

Tuesday Evening Bible Study
Series #8: The Minor Prophets
Session #2: Hosea 4:1 – 6:6
Tuesday, January 10, 2017

Outline

- A. The Prophecies of Hosea (4:1 – 14:9)
 - a. The Lord's Indictment against Israel (4:1 – 12:1)
 - i. Hosea sets the context (4:1-3)
 - ii. An indictment of corrupt religious practices (4:4-19)
 - iii. The people do not know the Lord (5:1 – 6:6)
 - 1. Captive to unfaithfulness (5:1-7)
 - 2. Judgement on brothers at war (5:8 – 6:6)

Notes

Hosea sets the context

- Hosea is filing suit on God's behalf against the people for breach of contract. (i.e., the Ten Commandments)
- 4:1 – "Hear the word of the Lord" = an introduction in the prophetic style
- Hosea quotes the themes of the 10 Commandments and says that it is so bad, even other animals are caught up in the fray.
- These words set the context for Chapter 4-11.
- The principal themes of Hosea's message: faithfulness, loyalty, and knowledge of God.

An indictment of corrupt religious practices

- Both the priests and the people are guilty of heresy
- 4:5 – "your mother" = your kindred = idiom for the family of hereditary priests
- 4:8 – "feed on the sin of my people" = priests depend on the sacrificial system for food
- 4:11 – references to the whore and whoredom are because of Israel's (Ephraim) worship and veneration of fertility deities and worship of Baal.
- 4:12 – "piece of wood" & "divining rod" may refer to wooden objects and symbols associated with the Canaanite goddess, Asherah.
- 4:13 – local Canaanite shrines were usually located on elevated sites on hills.
- 4:14 – "temple prostitutes" likely refers to women religious officials who had roles in fertility rituals. Women did not have such roles in the Israelite religion.
- 4:15 – "Beth-aven" = 'house of wrong', a pejorative name for Beth-el. "As the Lord lives" is a dig on a cry typically used to indicate that a god who has been absent or dead now lives; use here suggests that Israel's God was being worshipped and viewed as a god like Baal.
- 4:1 – Ephraim = Northern Kingdom (Israel)

Captives to unfaithfulness

- Israel's leaders have misled the Israelites into the trap of Baal worship.
- Mizpah, Tabor, and Shittim are cities with shrines to Baal.
- 5:4 – "spirit of whoredom" = the inclination to worship Baal.

Judgment on brothers at war

- 5:8-14 – May refer to the Syro-Ephraimite War (2 Kings 15:27-30)
- 5:8 – “Blow the horn” alarm signal used by sentinels. Gibeah and Ramah are Benjaminite sentinel towns just north of Jerusalem.
- 5:11 – “go after vanity” may refer to the alliance between Ephraim and Assyria.
- 5:13 – refers to concessions that Israel paid to Assyria (2 Kings 15:19-20)
- 5:15 – God will return to the place from which he comes when he intervenes in the affairs of the world.
- 6:4 – Ephraim and Judah love God only when they are desperate.
- 6:6 – Mercy and steadfast love (*chesed*) are more important than empty temple rituals.

Resources

Notes from The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NRSV), 2010

Notes from HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV), 1989

Abraham J. Heschel, “Hosea” in *The Prophets* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001)