1-3, is now presented in detail, and Israel's punishment is outlined in chapters 4-13.
4. Religious apostasy leads to moral depravity and divine judgment. It was true in Hosea's day and it is true in our day.

### **I. NO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (4:1-6)**

1. God says, "Hear the word of the Lord" (4:1), because there was no "knowledge of God in the land" (4:1).
2. The only way one can acquire knowledge of God is by hearing the Word of God. So God says to "hear the Word..."
3. People who do not come to church to hear the Word of God are ignorant of the Word of God (cf. 4:6a). And those who come the most frequently have a better understanding of God's Word.
4. God gave the ten commandments to the nation Israel as an expression of His will. That is why today the ten commandments are a pattern for the laws of every nation (cf. 4:2).
5. "Blood toucheth blood" (4:2b). Every day we hear about people being murdered. The other night, David told about a man being murdered a few blocks from here. On Sunday night, a New Jersey man was murdered in a mall parking garage because his killers wanted his 2012 Range Rover.
6. A Colorado high school student, upset with his former debate team coach, killed an innocent student, then killed himself. He was reportedly a communist and socialist, but the Denver Post refused to note that in their articles.
7. Violations of God's commandments resulted in the land and wildlife wasting away (4:1-3). We are witnessing this very same thing today with unusual weather patterns, crop failures, floods, storms,

- earthquakes, and other catastrophes. God's Word warned that this would happen (cf. Deut. 11:13-17).
8. The worldly crowd blame the weather on so-called "global warming." In 2000, Dr. David Viner, of the University of East Anglia, said that within a few years winter snowfall will become "a very rare and exciting event...Children just aren't going to know what snow is."
  9. And since he made those ridiculous statements, we have had five of the six snowiest winters since men have been keeping records.
  10. Furthermore, the integrity of the University of East Anglia was brought into question in 2009 when leaked emails proved researchers there were engaged in a major scheme to manipulate and suppress evidence against global warming.
  11. London's *Telegraph* newspaper called this misconduct "the worst scientific scandal of our generation."
  12. Here in the USA, John C. Beale, the Environmental Protection Agency's highest paid employee, and a so-called "global warming expert" is going to prison.
  13. The other day he pled guilty to bilking the government out of nearly \$1 million in salary and other benefits over a decade. He claimed he was working for the CIA but it was all a bunch of lies -- just like his views on "global warming."
  14. Hosea 4 teaches that "the land mourns" when people sin (4:3). The opening verses of Hosea 4 are a strong indictment of the nation Israel. It was a bloody time in their history – "and blood toucheth blood" (4:2). King Jeroboam II's son, Zechariah, was murdered by the usurper Shallum after reigning for only six months.
  15. Shallum was then slain by Menahem, after reigning for only one month. Then Menahem attacked Tiphshah, committing horrible atrocities (cf. II Kings 15:8-16).
  16. The people were rebellious and did "strive with the priest" (4:4). Deuteronomy 17:12 says, "And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel."
  17. However, in Hosea's day, the priests and the prophets were as bad as the people, and therefore all of them were under the judgment of God (4:5, 9).
  18. The nation ("My people") were destroyed for lack of knowledge (4:6). We are seeing the same thing happen in America today. Israel was supposed to be a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6), but now God was

- rejecting them because of their unbelief, and idolatry, and swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery (4:2).
19. Light rejected results in deeper darkness than ever. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness" (Matt. 6:23).

## II. WHOREDOM AND WINE (4:7-11)

1. The more they increased in wealth, the more they sinned against God, so He changed "their glory into shame" (4:7).
2. The apostle Paul warned of "enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:18, 19).
3. The priests enjoyed the sinful behaviour of the people -- they ate it up (4:8). They delighted in their sins and had their hearts set on the people's iniquity, because they indulged in it themselves, and it brought in revenues for them through the sin offerings (4:8).
4. The priests were happy with the fact that many people were sinning and bringing their sacrifices, because the more sin took place, the more sacrifices took place, and that meant more food for them because the Mosaic law said that since the priests were supported by the people, that they were to receive certain parts of the animals brought for sacrifice.
5. In this way they fed on the sin of the people (4:8). They liked it that the people are wicked, because it meant that they are obtaining more food from the people. It meant financial gain for them.
6. I recall a phone conversation with a Pentecostal pastor who was renting out his church building to the Armstrong cult and AA and other non-Christian groups. When I questioned him about it, he said he was happy because it brought him a lot of money.
7. The priests and the people were equally wicked. The people observed the low standards and immorality of the priests and this confirmed them in their own sinfulness (4:9).
8. "Like people, like priest..." (4:9). One in sin, one in guilt, one in judgment, and one in punishment. A neighbor told me that at a friend's funeral, the priest was so drunk that he forgot how to conduct the ceremony!
9. A pastor friend in the Philippines was asked by some Roman Catholic neighbors to help their demon-possessed family member. When my friend asked why they did not go to their priest for help, they said they did go to him first but he was so drunk he couldn't get off his couch.

