

HOSEA: Message 1

INTRO: As we begin our study of this book of Hosea, you will remember that in the introductory message, I told you about the northern and the southern kingdom. The northern kingdom had as its capital city, Samaria, and it is to this kingdom that this book is addressed.

Now, the name, 'Hosea' means 'salvation'. His name is what God wanted to proclaim to this wayward nation. They needed salvation. Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah but Isaiah lived in Jerusalem and addressed most of his writings to Judah whereas Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom called Israel or Ephraim. He was born during the years Amos prophesied and probably began his ministry as prophet as the years of Amos came to a close. Possibly he learned a lot from Amos about the work of the prophet. We have very little information about this man other than what is given in this book.

This book begins with these words: **The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beer**i ... We know very little about Hosea other than that he was the son of Beer*i*. When the word of the Lord came to a man with a word, that man had the task of conveying that word to the people. He became God's spokesman to the people. It was often an exceedingly difficult task.

Next, in verse 1 we are next told which kings reigned during Hosea's ministry. It was, **...in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel**. This book, unlike some others, gives us the names of the kings that reigned during the prophet's ministry. This is tremendously helpful in knowing the dates of the prophet's ministry. Four kings of the northern kingdom ruled during Hosea's ministry. But Hosea prophesied to the northern kingdom of which he mentions only one king, Jeroboam II. This means that Hosea's ministry began some time before 747 BC. Saul, the first king of Israel, began to reign about 1060 BC. So the kings have been in power now for just over 300 years.

Now it may be questioned why Hosea mentions only one king of the northern kingdom, when he lived during the reigns of several others as well. And I think that Hosea does that in order to show that he prophesied before the events he spoke of took place, for it was not many years after he

prophesied that some of the prophecies began to be fulfilled. If he had mentioned the other kings, it would be argued that he prophesied events after the fact, which was not true.

So, let me liken Israel in Hosea's day to the United States of today. In Hosea's day, the northern kingdom had existed approximately 180 years. The United States is now about 45 years older than that. The northern kingdom in Hosea's day was in tremendous prosperity. The United States has now been for numerous years in tremendous prosperity. The moral decline of Israel was steadily on the increase. According to Chuck Missler these are the things that were happening in Israel. There was widespread adultery, all kinds of social injustice, violent crimes, religious hypocrisy, political rebellion, selfish arrogance and spiritual ingratitude. And, the prophets were sounding warning after warning to Israel.

Now that list I read of the northern kingdom holds true in every part for America today. And in America, the economist prophets have been warning for a long time. And in America, preachers have been warning about the spiritual decline for many years in America. Billy Graham, not a conservative by any stretch of the imagination, said many years ago, "If God does not judge America, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah." In today's America, homosexuality is not a sin, it is an alternative life style. We do not even allow children to grow old enough to offer them to Moloch in the fire. We kill them before they ever get there. Covenants in marriage are meaningless, and we thus come under the major sin of covenant breakers. Sin is rampant on every hand and protected by law. The leaders of the land often live in deep sin, and that with impunity. The likenesses between America, and our world and Hosea's day are striking. In the days of Jeroboam, as far as the people were concerned, there was not a cloud in the sky. It was health, wealth and prosperity. It could not be more like our day.

Freeman says, "The moral condition of Israel, as evidenced by the Historical Books, as well as the prophecy itself, was exceedingly corrupt. The priest, instead of leading the people into righteous living, encouraged them in their sins (4:6-9; 5:1; 6:9). In America, many Christian institutions and pastors are now also encouraging people in their sins. The kings set an example of drunkenness and debauchery

(7:3-5). The people confounded the worship of Yahweh with Baal, while calf worship was prevalent on every hand. The nation rejected God and trusted in foreign alliances(8:9-10)", (Freeman, 177).

And when our text says Hosea began to prophecy in the days of Jeroboam, the message is that he warned them in the days of their wealth, when all looked like it would continue this way forever. So turn to Ezekiel 16 for an interesting verse describing both Israel in Hosea's day and our own day (read 49).

