

Welcome to the 6th lesson from the book of Hosea. As a moment of review, the book of Hosea is written to Israel in their state of being backslidden against God. Hosea's family is used to picture Israel walking in infidelity against God.

In this sixth lesson God gives more specifics of the offenses Israel has committed. God is honest and upright in all his dealings. He will never administer judgment unto a person for their sin until He first makes sure that person knows what the sin is. So, beginning with chapter 4 Israel's specific sins are named.

Chapter 4 (verse 1-2)

Have you ever had an experience in court? I hope you never do. More times than not it will be an unpleasant experience. Have you ever served on a jury? Serving on a jury is our civic duty under the design of our court system, but it makes most people nervous and they deem it unpleasant. To me, court is all about contention and strife and conflict.

When someone has committed wrong they are formally charged of their wrongdoing. If their wrongdoing is such that it will be heard in court, there is an arraignment. An arraignment is when the court makes a formal statement of the charges against the accused. This involves the judge who presides over the court, the prosecutor, the defendant and his legal representative.

Beginning in verse one of this chapter, God, the judge *and* the prosecutor, speaks the arraignment of Israel. Exactly what is God accusing Israel of? Of what crime is Israel being charged? Again I say God is fair and honest in all His dealings. Verse one begins with the words "hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel." Have you ever thought of the day when every one of us will be arraigned before God? Every man shall appear, saved and unsaved, before God. The saved appear before God to be evaluated for their Christian service. Saved people do not appear before God to determine whether or not they are saved. Neither does a sinner appear before God to determine whether or not He is saved or lost. There is no such trial in heaven. Whether you are saved or lost is determined in this life.

So, God begins His arraignment of the nation Israel. Hosea beckons them to listen, for God is about to speak. Multitudes, including saved folk, continue to turn a deaf ear to the Lord and suffer the consequences for doing so. There are grave consequences for not listening to what God has to say. Hosea says to God's people Israel "listen up!" "The Lord has a controversy with you!" The word "controversy" comes from the Hebrew word

“rib” which means “strife, controversy, a dispute, a lawsuit.” The word first appears in the book of Genesis where it is translated “strife” for we read in Genesis 13:7 *“and there was a strife between the herdman of Abram’s cattle and the herdman of Lot’s cattle.”* Another use of the word is found in Proverbs 18:6 *“a fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.”*

The first accusation against Israel in God's arraignment of them was “there is no truth.” Here the word “truth” means “firmness, faithfulness, truth, stability.” Israel was not firm in their faith toward God. They were an unreliable people. One day they seemed faithful to God and the next day they were back involved in idolatry. This lifestyle caused their homes to be unstable and their society was unstable. Why? There was no *truth* in Israel. Is there stability in your life? There is not if you live a lie. Is there faithfulness in your service and devotion to Christ? Are you here today and gone tomorrow? One Sunday off- one Sunday on. Can't be found on Wednesday night? Everything is just wonderful on Sunday morning and Sunday night and then you disappear. Why? There is no truth in your life. Truth leads to faithfulness. Truth leads to stability. Truthful people are faithful and stable and reliable. Somewhere underneath the surface of an unstable life there are lies.

Many homes are unstable because of the lack of commitment of mom and dad to Christ. If that describes you, don't be surprised if your kids grow up either unsaved or not walking with Christ. Folk sit on the pew, play the instruments, sing in the choir, then walk out the church door and live a lie. This is a double life. They were so Godly inside the four walls, but when they exited the door they went into another zone. Ultimately, if that is the life you're living, it will come to light. Be sure your sin will find you out. James 1:8 *“a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.”* A lack of firmness or commitment leads to instability. Have you ever made up your mind about whom you are going to serve? You can only have one master. You need to read our small gospel tract entitled “CHOOSE.” Matthew 6:24 tells us *“no man can serve two masters.”*

