

HOSEA

Author: Hosea

Date: 755 – 710 B.C.

Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel beginning about thirty years before Israel fell to Assyria. Outwardly, the nation was enjoying a time of prosperity and growth; but inwardly, moral corruption and spiritual adultery permeated the lives of the people. Hosea was instructed by God to marry an unfaithful woman, and he found in his own life a vivid illustration of the unfaithfulness of God's people and the faithfulness of God. Hosea repeatedly echoes his threefold message: God abhors the sins of His people; judgment is certain; but God's love stands firm. While Hosea and Amos were prophesying in the northern kingdom (Israel), Isaiah and Micah were ministering to the southern kingdom (Judah). Hosea was a prophet to the last seven kings of Israel, all evil.

Hosea's name means "salvation," and his message provides one of the Old Testament's most eloquent expressions of God's mercy. Hosea had real compassion for his people, and his personal suffering because of the behavior of his wife gave him insight into God's grief over Israel's sin. Thus, his words of coming judgment are passionate but tempered with a heart of tenderness.

It is a story of one-sided love and faithfulness that represents the relationship between God and Israel. As Gomer is married to Hosea, so Israel is to God. Israel's spiritual idolatry is illustrated by Gomer's physical adultery. Both relationships disintegrate—Gomer runs after other men, and Israel runs after other gods. Hosea's message reflects the terrible fascination of Israel with Baal worship. Baal means "lord, owner, possessor, or husband." Baal worship involved fertility rites that included ritual prostitution. Baal was the other lover to whom Israel most often turned.

Theme: God's love for Israel is steadfast in spite of their continued unfaithfulness which was vividly portrayed through Hosea's marriage.

Key verses: "I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord" (2:20). "I have spoken by the prophets and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets" (12:10). "Yet, I am the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt, and you shall know no god but Me; For there is no savior besides Me" (13:4).

Outline

- I. The Adulterous Wife and Faithful Husband (Chapters 1 – 3)
 - A. The Prophetic Marriage of Hosea to Gomer (1:1 – 2:1)
 - B. The Application of the Adultery of Gomer (2:2-23)
 - C. The Restoration of Gomer to Hosea (3:1-5)
- II. The Adulterous Israel and the Faithful Lord (Chapters 4 – 14)
 - A. The Spiritual Adultery of Israel (4:1 – 6:3)
 - B. The Refusal of Israel to Repent of Her Adultery (6:4 – 8:14)
 - C. The Judgment of Israel by God (9:1 – 10:15)
 - D. The Restoration of Israel to the Lord (11:1 – 14:9)