

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF HOSEA

TEXT: HOSEA 1:1-11

INTRODUCTION:

1. The name "Hosea" means "salvation." It is the same as the name *Joshua* (and *Jesus*). The last king of Israel had the same name but it is spelled differently -- "In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD..." (II Kings 17:1, 2).
2. The prophet Hosea prophesied for a long time, probably for close to seventy years, and his prophecy was directed primarily to Israel.
3. Hosea prophesied while King Uzziah was reigning in Judah, and King Jeroboam II was reigning in Israel, as well as during the time when Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings over Judah (1:1).
4. Students of the Bible have wondered why Hosea refers to four kings of Judah, but to only one king of Israel, since there were several kings on the throne in Samaria during Hosea's long prophetic ministry.
5. Jeroboam II was the last king who ruled by the appointment of the LORD. All the kings that followed Jeroboam II were robbers and murderers. Shallum slew Zechariah; Menahem slew Shallum; Pekah killed the son of Menahem; and Hoshea killed Pekah. All was bloodshed and anarchy in Israel, until the Israelites were taken into captivity by Assyria.

I. THE PICTURE OF SPIRITUAL ADULTERY (1:2, 3).

1. The northern kingdom of Israel was idolatrous from the very beginning of the divided kingdom, and not one king of Israel knew the LORD. Every king was wicked.
2. The first King Jeroboam had set up a rival worship so that the people would not go to Jerusalem to worship in God's appointed way.
3. Before he became king, Jeroboam had lived for a while in Egypt. First Kings 11:40 says, "Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon."
4. Jeroboam's return from Egypt is recorded in I Kings 12:2.
5. In Egypt, Jeroboam had seen calf-worship, and when he became the king of Israel he introduced this calf-worship to Israel, using the identical words which Aaron and the backslidden Israelites had used when they worshiped the golden calf in the wilderness.

6. "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4).
7. When King Jeroboam made two calves of gold, he said to the people of Israel, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (I Kings 12:28).
6. The prophet Hosea refers to this idolatrous calf-worship in Hosea 13:2. Calf-worship led to the most awful sins and degradation, and this is the background to the book of Hosea.
7. Edward Pusey said, "Calf worship paved the way for the coarser and more cruel worship of nature, under the names of Baal and Ashtaroth, with all their abominations of consecrated child sacrifices, and horrible sensuality."
8. Outwardly the Israelites maintained various ceremonies of the Mosaic law, the feasts of Jehovah, the new moons and Sabbath days, the sacrifices and offerings, and so on, but it was a corrupt, heathenistic worship.
8. Nearly all the murderous usurpers that followed the second King Jeroboam had made alliances with heathen nations which resulted in the introduction of their immoral, corrupt Phoenician and Syrian idolatry.
9. The Old Testament prophets repeatedly condemned this (cf. Jeremiah 3:1-6).
10. Though the book of Hosea deals specifically with the spiritual adultery of Israel, there are plenty of application for today.
11. James 4:4 says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."
12. Revelation 17 describes the apostate tribulation church as a whore.

II. WHY WOULD GOD TELL HOSEA TO MARRY A WHORE?

1. Gomer was called "a wife of whoredoms" by God, who is omniscient.
2. Gomer was called "a wife of whoredoms" in anticipation of her future conduct, not her conduct before she married Hosea.
3. Hosea had to experience deep agony in his own marriage to an unfaithful wife ("a wife of whoredoms" -- i.e., adultery), and it was all ordained by the LORD as an object lesson for him, and a lesson for the nation of Israel, and for all those who read the Bible.