A second indictment in God's arraignment of Israel comes from verse one- there is *“no mercy.”* The word mercy means “goodness, kindness, loving-kindness.” Because Israel had an improper relationship with the Lord, they became harsh toward one another. Love for God results in love for people. I don't know where that leaves the “people-haters.” I know plenty of people who would be happy if they and their family were the only inhabitants of planet Earth because they dislike everybody else. One of the fruits of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, in our lives is love. This is found in Galatians 5:22 which reads *“but the fruit of the Spirit is love.”*

When the Lord is first in your life, it will help you be a better husband, wife, son, daughter, church member, and Sunday school teacher. When there is mercy in your life, it will be shown unto others. Mercy is impossible to hide. Have you ever done a good deed for neighbor or any man in need? I will stop at this juncture to say what I've said many times "you can be saved and not be a Christian." You say, "Please explain this." Okay, to be saved is to get on your knees and confess your sins to God and ask Jesus into your heart and receive him by faith. You did not become a Christian. Getting saved is an act of faith. Becoming a Christian is an act of works. After you are saved when you make the choice to act like Christ, then you can call yourself a Christian. Until you act like Christ, don't call yourself a Christian. The saved people were first called Christians at Antioch when the world observed that they acted like Christ. How did Christ act? If He met a hungry man he fed him. If He met a man who was blind he gave him his sight. If He met a lame man he asked him to take up his bed and walk. Christianity is helping others. Christianity is not a chain around your neck with a cross on the necklace. Christianity is not a lapel pin of a cross. Christianity is not a decal on your car. These things are fine, but Christianity cannot be manifest outside of *actions*.

There is yet a third accusation which God passes to Israel in His arraignment of them. Verse one says "*nor knowledge of God in the land.*" Does that sound like America? Folks sitting on the pew of Baptist churches and other religious denominations cannot quote John 3:16. There is no knowledge of his Word, the Bible. Folk don't know whether John is in the Old Testament or New Testament. Some folk choose to ignore the entire book of the Revelation. Their Bible has only 65 books, for one is missing. Sadly, there are people in our city who do not own a Bible and they do not own one because they are poor but because they do not want one. God has given a burden to one of our jail ministers to make sure the prisoner's family back home has a Bible. An amazing number do not. That is not in Africa, but in America!

There is no knowledge of God's character. What is God like? Is he a fable? Did man start him a fairy tale many years ago? Is He just a good idea? How much do you know about the character God? Do you know that God is holy, has all power, all knowledge, does not have a birthday, never sleeps, and does not live in a house on your street? Children can tell you more about sports than they can about God. Young people can tell you more about the pop artist than they can about God. They listen to secular music 100 hours a week and come to church three hours to hear the songs of Zion. There was a time when God winked at ignorance but doeth now call all men to repentance.

Verse two tells us the by-product of living like Israel was living in verse one. If America continues without truth, mercy, and

knowledge of God, they will wind up like Israel is described in verse 2.

Not only are there sins of *omission* as described in verse 1, but verse 2 lets us know there are sins of *commission*. Many times we disregard sins of omission. Yet, sins of omission lead to sins of commission. Sins of commission are doing what God says not to do. The sin of omission is failing to do what God said to do.

The first sin mentioned in verse 2 is *swearing*. Swearing is pronouncing a curse or an oath upon someone as an act of revenge. To swear using the name of God is to place Him in a position of guaranteeing your actions. How shameful!

Next, as described in verse two, they were engaged in *lying*. Lying is not telling the truth. Lying is trickery. Lying is deceiving people. Lying is ripping-off and cheating people in business dealings and being dishonest in your financial dealings. A man or wife who cheats on their spouse is lying to their spouse. How many people cheat the government on April 15? How many people have ever called in a sick-day when they were well?

