

Lacking Knowledge

Hosea 4:1-9

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Hosea 4:1-9 (NIV)

Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land:

“There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. ² There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. ³ Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away. ⁴ “But let no one bring a charge, let no one accuse another, for your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. ⁵ You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you. So I will destroy your mother— ⁶ my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. “Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. ⁷ The more priests there were, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful. ⁸ They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness. ⁹ And it will be: Like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds.

v1 – What message did God have for Israel?

As if Yahweh brought Israel into a court of law, God here described the charges against disobedient Israel.

- What we should call a lawsuit, in which God is plaintiff, and the Israelites defendants. It is Jehovah versus Israel and Judah.

What did Israel lack?

faithfulness, love, acknowledgment of God truth, mercy, knowledge of God (NKJV)

How are these three points connected?

When people forsake the knowledge of God, soon truth and mercy are both gone. Truth must be rooted in something more than personal opinion, and mercy means going beyond self-interest.

- True wisdom and understanding always begins with the knowledge of God...
Proverbs 9:10 – The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

v2 – What else results from having no knowledge of God?

cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds... break all restraint (NKJV)
When man will not or cannot restrain himself, bloodshed and destruction follow.

What does the culture think of restraint?

Our modern age is completely set against the idea of restraint. You see it in advertising slogans of the recent past:

“To know no boundaries.”

“No rules, just right.”

“Just do it.”

“Break all the rules.”

“Peel off inhibitions. Find your own road.”

“Living without boundaries.”

The message is the same: You make your own rules. You answer to no one. You are the one that matters. Your universe revolves around you. You should only restrain yourself if you want to.

What does it mean that bloodshed follows bloodshed?

In the ancient Hebrew, this is literally “bloody deed touches bloody deed.” Apparently violent crimes had become so common that one seemed immediately to follow another, as if touching it.

v3 – What will be the result of no acknowledgment of God?

The tragic fruit of forsaking the knowledge of God is destruction. Satan sings sweetly to us, making us think that casting away God’s restraint is a doorway to freedom — but that is a deadly deception.

v4 – Why would God’s people bring charges against a priest?

In passages like Deuteronomy 17:9-12, God clearly commanded His people to listen to and submit to the priests, who would lead and help the people with the Word of God. But because the people cast off the knowledge of God, truth, mercy, and restraint, they wouldn’t listen to the priests, and they contended with them instead.

If God's people would bring charges against a priest, why shouldn't they accuse anyone?

People without God in their lives have a distorted view of everything and thus their judgements are more likely to be flawed.

- This doesn't mean godly people can't make bad judgements, it is just that they have the potential to make better judgments by being aligned with God.

v5 – What goes along with bringing charges against a priest?

They will stumble... make serious mistakes.

What is the significance of stumbling day and night?

It's bad enough to stumble in the night, but at least we can understand it. But when God's people cast off the knowledge of God, restraint, and guidance from leaders then they shall stumble even in the day.

What is the significance of the prophets stumbling with those who bring charges against a priest?

Their situation is so bleak that even the prophet is dragged down to the level of the stumbling people.

- As a consequence for the people having no regard for God, He will withhold His Word from His prophets causing even them to stumble.

Who is the mother of the stumbling people of Israel that would be destroyed?

Matthew Henry: Did the children think that when they were in danger of falling their mother would help them? It shall be in vain to expect it, for Samaria, the mother-city would be made silent.

v6 – What would ultimately lead to the destruction of those without God?

Their lack of knowledge about God would result in their destruction... ignorance is not bliss!

- When God's people are destroyed and waste away, it isn't because God has lost either His love or strength. It's because His people lack... knowledge.

How much knowledge of God is enough to avoid destruction?

It is not so much how much you know, but having a desire to grow in your knowledge of Him. Such a desire reveals having a relationship with Him.

- There is danger in thinking you have sufficient knowledge of the Lord and don't need to know any more.
- It is like having "head" knowledge, but not "heart" knowledge of the Lord.

How do we get to better know the Lord?

Becoming familiar with His Word and applying His teaching to our lives.

- Praying and looking for answers to our prayers.
- Taking steps of faith and growing in faith.

What is the connection between knowing God and knowing His Word?

God and His Word are vitally connected...

Psalm 138:2 – *You have magnified Your word above all Your name.*

When God sought for a term to express His nature, He calls Himself "*The Word*" (John 1:1).

Who did God blame for Israel lack of knowledge of Him?

I also reject you as my priests: The priests had the responsibility to help the people know God and they failed in that responsibility.

- That is what priests are supposed to do, represent God to the people and the people to God.
- How could the priests help people know God if they themselves lacked a knowledge of God?
- Teaching was an important duty of the priests (Deuteronomy 33:10, Ezekiel 44:23, Malachi 2:7).

What is the application of this for us today?

We are all priests; we all have a responsibility to help those within our circle of influence to know the Lord...

1 Peter 2:5 – *you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ* (see also 1 Peter 2:9)

How may we help others know the Lord?

- Plant & water seeds with faith flags in the course of normal conversation; and be ready to give a defense for your faith in Jesus.
- Allow the Fruit of the Spirit to be seen in our lives (Joy in the midst of unjoyful circumstances, etc.)

Pastors and teachers have even more responsibility to be faithful to their opportunity to correctly present God and His Word to the people...

2 Timothy 4:2 – *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*

Actually, this applies to all of us as priests... everyone has opportunities to preach the Word, even if it is to just one person at a time.

What other consequences would come from priests ignoring God's Law?

I also will ignore your children: Their offspring both physical and spiritual would suffer as well. The consequences of sin extends beyond just yourself.

Is there such a thing as generational sin?

Yes it is...

Deuteronomy 5:9 – *I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me*

The sinful patterns of parents are taught to their children. People often want to break negative cycles but do not know how because the way of thinking they were raised with has confused them.

Can God break the cycle of generational sin?

Absolutely, when a person embraces God's provision for eternal life and responds to Him...

1 John 1:9 – *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

v7 – How had God blessed the priests who were lacking in their knowledge of Him?

He increased their number in the hope that more of them would seek to know Him.

- But they took God's blessing for granted and only sinned against God all the more.
- Blessing is a two-edged gift; it also brings more accountability and more opportunity for sin.

v8 – What else were the priests lacking a knowledge of God doing?

They were encouraging the sins of the people... they compromised with the corrupt culture.

Do we have this problem today?

Yes, churches becoming woke raising up LBGTQ advocates to be leaders and teaching that the gay lifestyle is OK with God.

- This is just a symptom of a deeper spiritual problem.

v9 – Who would God punish for their lack of knowledge of Him?

Like people, like priest: The priests may have thought they would be immune from the judgment coming upon Israel. After all, they were priests! But God promises that when it comes to judgment, *like people, like priest.*

- There is no doubt that the priesthood of Israel was corrupt. *Jeroboam I had made priests 'from all sorts of people'* (1 Kings 12:31; 13:33). Therefore, large numbers of true priests - and doubtless true prophets,

also - had left the northern kingdom (2 Chronicles 11:13-16).

Which came first, the ungodly religious leaders, or the ungodly people?

Since the "priests" come from the people, if the people are backslidden then many backslidden men will seek to be "priests." This will also be an end-times trend:

2 Timothy 4:3-4 – *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- True wisdom and understanding always begins with the knowledge of God.
- The world casts off the restraints of God; don't compromise with the world.
- Not growing in the knowledge of the Lord is deadly.
- God will break the cycle of generational sin in His faithful.
- Being one of God's people makes us His priests and comes with responsibility.