So, that is verse 1, the introduction to the book of Hosea. It is like a book written to America or Canada, a time of great wealth and a time of tremendous moral decline!

Now in my outline of the book, which I did, probably almost 20 years ago I outline this book as giving two messages, and both are about the *chesed* love of God. In both messages the prophet gives first a picture of God's steadfast love, and then a proclamation of that love. And in both in the picture and in the proclamation, the prophet gives first the blight and then the blessing. So for every negative there is a positive, and the positive happens last. This morning we will consider Hosea's first message. It covers from 1:2-2:23.

By the way, let me mention that the book of Hosea is quoted from 10 times in the NT.

I. MESSAGE #1 (1:1-2:23)

A. PICTURE OF GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE (1:1-2:1)

1. Blight (1:1-9)

So we begin with message 1, the blight part of the picture of God's steadfast love. We begin with a very hard command given by God to Hosea in verse 2 (read). And here is the question: Did he take a wife who was a prostitute? Or was this all an allegory or a vision? Or did he pretend this of his own proper wife and he gave her the character of such a woman? Some take the view that he took a woman who later became a prostitute. Others argue that it was not allowed an Israelite to marry an harlot. But this was

only forbidden to the High Priest, not a prophet (Lev. 21:14).

It is my view that it best to take the text as it stands. Here was a godly man. I suppose that he was known for his godliness. And then he is instructed to go to an unthinkable place to marry an unthinkable woman. And if I am correct, in taking such a woman, he, as prophet, will have felt the very pain God felt about Israel. When God took Israel, she too had come out of idolatry, the sin to which prostitution is likened here.

Furthermore, he is to take a woman who would bear him children of harlotry. Again, this is difficult. Does she bare him children from other men? And again, I think that is the case. That is what happens when you marry such a woman. And the reason God gives for placing such a terrible burden on the prophet, is that Israel has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord. So, Israel is both an harlot and she was bearing children from other gods than Jehovah God. Remember that Israel is viewed, in the OT, as the wife of God.

So Hosea, this godly man, finds an impure woman by name of Gomer. The name Gomer signifies perfection or completion in the passive sense. She was complete in her sinfulness or had gone to the farthest length possible according to Keil and Delitzch. One can hardly bear with this godly man as he hurts so deeply to be required to do something so horrifying for the sake of his fellow, failing, sinning Jews. But he does it.

And she conceived and bore him a son, though from a different man. And the Lord instructs Hosea to call this son 'Jezreel'. Let me explain just briefly. King Ahab, wanted a certain vineyard but the man would not sell it to him. Well, his wicked wife Jezebel, a Canaanite woman of Phoenician background, a woman forbidden the Jews to marry, had the innocent owner of the vineyard killed and she gave it to her husband. That was a long time ago. God never forgot. And in this

first son of Hosea, God remembers. God had told Ahab through a prophet what would happen and Ahab repented and then God said, "I will do it later." Now in this son is the prophecy of that 'later'.

The name 'Jezreel' means sown, or scattered. And it pictures that Israel will be sown in the world or scattered into the world. But this name Jezreel may have been chosen, not only for its meaning but because of all the iniquities committed in Jezreel by Jehu. K&D say that, "With the name of the first child, Jezreel, the prophet had, as it were with a single stroke, set before the king and the kingdom generally the destruction that awaited them."

So, look at the prophecy of verses 4-5 (read). At the time this is written it is at least before 747 BC. That is 25+ years before this prophecy was fulfilled. In 722, a date to remember for the northern kingdom to which Hosea prophesied, the Assyrians came and took Israel captive. The horrors of that captivity are almost beyond description! If Israel had only heeded the cry of the prophets!

