

Hosea 5 – A Divine Punishment  
September 24, 2023

**Congregational Reading**

Matthew 23:13-22

Eight Woes (covering 4 today)

13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut the kingdom of heaven in front of people; for you do not enter it yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

16 “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’

17 You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold?

18 And you say, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the offering that is on it is obligated.’

19 You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering?

20 Therefore, the one who swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it.

21 And the one who swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells in it.

22 And the one who swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

**Responsive Reading**

Question 36

What do we believe about the Holy Spirit?

Answer 36

That He is God, coeternal with the Father and the Son and that God grants Him irrevocably to all who believe.

Question 37

How does the Holy Spirit help us?

Answer 37

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The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, comforts us, guides us, gives us spiritual gifts and the desire to obey God; and he enables us to pray and to understand God's word.

Well good morning again everyone. In case you were not here last Sunday, and to make sure everyone is on the same page, Pastor David has taken a leave of absence on his own initiative with counsel from his pastoral leadership to take care of himself, recharge his batteries, and get some much-deserved rest.

A fairly recent Barna study has shown that pastors are leaving the pulpit in record numbers and that nearly 40% of those polled have considered leaving. The point of this is that the pastorate is a very taxing job, emotionally and spiritually. Pastor David has been working extreme hours for the benefit of the church and he needs a time of rest. Please be in prayer for him and his family during this time.

In the meantime, I am filling in for Pastor David while he is on leave. We have been going through the book Hosea and we pick up where we left off last week in Chapter 5. Next week Amaris and I will be out of town on our anniversary in which we will be having a guest speaker filling the pulpit.

If you would all please stand as I read our main text from Hosea 5.

1 Hear this, O priests!

Pay attention, O house of Israel!  
Give ear, O house of the king!  
For the judgment is for you;  
for you have been a snare at Mizpah  
and a net spread upon Tabor.

2 And the revoltors have gone deep into slaughter,  
but I will discipline all of them.

3 I know Ephraim,  
and Israel is not hidden from me;  
for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore;  
Israel is defiled.

4 Their deeds do not permit them  
to return to their God.  
For the spirit of whoredom is within them,  
and they know not the Lord.

5 The pride of Israel testifies to his face;  
Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt;  
Judah also shall stumble with them.

6 With their flocks and herds they shall go  
to seek the Lord,  
but they will not find him;

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he has withdrawn from them.  
7 They have dealt faithlessly with the Lord;  
for they have borne alien children.  
Now the new moon shall devour them with their fields.  
8 Blow the horn in (Gib-ee-ah) Gibeah,  
the trumpet in (Ray-ma) Ramah.  
Sound the alarm at Beth-aven;  
we follow you, O Benjamin!  
9 Ephraim shall become a desolation  
in the day of punishment;  
among the tribes of Israel  
I make known what is sure.  
10 The princes of Judah have become  
like those who move the landmark;  
upon them I will pour out  
my wrath like water.  
11 Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment,  
because he was determined to go after filth.  
12 But I am like a moth to Ephraim,  
and like dry rot to the house of Judah.  
13 When Ephraim saw his sickness,  
and Judah his wound,  
then Ephraim went to Assyria,  
and sent to the great king.  
But he is not able to cure you  
or heal your wound.  
14 For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,  
and like a young lion to the house of Judah.  
I, even I, will tear and go away;  
I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.  
15 I will return again to my place,  
until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face,  
and in their distress earnestly seek me.

Here ends the reading of the word of God. You may be seated.

When I was young, I occasionally would come in from recess and I would tell my teacher about how someone on the playground had been calling me names. I would tell her how mean they were to me by the things they said. I remember the way I felt when someone would say something that cut deep, especially when it was untrue.

My teacher, in her efforts to help equip and give me tools to protect myself told me to recite to them the famous motto “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”

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I came to find out, despite how much I used this jingle to defend against my aggressors, the words still hurt.

Today we live in world where one of the worst insults someone could hurl at you is to call you judgmental. One of the worst labels that a church could receive is “oh that’s a judgmental church!” With this label comes all sorts of additional labels and insults: Self-righteous, accusatory, condemning, hateful, bigoted.

So you could understand that in such a climate as today that a church, in effort to avoid these labels, stays FAR away from any such judgmental themes.