4. G. Campbell Morgan called Hosea "the prophet with the broken heart" because Hosea's message was a heart-breaking message of God's imminent judgment.
5. That message of judgment was not unlike the messages of Jeremiah and most of the other prophets. But what makes Hosea unique is that he had to live it himself before he could preach it to others (1:2).
6. The prophet was commanded to take unto himself "a wife of whoredoms..." (1:2). This was designed to be symbolic of the union of the LORD with His people Israel, who had become idolatrous and wayward (1:2).
7. With unquestioning obedience, Hosea took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim to be his wife (1:3).
8. S. Franklin Logsdon said, "As Israel, after her marriage contract with Jehovah on Mount Sinai, lapsed into spiritual fornication, it is assumed, in order to complete the figure, that Gomer, following the trend of the times, fell into adultery" (*Hosea, People Who Forgot God*).
9. Mark those words: Gomer "fell into adultery." She was not an adulteress when Hosea married her. It would appear that Gomer was pure when Hosea first married her but she later became an adulteress. This marriage is a picture of Jehovah and Israel, who later became unfaithful and lusted after idols.
10. If Gomer was a whore from the beginning, it would be unlikely that Hosea would suffer much because he would expect nothing but heartaches and trouble if he knew he was marrying a harlot.
11. But Hosea did not expect trouble because she was pure when they were married. It was later on that she broke his heart by being unfaithful.
12. Because verse 2 refers to Gomer as "a wife of whoredoms," some have taught that Gomer was a whore when Hosea married her. However, the book of Hosea is a prophetic book, and this is prophetic language. Hosea married a pure woman who later became adulterous.
13. LORD knows the future and the LORD knew Gomer would become unfaithful just as He knew Israel would become unfaithful (1:2).
14. "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms" (1:2) means, "Go, take to yourself a wife who will become a whore."
15. That is why Hosea 1:2 also refers to "children of whoredoms." At this time their children had not yet been born so the language is prophetic.

16. G. Campbell Morgan said, "The statement distinctly calls her a woman of whoredom, but it does not tell us that she was that at that time. It certainly does mean that God knew the possibilities in the heart of Gomer, and that presently they would be manifested in her conduct, and knowing, He commanded Hosea to marry her, knowing also what his experience would do for him in his prophetic work" (*Hosea, The Heart and Holiness of God*).
17. Gomer's sin was known to God beforehand because God is omniscient.
18. Once again we are reminded of the problem of trying to reconcile God's sovereignty with man's free will. The most well-known example is Judas Iscariot. Repeatedly the Bible predicted his treachery, but nevertheless Judas was responsible for his crime.
19. Gomer's adultery allowed Hosea to sense some of the pain that God feels when men and women break His heart.
20. In spite of his wife's adultery, Hosea loved her and brought her back from slavery and degradation. This is a vivid picture of God's relationship with Israel. They were unfaithful. They were wicked, idolatrous backsliders but God still loved them (Hosea 3:1-5).
21. Israel was a whore in every aspect: religiously, in worshipping other gods; socially, in creating a society of adulterers and adulteresses; and politically, in seeking help from other nations rather than from God.

III. THE CHILDREN OF WHOREDOMS (1:2)

1. When Hosea began his ministry, Jeroboam II was the king of Israel and it was a time of great prosperity (1:1).
2. But though Israel was prospering financially, the nation was rotting away spiritually and morally.
3. At this time, Israel was involved in several foreign alliances. Instead of trusting God, they were looking to other nations for help and protection.
4. God's judgment upon Israel is pictured by the names of Hosea's three children.

CONCLUSION:

I. **JEZREEL** (1:4) -- "GOD WILL SCATTER." Israel has been scattered among the nations.

II. **LO-RUHAMA** (1:6) -- "NO MORE MERCY." God would lift His mercy, and He would allow them to suffer for their sin.

III. LO-AMMI -- (1:9) "NOT MY PEOPLE." This refers to this present dispensation when Israel is out of fellowship with God. Verses 10 and 11 await fulfillment and point to the future restoration of Israel.

JEZREEL (1:4) -- "GOD WILL SCATTER." Israel has been scattered among the nations, and will remain scattered until Christ returns.

Jezreel was the valley in which Jehu executed his bloody deeds, when he slew the sons of Ahab (II Kings 10:1-14). Then later on, Shallum slew Zachariah, the descendant of Jehu, eliminating the dynasty of Jehu after four generations (note II Kings 10:30; 15:10-12), thus finally avenging the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu (Hosea 1:4).

LO-RUHAMAH (1:6) -- "NO MORE MERCY." God would lift His mercy, and He would allow them to suffer for their sin.

Hosea's daughter was named Lo-ruhamah, meaning "No more mercy" or "Not to be pitied," symbolizing God's imminent judgment on unfaithful Israel.

LO-AMMI -- (1:9) "NOT MY PEOPLE." This refers to this present dispensation when Israel is out of fellowship with God. Verses 10 and 11 await fulfillment and point to the future restoration of Israel.

The LORD said to Abraham, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Genesis 22:17).

God's original promise to Abraham must still be fulfilled, and both the "children of Judah and the children of Israel" will be gathered together in the last days (Hosea 1:11).