In verse 5 God said He would break the bow, speaking of the military force of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel. It was in the valley of Jezreel that Israel's kingdom came to an end. Hosea lived to see the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Well, Gomer conceived again. This time it was a daughter. And God said he was to call her "Lo-Ruhamah." So let us read verses 6 (read). Now the Hebrew word for mercy is 'ruchamaw'. And 'lo' means 'no'. So this young lady is called, "Lo Ruchamaw", which means 'no mercy' or 'uncompassionated' or 'no compassion.' So you can imagine the days of this prophet. He has a son called Jezreel. Every time they call his name, they are reminded of the unfulfilled judgment of this kingdom. And every time they call this daughter they are reminded by God there will be no more mercy.

This past year Dr. David Reagan wrote a little booklet called, 'A Prophetic Manifesto.' Here are the first words, "America is finished!" According to him it is too late for America to turn around. It is only a matter of time now.

Now there is a Psalm that says God's mercy endures forever. Psalm 136 has 26 verses and 26 times it says God's mercy endures forever. But I want to tell you something I believe. God's mercy, like His love, is conditional. If you study the Bible, God's mercy is extended to those who love Him and keep His commandments. And though, God would no longer have mercy, 'lo ruhamaw', on the northern kingdom, look at verse 7 (read). The southern kingdom had not yet departed from God to the extent the southern kingdom had, and therefore God still had mercy on it. Later, when Judah faced this very same army that destroyed Israel God delivered them (II Kings 19:35).

Let me here take a moment to warn sinners. There comes a time for individuals as well, that the time of 'lo ruhamaw' comes. Today is the day of salvation.

And so we go to verse 8-11 (read). Gomer's second son and third child after marriage to Hosea is to be called 'Lo Ammi". Ammi means 'My people'. Lo Ammi means 'Not My people." The message to Israel in this son is, "For you are not My people, and I will not be your God." May I remind us all here, that if we do not make God our God by repentance and faith, He is not our God. Many, many people pray like this, "Our Father which art in heaven..." But He is not their Father.

Now let me remind us once more the time in which Hosea is prophesying this. It is in a time like the time we are in right at this very moment. All is good. We are drunk with riches. Israel thought all was well because of how they were prospering. But, the clouds on the horizon were getting darker and darker. But surely they will blow over. Go away prophet.

2. Blessing (1:10-2:1)

So we go to 1:10-2:1 (read). You see, the prophets are not all gloom and doom as we have said in the first message. Cohen and Vandermay, in their commentary on this book say, "Between verses 9 and 10 lie volumes of Jewish history that fulfill the judgment of Jezreel (pg 23). Verse 9 was prophetic at the time it was written, but it was fulfilled between 20 and 30 years later. But verses 10 and 11 have never been fulfilled yet. And some day Jeremiah 31:18-20 will go into fulfillment which says, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: 'You have chastised me, and I was chastised, Like an untrained bull; Restore me, and I will return, For You are the LORD my God. Surely, after my turning, I repented; And after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, Because I bore the reproach of my youth.' *Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the LORD."

And when that happens, verses 1:10-2:1 will be fulfilled.

Cohen and Vandermay go on to say that six specific blessings may be seen in the following these verses: There will be national increase v.10a; spiritual awakening 10b; national reunion 11a; Messianic leadership 11b; victory over foes 11c; and complete restoration of the covenant relationship 2:1."

They will have one head and that one head will be the Messiah. Then they will be Ruchamaw and Ammi. God will have mercy on His people.

B. PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE (2:2-23)

1. Blight (2:2-13)

Well, we have had the picture of Israel's idolatry graphically displayed. Now will come the

message in words that apply that picture. This is the proclamation. In 2a we have the reason for the charge God is bringing against Israel (read). Israel has become a harlot. And in 2b comes the divine exhortation (read). When God exposes, He seeks repentance. When the message is preached in church and God speaks to my heart, He is seeking repentance. It is not just to convict me, it is to change me. We like to leave the place, so the conviction will go away.