A church that preaches to people that they are sinners in need of a savior and that if they don’t turn from these ways they face judgment, wrath and even hell, well, as a parent recently told a local school district administrator, “doesn’t that church realize that we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” as if now the church should be enlightened to sin being acceptable and not only should the church not turn the other way but the church should embrace the sinful behavior.

Preaching through scripture that covers the topic of judgment is not a way to “Win Friends and Influence People”, It is not a way to increase social media followers, unless you consider antagonist, heckling keyboard warriors, followers. It isn’t a way to fill your church with regular attenders or increase popularity within your community.

So here we are. In the book of Hosea. Cruising through in an expository manner. Covering the verses that hallmark would never think to post in a greeting card.

The language we have found Hosea to use is explicit, graphic and illustrative of how this book depicts the savagery of sin.

If you were here with us last week we covered chapter 4 and the language used in it was...there is no other way to put it...it was explicit. Other translations use terms that, in my opinion, don’t do justice to calling sin for what it is. We can insert other words to try and make sin more palatable but this is exactly the problem with how mankind currently views sin against God.

You see this in terminology within our culture today. For example, a pedophile is now considered a Minor Attracted Person and some will argue that this person didn’t intend to have these perverse motives but that they were born this way and therefore we need to understand that they are people with needs just like anyone else.

Do you see how the enemy today, all around us, is getting people to believe that a man can identify as a woman or a person’s gender can become fluid and change whenever the person feels like it. These blatant, fundamental truths about mankind being created in the image of

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God is being torn down by slick talk and cunning terminology and people are being taken advantage of and exploited by the enemy.

So Hosea is making a case against sin here. It isn't something to slap a cute Mr. Yuck sticker on so the kids no not to drink the potion...no this has to be eradicated out of the churches, out of the homes, out of the families of those who believe the word of God to be true. And then we must tell people who don't believe what the truth is as the understanding of this world will lead to destruction as we see taking place in Israel.

If you recall from last week's message in verse 6 of chapter 4 God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." What Hosea is referring to here is not a general lack of knowledge but a lack of knowledge of God.

People often wonder,  
"why is there so much sin?  
"Why is there so much Homelessness?"  
"Why is our government so corrupt?"

And they point fingers at the Republicans or the Democrats for what has led to this destruction...The destruction has to do solely with sin.

If you have thumbed through the ensuing chapters of Hosea...you have noticed that this is going to be a long probationary time, like the aftershocks that follow a great earthquake.

And some of you might wonder..."Why do we do this? Why even go there pastor? Can't we sum up the next 10 chapters in this one sermon?"

Are there not plenty of other happy passages in the scripture that we could focus on? Must we 'beat a dead horse' so to speak?

'I get the first 3 chapters of Hosea. That was a redemptive love story, but c'mon, is the judgment necessary?'

Well, if the judgment language we see in the Bible simply was the contrived, manufactured, human, self-righteousness of men then we should discard it and even dismiss it all together.

But if in fact there is a holy God who will judge the world in righteousness as the scriptures say there is. And the words of the prophets is in fact God's word which is given to us in order to prepare us for the reality of that judgment, then not only should we read the prophets, preach from the prophets but we should heed the warnings that are given to us through judgment.

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If there is a God who will judge the world. If there is a God that will judge you and I. Then we should ABSOLUTELY learn and understand this 'knowledge of God' that I referred to last week in chapter 4.

Any reasonable patient who visits his physician and is given a prognosis of certain, untimely death unless the habits of the patient drastically change, don't depart from the hospital, hurling insults of accusations of judgment or hatefulness towards his doctor. No, not at all. The patient immediately gets to work to turn from his destructive ways in order to extend his life.

Hosea doesn't speak from an earthly extension that is even still limited on its time. But rather of a spiritual extension that is eternal in length and is alongside the loving God who saved the patient from certain eternal death.

If you have allowed culture to shape your understanding of God these chapters are very difficult to wrestle with. They are hard to understand because a view of a God who only loves in the sense of never judging is a God that really doesn't love at all. In fact that doctrine of who God is comes from the enemy, who we would all agree with doesn't love in a selfless manner.