10. God will punish these reprobates for their ways, "and reward them their doings" (4:9). Revelation 20:13 says, "And they were judged every man according to their works."
11. God's judgment begins in this life and will be consummated in the next (4:10; cf. Haggai 1:5, 6).
12. "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart" (4:11). In the Bible, there is a close association between drinking and immorality (cf. Hab. 2:15, 16).
13. The apostate religious leaders set the bad example for the people (cf. Isa. 28:7, 8).
14. Years ago I heard Pastor Duane Brown preach. He told how he happened to be seated next to a drunken Methodist preacher on an airplane. This Methodist pastor admitted to Pastor Brown that he was a drunkard.
15. Booze is the #1 drug problem in America. Propaganda put out by Alcoholics Anonymous and other humanistic thinkers have brainwashed many people into thinking that drunkenness is a "disease." It is not a disease. IT IS SIN.

16. If drunkenness is a disease,

It is the only disease contracted by an act of the will.

It is the only disease that is habit forming.

It is the only disease that comes in a bottle.

It is the only disease causing hundreds of thousands of family disruptions, broken homes, and car accidents.

It is the only disease promoting crime, brutality, and immorality.

It is the only disease contributing to over 50% of the more than 50,000 annual highway deaths in America.

It is the only disease which is sold with a license.

It is the only disease that is bought in grocery stores, liquor stores, bars, and even some churches.

It is the only disease that is taxed by the government.

It is the only disease which is glorified and promoted by Hollywood.

It is the only disease which keeps people out of heaven. "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven" (I Cor. 6:9, 10).

### **III. THE SPIRIT OF WHOREDOMS (4:12-19)**

1. Notice the terrible repetition -- committing adultery (4:2); commit whoredom (4:10); whoredom and wine (4:11); the spirit of whoredoms...they have gone a whoring (4:12); "your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery" (4:13); commit whoredom...commit adultery...sacrifice with harlots (4:14); play the harlot (4:15); they have committed whoredom continually (4:18).
2. There are also many specific references to idolatry (4:12-15, 17, 19).
3. "The spirit of whoredom" (4:12) is all over today through television, Hollywood movies, rock music, false religious cults, etc. Even the city buses have lurid pictures of half-naked men and women.
4. This spirit of whoredom enchanted them, and bewitched them, and deluded them, and deceived them. It "caused them to err" (4:12). This is the spirit of devils (4:12, 13).
5. God is not saying in 4:14 that He was setting aside the law of sowing and reaping, but that He would judge the fathers and husbands more severely because they were consorting with whores and sacrificing with harlots (temple prostitutes).
6. Judah was warned not to follow Israel's bad example (4:15). Israel was stubborn and backslidden – "joined to idols" (4:17).
7. God warned Judah not to go up to Gilgal or Beth-aven, the two chief shrines in Israel, where idols were being worshipped (4:15).
8. Gilgal was once sacred to God but no longer. In I Sam. 10:8, Samuel told Saul, "And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings."
9. Hosea 9:15 says, "All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers."
10. There is an application here for churches. Our Lord said to the church in Sardis, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."
11. "Backsliding" does not necessarily mean someone who has gone back into the world. Many people like that were probably never saved to begin with. Second Peter 2:22 says, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
12. If you used to pray more, or read the Bible more, or give more, than you are backslidden. If you used to go soulwinning or attend prayer meeting but are no longer doing so, you are backslidden.

13. The term "backslide" is used only in the Old Testament. The New Testament uses the words "carnal" and "lukewarm" to describe backsliders.
14. God was so fed up with Israel that He said: "let him alone" (4:17). "Their drink is sour" (4:18). After awhile the drunkard realizes drinking is destroying his health, and that his booze tastes horrible, but still keeps drinking.
15. "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again" (Pro. 23:35).
16. "The wind" refers to God sending in the Assyrian invaders as His righteous judgment for their sin (4:19; cf. 13:15, 16).

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. If you study this chapter carefully, and substitute the word "America" for Israel, it would fit (4:1, 2, 6). America is guilty of all of the same gross sins that Israel was.
2. As Christians, we need to take 4:6 to heart, and study the Bible, support our church, and try and get the Word of God out through door to door visitation.