How many truthful people do you know? Do you know even one person to whom you could say “you will tell me the truth and you will stake your life upon your word?” Back in time someone coined the phrase “a man’s word is his bond.” This is no longer true. You cannot believe 10% of what the average person tells you. Get it in writing. We are so accustomed to lying we don’t even call it lying anymore. If you tell me you will be at my home at nine o’clock tomorrow morning and you do not come, you have lied to me. If you tell me you will be at my home at nine o’clock in the morning and you come at 10 o’clock, you have lied to me. Lying is a way of life in our society. And that’s what people become, LIARS, when they depart from truth, mercy, and knowledge of God as outlined in verse 1.

Israel is involved in “killing.” The Bible speaks about how sinful men’s “feet are swift to shed blood.” Recently, two men killed a young man for a three-dollar watch. Not so many years ago a man decapitated an 80-year-old woman in order to steal her \$300 Social Security check. Lock your doors at night- someone may come in and kill you. Buy yourself a weapon and learn how to use it to protect your home. Folk, we are living in a society of killers. Babies are killing babies. Schoolchildren are killing schoolchildren. Brothers are killing brothers. I will mention three places in the Bible where it is acceptable to kill someone: One) when a man takes another man’s life, he is to be killed for doing it. Two) a person who intrudes into your home is to be killed. Third) in war the soldier is supposed to kill the enemy.

Next, because Israel has left truth, mercy, and knowledge of

God, they are guilty of *stealing*. In the Bible a thief was the most despised of all criminals. How low-down is a man who will take something belonging to another man? In the Bible thieves were not worthy of being stoned when they were caught. They had to be crucified because the law of Judaism deemed them unworthy to die by stoning. It was two thieves who hanged on the cross with the Son of God, not two murderers or two adulterers. Stealing is expected in this society. When I was a child walking down the street with my mother, and a coin was seen lying on the sidewalk, I could not pick it up. My mama told me “that is not yours. It does not belong to you.” Stealing is taking something that is not yours. Society has taught us to believe if something does not have someone’s name on it, take it- it is yours!

There is white-collar stealing and blue-collar stealing. When you cheat on your taxes and don’t pay what you’re supposed to pay, that’s called white-collar stealing. When you pry open the door to my car and take my CD player, that’s blue-collar stealing. It was once reported that white-collar stealing is more than tenfold, in dollar value, that which is stolen by blue-collar methods. How much money did the financial investor Madoff steal from his clients recently? \$50 billion stolen by white-collar methods!

Verse two further describes that Israel, because they had departed from mercy, truth, and knowledge of God, was guilty of committing *adultery*. Marriages were being destroyed by sexual unfaithfulness. Adultery and sexual sins are often considered glamorous and acceptable. Arise from your bed tomorrow and turn on the television. Watch it until you go to bed tomorrow evening. Write down the times you see adultery promoted. Two o’clock soap operas promote adultery and even incest. More than one half of marriages terminate in divorce. Most divorces come about as a result of adultery. What is adultery? It is infidelity, or lack of faithfulness to your spouse. One commercial on television brings to our attention that there is a website that promotes the glamour of infidelity in your marriage. Some marriage counselors suggest and encourage at least one adulterous relationship in a married person’s life so that they will better appreciate their marriage and spouse. God help this nation!

“*They break out*” refers to a people simply out of control. When the bride breaks on the horse, he runs away wildly. When the fence is broken down, the beasts of the field wonder as they please. The dam breaks, a torrent of water springs forth and the rivers overflow. Such was the case with Israel. They were out of control. America is out of control. Planet Earth is out of control. What broke the dam? What tore down the fence? What broke the bridle of the horse? *A departure from truth, mercy, and knowledge of God.*

“Blood touches blood” according to the last phrase in verse 2. This indicates a tremendous amount of violence and bloodshed in Israel. There was scarcely an interval between bloodshed. One crime quickly followed another. No sooner had the funeral director gathered the body of a victim than his phone was ringing needing his service to collect another body. It used to be Philadelphia or New York or Los Angeles where we heard of murder. Now, it is in the Bible belt. Our local community newspaper reports murder almost daily. Any people who forget *truth, mercy, and knowledge of God* will find themselves a nation of barbarians.