I am not suggesting that God does not love but the way in which most of us understand how God loves is tainted by a one-sided view of God. How do we reconcile the judgment of God through a one-sided view? Some have gone as far as rejecting this judgment. In fact, some have rejected that there is a hell because a loving God would never send his people to hell.

In broad strokes throughout Hosea he talks explicitly of the necessity of judgment but also eventually the restoration of his people as well.

The reason that Hosea spends so much time with this topic of judgment is so that it might stir up in us in line with the character of God a right hatred of sin. A fresh hatred of sin. A renewed desire to please the Lord by turning from sin and gratitude for the price that has been paid.

All of us have probably been grounded at one point in our lives. We didn't get this because we were a good citizen in our household. Being grounded or restricted as some call it is to withhold good things from the person being grounded so that they turn from their wayward ways. It is a discipline that is put in place to correct us. When we are young we despise the discipline but when we are older we are grateful for the discipline that set us on course into adulthood. The action may be cute when you are little but it becomes wrong when you are a teenager and illegal when you are adult if the parent doesn't discipline their child toward the correct way of living.

So with this in mind about why judgment is really a loving governor in our lives from God, lets break down the text this morning.

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I want to us to keep this word study on the “knowledge of God” from last week in mind as we digest the content for today.

Chapter 5 begins similarly to the start of chapter 4 with a call to attention. There is one difference however in who is being addressed. God brought attention to the priests and the people in chapter 4 but now he is also adding in the kings. The priests, the people of Israel and the royal family, no one is getting out of this unscathed. All who are guilty are being called out directly for their actions of allowing Israel to go wayward.

The religious and civil leaders had entrapped the people. The use of the words snare and net: these are item used in hunting to bait ones pray into being caught or to capture them by surprise.

It was the responsibility of the priests and of the kings to teach and rule in a way that would govern their people towards knowledge of God. Not only did they not do this but as we saw in chapter 4 and are witnessing them being held accountable in chapter 5, God held the priests and the kings responsible first. They were held to a higher standard. They were given a greater responsibility from God and they failed miserably.

In the South there were a couple of good kings. None was perfect. David was a good king despite his entanglement with sin in his younger years he sought the Lord and the Lord lifted his head.

There were also other good Kings:

- Asa
- Jehoshaphat
- Jotham
- Hezekiah
- Josiah

These were all kings in the Southern Kingdom however. If you recall the focus of Hosea is on the Northern Kingdom of Israel referred to also as Ephraim where Hosea was the prophet.

The Southern Kingdom referred to as Judah is mentioned throughout Hosea and is looped in to what is taking place but God shows a little bit more mercy on Judah than on Ephraim. Isaiah is the prophet in the Southern Kingdom while this is taking place.

In the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim), there was not a single good king that led the people.

Mizpah was a fortress city on the border between Judah and Israel or the Southern and Northern Kingdoms of Israel.

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A fortress is a military stronghold, especially a strongly fortified town fit for a large garrison that is not susceptible to outside influence or disturbance. Troops would gather here and it was well protected.

Tabor is a mountain in the north of Palestine, overlooking the Jezreel valley. It was used as a high place of false idolatry worship. In fact the kings and priests would designate these areas as a hub for this type of activity and instead of shepherding the people of God instead they were taking advantage of them and leading them away from the knowledge of God.

Both Mizpah and Tabor were most likely hunting locations as well. The allegory of these hunting tools and locations is meant to accuse the priests and kings of allowing and partaking in the entanglement of sin.

Hosea 5:2 - And the revolvers have gone deep into slaughter, but I will discipline all of them.

The fact that the religious and civil leaders of the day being “deep in slaughter”, reflects the predicament of a people not only hunted but slaughtered.

Verse 2 describes these leaders as revolvers or rebels. They aren’t innocent bystanders. They have abandoned Gods rule. They have rejected Him. And they have led the people astray.

So what will God do? God would discipline all those responsible for this.

If you can imagine, the people of Israel are running amuck with sin. The descriptive words used in Hosea talk about ensnaring and slaughtering. Why would the very people of God give in to sin when God had been so good to them?

If you can recall, back in June when I took us through Chapter 3 of Hosea, I referred to a book by the puritan theologian, John Owen. John Owen wrote a book titled the Mortification of Sin. This book explains in depth what sin does to a person.

