28 - Hosea: God's Love for an Unfaithful Wife

- Hosea, whose **name means "salvation,"** ministered to northern kingdom of Israel (also called Ephraim, after its largest tribe).
- The names Hosea, Joshua, and Jesus are all derived from the same Hebrew root word. The word hoshea means "salvation," but "Joshua" and "Jesus" include an additional idea: "Yahweh Is Salvation." As God's messenger, Hosea offers the possibility of salvation if only the nation will turn from idolatry back to God.
- Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel for about 45 years immediately before its judgment and destruction by the Assyrians. Hosea served Israel as Jeremiah did Judah the final warnings before judgment of both kingdoms. Jeremiah prophesied to Judah around 625 to 585 BC, while Hosea spoke to Israel from about 755 to 710 BC. Like Jeremiah, God had Hosea do some



Early manuscript illustration: Hosea, Gomer and the Three Children

- strange things, and he suffered great personal tragedy which became a dramatic illustration of Israel's tragedy.
- Hosea's personal tragedy is an intense illustration of Israel's national tragedy. It is a story of one-sided love and faithfulness that represents the relationship between Israel and God. Gomer is married to Hosea, Israel is betrothed to God. Both relationships gradually disintegrate—Gomer runs after other men, Israel runs after other gods. Israel's spiritual adultery is seen in Gomer's physical adultery. God is ready to divorce His wife, Israel, but He promises reconciliation and renewal of the covenant between them.
- Hosea's Message: a complete outline of the ways of God with His earthly people:
 - God suffers when His people are unfaithful to Him;
 - ✓ God cannot condone sin;
 - ✓ God will never cease to love His own, and, consequently,
 - ✓ He seeks to win back those who have forsaken Him.
 - ✓ Although a loving and caring God had provided their abundance and prosperity;
 - ✓ Their sin, disloyalty and abandonment of Him will force Him to vindicate His justice with judgment.
 - ✓ Thus, God is going to *use their enemies* as His instrument of judgment. Shortly they will be history.
 - ✓ Ultimately, however, He will reconcile with them, and renew them.
- Hosea is a book about God's redeeming love. It is about the consequences of betrayal, but the restoration out of consuming love. NOTE: If you want to better understand this kind of love, and get a better idea of what is happening in this book of Hosea, read Francine Rivers' book "Redeeming Love." This is a fictional story, but it is based on Hosea. It is a wonderful way to further understand the love God has for Israel, and His love for us.
- In Hosea 12:10 God says "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets." Throughout the Word we see over 200 other literary devices used to get our attention and help us understand just what God is saying. This book of Hosea is a dramatic illustration of this concept. This story was actually lived by Hosea, but it is allegorical and metaphoric in nature, and Gomer stands as a type for Israel. God does this repeatedly in scripture.
- Christ in Hosea—Matthew 2:15 applies Hosea 11:1, to Christ in Egypt: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son." Matthew quotes the second half of this verse to show that the Exodus of Israel from Egypt as a new nation was a prophetic type of Israel's Messiah who was also called out of Egypt in His childhood.

Do these verses echo here? "Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed." (Hosea 4:1-2) Sound familiar? The nation of Israel has left the knowledge of the truth and followed the idolatrous ways of their pagan neighbors. A central message is in chapter 4, verse 6—"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."

Highlights

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4-6:3 | 6:4-ch 8 | 9-10 | 11-14 |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Hosea's Marriage | Applies to Israel | Gomer Restored | Spiritual Adultery of Israel | Israel will not repent | God Judges Israel | Israel Restored |
| Marriage | | | Message | | | |

Hosea's Personal Tragedy

The Adulterous Wife and Faithful Husband (1-3): God directs Hosea to marry a prostitute. He weds Gomer who bears him three children, appropriately named by God as signs to Israel. Jezreel ("God Scatters"), Lo-Ruhamah ("Not pitied" lit. "no mercy"), and Lo-Ammi ("Not My People") Similarly, God will judge and scatter Israel because of her sin. Gomer seeks other lovers and deserts Hosea. In spite of her sins. Hosea redeems her from the slave market and restores her. God said He would avenge the sin of Jehu. The reigning house of Israel had succeeded to the throne through the "Blood of Jezreel"; it was the site of Jehu's ruthless massacre of the house of Ahab at Jezreel (1:4; cf 2 Kings 9-10); and in the future it would also be the scene of Israel's military demise (1:5).

[Jezreel: the Plain of Esdraelon 10 miles in breadth; Mediterranean (nr. Mt Carmel) to the Jordan; from Galilee to the Mountains of Ephraim The great battlefield of Gideon (Ju 6:33; 7); became a symbol of national disgrace and defeat as it had been after Saul's death (1 Sam 29:1, 11; 31). Eventually site of last great battle, Armageddon.]

Israel's National Tragedy

The Adulterous Israel and Faithful Lord (4-14): Because of his own painful experience, Hosea can experience the sorrow of God over the sinfulness of His people. His loyal love for Gomer is a reflection of God's concern for Israel. However, Israel has fallen into the dregs of sin and is hardened against God's gracious last appeal to return. The people have flagrantly violated all of God's commandments, and they are indicted by God for their crimes. Even now God wants to heal and redeem them (7:1, 13), but in their arrogance and idolatry they rebel. Chapters 9-10 give the verdict of the case God has just presented. Israel's disobedience will lead to her dispersion. "For they [sow] the wind" (4-7), "and they...reap the whirlwind" (8-10). Israel rejects repentance, and the judgment of God can no longer be delayed.

God is holy (4–7) and just (8–10), but He is also loving and gracious (11–14). God must discipline, but because of His endless love, He will ultimately save and restore His wayward people. "How can I give you up, Ephraim?...I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him" (11:8; 14:4).

Northern Kingdom of Israel

A WARNING TO ALL NATIONS: Outwardly, the northern kingdom of Israel was enjoying a time of prosperity and growth; but inwardly, moral corruption and spiritual adultery permeated the people. Hosea, instructed by God to marry a prostitute, finds his domestic life to be an accurate and tragic dramatization of the unfaithfulness of God's people. During his half century of ministry, Hosea repeatedly echoes his threefold message: God abhors the sins of His people; judgment is certain; but God's loyal love stands firm. When he began his ministry, Israel was enjoying a temporary period of political and economic prosperity. However, confusion and decline characterized the last years of the northern kingdom, and her people refused to heed Hosea's warning of imminent judgment. The people were in a spiritual stupor, riddled with sin and idolatry.

The theme of **God's holiness** is developed in <u>contrast to Israel's corruption and apostasy</u>. Hosea utters about 150 statements concerning the sins of Israel, and more than half deal specifically with idolatry. The theme of **God's justice** is <u>contrasted with Israel's lack of justice</u>. There was never a good king in Israel, and judgment is long overdue. The theme of **God's love** is seen in <u>contrast to Israel's hardness and empty ritual</u>. God's loyal love is unconditional and ceaseless; in spite of Israel's manifold sins, God tries every means to bring His people back to Himself. He pleads with the people to return to Him, but they will not.