Now there is a danger to failing to repent. It is not different for us today than it was for Israel of old. We find the danger in verse 3 (read). Now notice in verses 4-5 that judgment extends beyond those who live in sin (read). Here is a word to parents. We cannot live in sin without it affecting our children. Many, many children suffer for their parents sin. In this case it is just the mother, and her sins extend far beyond herself.

In the Bible, the picture of the relationship between God and Israel is that of marriage; God is the husband and Israel is the wife. And Israel continually played the harlot. The far reaching consequences of a sinning mother's actions are here clearly pictured and God says she will be disciplined. And God now shows what will happen in verse 6-13.

So let us read verse 6-7a (read). First, God said He would hedge up their way with thorns. They would run after their sinful desires and God would confuse their ways. Israel would seek her fulfillment in the ways of worship of other nations, but she would not be satisfied. And when He had hedged her up like this long enough, she would then realize how good she had it when she lived in obedience to God. She had been blessed once. She had been rich, but she had forgotten where those blessings came from, and now she would learn all about that. Verses 6-8 then indicate how, when she is in her darkness, she will reconsider God.

Now look at verses 9-13 (read). In verses 9-10, God says He will take away His blessing on the grain and fruit produce of the land, and the productivity of the sheep flocks and the plants used to make linen. It is amazing what it is like when that happens. And the other nations, after whom she is longing, will see her in her lack of clothing and no one will deliver her.

Then, the Lord would take away all joy. The feast seasons that were so rich in laughter and joy, would come to cease. Instead of laughter, it would be a dirge (read 9-11).

And last, note verses 12-13 (read). Israel will learn, but only through very hard lessons. Her harlotry must be expelled in order to bring her back. She will learn through suffering.

In the introductory message I mentioned that the prophets are not all gloom and doom, and when Israel returns to the Lord, blessing will follow.

2. Blessing (2:14-23)

The book of Hosea was written, according to Charles Ryrie, in 710 BC. That is a mere 12 years before Assyria came and took them captive. That is a date to remember, 722 BC. And between the time that this prophecy took place until the fulfillment described in the blessing which follows, there will be over 2700 years. So, when we go to verse 14, we will move to the time of Israel's blessing. And let me mention that many of the things that have to happen before that blessing can take place are happening in our very day.

So, in verses 14-15, Israel is restored to her land. This has already happened. In verses 16-17, she is restored to her God. This has not yet happened. Then she will be restored to peace with creation, verse 18. Here is the millennium, and it has not yet happened. Then the marriage relationship between God and Israel will be restored (19-20). This has not yet happened. Then God will restore His blessing of the work of

their hands (21-22). And then will come the final blessing when god will once more say, "Ammi!" You are My people! And they will say, "You are my God!"

CONCL: So, we have had the picture and the proclamation of God's chesed, the Hebrew word for his unfailing love for Israel. In the picture, Hosea married an impure woman. She was unfaithful both before and after her marriage to Hosea and brought forth children that were not her husband's. That is a picture of Israel. God took her out of an idolatrous situation, married her and she became unfaithful once more and brought forth that which comes from other gods.

That was the blight. But God loved her so much that even then, in the blight, He sought to turn her back to Himself and in the end, according to the promise of the Word of God, she will return. It has not happened yet. God scattered her among the nations and there He allowed her to be whipped again and again. Hitler's holocaust was part of that. Then He began to draw her back to the land of Israel. That is an ongoing process right to this very day. Even now, Israel is returning many Ethiopian Jews to Israel every year. And here, in this land, after years of heartache, Israel will turn back to Him. That has not happened yet.

In God's proclamation of His love for Israel He tells how He fed her, clothed her, and cared for her. But she credited other gods with what He had done. And then, when she needed her lover's help, the help of the other gods, they forsook her. Blind Israel. But God said, "I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. And from there, He would return her to her land, and once more bring the blessing of nature on her. And there He would once more betroth her, and He would say to her, "You are My people!" And she will say, "You are my God!"

Today we stand within sight of the fulfillment of these prophesies.