“Sin weakens the soul,” Owen says, “Sin captures the affections of the heart and turns it away from God. It diverts the heart from the spiritual state that is required for close fellowship with God. It grabs ahold of the heart, making the object of sin desirable and beloved, and so expels the love of the Father.”

1 John 2:15 says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Owen continues, “So now the soul can’t honestly say to God, “You are what I want” because it has something else that it loves more than God. Fear, desire, and hope, which are the most important feelings of the soul, and ones that should be full of God, instead end up entangled with sin.”



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Matthew 6:24 – No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

This verse is referring to money but it applies to all things that we put in the place of God. When people get entangled in sin it is because the temptation of it captured their heart and they tasted the sweetness of its poisonous nectar.

Years ago when I was the junior high director at church on the westside I lead a group of 20, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders on a mission trip to Wyoming. While we are on our way back from our trip we stopped and camped a couple of nights in Yellowstone National Park.

I was already amped up for some of the growth I had seen in the kids during our mission week and I was also excited to have them experience the features of Yellowstone. Knowing that we were entering into bear country I sat all of the kids down before we got to the park and told them the importance of keeping any scented items out of the tents because wildlife is attracted to these. I explained that even nonfood items such as toothpaste, Chapstick, hairspray, deodorant should be put in the vans not left or brought into the tent. I'll just note that the boys tent had no problem keeping deodorant out of their tent because no one had any. I explained to them that we need to keep a clean camp and throw trash in the garbage cans, you know basic common-sense type of lectures. All the kids nodded as if they were tracking.

I'll never forget arriving to our campsite and both sliding doors of our sprinter van slid open at the same time and 1 week worth of candy wrappers, juice boxes, you name it was picked up by the sudden gust of wind that blew through the van and delivered trash all over the campsite before our fellow neighbors as 20 junior high students poured out into what was the quiet wilderness.

I'll be honest this was the most stressful part of the trip for me. I rallied all the students back together after chasing down 200 pieces of flying garbage and recapped on our recent lecture. In that moment I also shared with the kids the signage posted around camp using slogans that, "a fed bear is a dead bear."

Not only was this sign there to remind us of the responsibility we had to keeping bears out of our tent but it was a reminder that even if a bear gets a taste of what human food is like that bear's mind has changed its desire to eat snicker bars rather than huckleberries. The bear will become more and more brazen and do whatever it takes to get a hold of human food again. At that point, it is almost impossible to recondition the bear back to eating what was designed for it and fish and wildlife are forced to put the nuisance bear down before it hurts or kills a person in its attempt to eat what it isn't designed to eat.

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Mankind is not designed to eat what is offered from sin. When it comes to sin, a fed human is a dead human. Once the taste of sin enters the human body it is very difficult to recondition the human to reject the sin. In fact, it is impossible for a human to do this in their own flesh. It is only by the super natural power of the Holy Spirit that can turn our hearts back to God.

This is why when we are faced with sin we must reject it and turn to the power that comes from the word of God. We may know that we are inclined to certain sins that tempt us more than others and at all costs put prayer, scripture, barriers, accountability, you name it, between ourselves and sin.

Hosea 5:3 – I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me; for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore; Israel is defiled.

God will judge not because this was a one-time sin but because he knows the hearts of his people are completely ensnared.

Hosea 5:4 – Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not the Lord.

The lust of their flesh and the pride of life has kept them from any type of relationship with God. They have a spirit of harlotry, a spirit of unfaithfulness. This isn't a status based on a singular sin. The discipline is not because Israel sometimes fails to obey it is because of a spirit of rebellion within them.

They do not know the Lord.

Hosea 5:5 – The pride of Israel testifies to his face; Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt; Judah also shall stumble with them.

God is saying to Judah that they are not innocent either and that they are going to fall with Ephraim.

Hosea 6:6-7 – With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them. They have dealt faithlessly with the Lord; for they have borne alien children. Now the new moon shall devour them with their fields.

The people, in their efforts to now want to worship the Lord through their monthly festivals and religious sacrifices no longer brought divine favor but judgment from the Lord.

By dealing treacherously with the Lord, men only deceive themselves. Those that go to seek the Lord with their flocks and their herds only, and not with their hearts and souls, cannot expect to find him; nor shall any who do not seek the Lord while he may be found.

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Matthew 7:21-23 - 21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

See how much it is our concern to seek God early, now, while it is the accepted time, and the day of salvation.

So, I ask this question for us to reflect on here today. Have you been doing all of the Christian things, showing up with your flocks and herds but your heart has not yearned for the Lord but rather the things of the world?

If the judgment taking place in Hosea causes just one person to turn from their sin, then this book has been worth it for us today.

There is a dualistic meaning to what the text is saying to us about the unfaithfulness that is taking place. There is the unfaithfulness of the people towards God that we see as the bigger theme throughout the text. The people have turned from God as their maker and sustainer to other false gods.

We also have the unfaithfulness that is taking place within the people of Israel having sexual relationships outside of marriage and having illegitimate children. Parents are rearing children in their own sinful ways rather than in the way that God designed it.

Hosea 5:8-9 – Blow the horn in (Gib-ee-a) Gibeah, the trumpet in (Ray-mah) Ramah. Sound the alarm at Beth-aven; we follow you, O Benjamin! Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of punishment; among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure.

It is here that God turns His focus on Judah, the southern kingdom. All three of these were strategic defense cities located on the northern border of Judah. Benjamin is a term also that refers to all of the southern kingdom. God is telling these cities as news of judgment moves through the northern kingdom that the southern kingdom should also now be aware.

A trumpet was customarily used to sound a warning of impending danger.

This was all forth telling of the enemy, being Assyria, who was to descend on the Northern Kingdom first before invading and decimating the south.

Hosea 5:10 – The princes of Judah have become like those who move the landmark; upon them I will pour out my wrath like water.

**WORSHIP TEAM BACK UP**

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The leaders were “like those who move boundary stones,” which was equivalent to stealing property from neighbors. Property lines, indicated often only by stone markers, could be easily moved in a night’s time. This was the ultimate thievery.

Judah’s leaders, however, were not shifting physical property lines but spiritual ones established by God, changing the boundary between right and wrong, between true and false religion, between the true God and the idols.

It is almost as if Hosea is reading our diary today! Today the blatant moving of boundary stones is not even being done in the night. The shameless sin that takes place is done in broad daylight. It takes place all around us and we are pressured to give in to it.

Times today are more difficult than ever to raise a family without navigating the flagrant sin that is waved in our face as if to taunt its wickedness.

Hosea 5:11 – Ephraim was oppressed, crushed in judgment, because he was determined to go after filth.

The people had been intent on pursuing idols leading them to Jeroboam’s institution of calf worship possibly in which we see towards the end of 1 Kings 12.

Hosea 5:12-13 – But I am like a moth to Ephraim, and like dry rot to the house of Judah. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to the great king. But he is not able to cure you or heal your wound.

This bold figure of speech describes the judgment referred to in verse 11. The people were being eaten—as if by moths and decay—by problems and troubles. On realizing the situation, Ephraim sought help from Assyria rather than from God. Unfortunately, Ephraim’s troubles were internal ones and indeed incurable.

Hosea 5:14-15 – For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue. I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.

Foreign assistance would be of no value, since the Lord was orchestrating punishment at the hands of the Assyrians. He would remove himself “until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face.”

When men begin to complain more of their sins than of their afflictions, then there begins to be some hope of them; and when under the conviction of sin, and the corrections of the rod, we must seek the knowledge of God. Those who are led by severe trials to seek God earnestly and

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sincerely, will find him a present help and an effectual refuge; for with him is plentiful redemption for all who call upon him.

Peace can only be found in God. All other is counterfeit to the trueness of the knowledge of God.

Questions for small groups:

1. In what areas of your life have you been showing up with your flocks and herds only and not with your heart and soul?
2. When have you ever sensed a warning in your life around an urgency to know who God is or to know him more?
3. What boundary stones are being moved in our culture today? In other words, what blatant lies are being told to people that are ensnaring them into sin?
4. In what ways or sources do you occasionally find yourself seeking out help and refuge other than God? Why do you think this is?
5. Looking back on your life, what were some key milestones where you understood more fully the knowledge of God? How did this change your life or how you think or act?