

28 - Hosea

Hosea

Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA

Hosea is the first book of the 12 minor prophets. Hosea directed this prophecy toward Northern Israel, which he called Ephraim. He prophesied for almost 40 years, during the reigns of 7 different kings, 4 of whom were assassinated. It was a time when the unfaithfulness of Israel was bearing bitter fruit. During the time of King Rehoboam, son of Solomon, ten tribes of Israel had broken away and established a separate nation. Later, the capital became Samaria. In order to consolidate his own power and close the door of a later reunion, Jeroboam I invented a state religion. He set up two golden calves--one in Bethel and the other in Dan--for the people to worship. The kings and people of Northern Israel had persisted in this idolatry until the final demise of the nation in 722-21 BC, at the hands of the Assyrian Empire.

God loved his people in spite of their unfaithfulness, and, in order to show them his faithfulness and love, he sent his prophet Hosea to call them to repent. Hosea was told to preach not only with his mouth, but to demonstrate God's faithful love with his life as well. He was told to marry a prostitute and love her and be faithful to her to the end. Even when she left him and returned to her old life, he was sent to find her and bring her back. God's love for unfaithful Israel was like that. The first three chapters are about Hosea's family; chapters 4-14 are about the unfaithful nation and the faithful God.

GOD'S BROKEN HEART

Hosea 1:1-2:1

Key Verse: 1:2

1. Go, take an adulterous wife (1:1-5)

Hosea did not reserve his personal life--even his marriage--for himself. God told him to marry a prostitute and have children by her. Hosea obeyed. His first son, Jezreel (God sows or scatters), was named for the valley where Jehu had massacred the house of Ahab (2Ki 9-10). King Jeroboam II was of Jehu's line. Hosea warns of God's impending judgment on Israel. God would break and scatter this unfaithful people.

2. Gomer's children (1:6-2:1)

Hosea's wife conceived and bore a daughter--father unknown--whose name was "Not-Loved." God would not forgive or save unfaithful Israel, but he would save Judah. Then, Gomer had another son--a child of adultery--who was named "Lo-Ammi" (Not My People). He said of Israel, "You are not my people and I am not your God." But he would sow new seed in Jezreel, and raise up a new Israel from the Gentile world (Ro 9:24-25).

Prayer: Lord, your heart is broken because of our unfaithfulness. Cleanse my heart of all idols and help me to worship you alone.

One Word: God used a broken-hearted prophet

ISRAEL PUNISHED FOR UNFAITHFULNESS

Hosea 2:2-13

Key Verse: 2:8

1. The ungrateful and unfaithful wife (2-8)

Israel was like an unfaithful wife to her husband God. God had blessed her and provided for her abundantly. But she chased after other lovers--she worshiped the Canaanite gods. She did not acknowledge God as the source of blessing, even though he was the one who had lavished his blessings on her. She said that grain, oil and new wine came from Baal, the Canaanite fertility god. Unfaithfulness begins with ingratitude.

2. Therefore I will take away my blessings (9-13)

In order to teach the ungrateful people that God is the source of all blessing, he would remove the blessings Israel took for granted. He would make them like a parched desert. He would ruin Israel's vines and fig trees, which she had said were given her by Baal. He would take away the wool and linen which covered her nakedness. He would put a stop to her hypocritical worship services, and punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals.

Prayer: Lord, you are the source of every blessing. Give me a thankful heart.

One Word: Acknowledge God and thank him

I WILL BETROTH YOU IN FAITHFULNESS

Hosea 2:14-23

Key Verse: 2:19,20

1. I will make a door of hope (14-15)

When trouble comes to punish wilful sinners, they can become fatalistic and think that there is no hope. But God is a God of hope. He promised to make the valley of trouble (Achor) a door of hope. There is a redemptive purpose in his punishment; he wants sinners to repent and return to him. He will restore repentant sinners and put a song in their hearts.

2. Betrothed in righteousness and justice (16-23)

God wants his people to love him. He does not want them to worship Baal. When they respond to his love and acknowledge that he is the Lord, a chain reaction of love will be put into action. The Creator will respond to the sky; the sky will respond to the earth; the earth will respond with fruitfulness. God will sow and plant his people in the land. His people will include the Gentile world (Ro 9:25; 1Pe 2:9-10).

Prayer: Lord, teach my heart to respond to your love; help me to be faithful to your loving covenant forever.

One Word: Betrothed to the Lord forever

GO, LOVE YOUR WIFE AGAIN

Hosea 3:1-5

Key Verse: 3:1b

1. Though she is an adulteress (1-3)

God asked Hosea to do something that no man can do. His wife walked out on him, sought other lovers and became a slave. God told him to buy her back from slavery, take her into his home, and love her again. Hosea obeyed; he brought her back and told her to live with him and not with any other man.

2. They will seek the Lord and his King (4-5)

During Hosea's lifetime Israel had 7 kings. All of them were godless. So they had no king and no God--and no peace. Their only hope was to return to God and accept his appointed king--a descendant of David. This prophecy looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, the true King, the promised descendant of David. When we accept Christ and acknowledge God's righteous rule in our lives, we have true peace. We have no right to come to God, but God seeks us, his sinful, rebellious people, just as Hosea sought his wife and bought her back from slavery.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your love that seeks out and redeems sinners like me.

One Word: Seek the Lord, for he seeks you

WHEN THERE IS NO LOVE OF GOD

Hosea 4:1-19

Key Verse: 4:6

1. No love of God in the land (1-3)

If there is no faithfulness, no love, and no acknowledgement of God in the land, a nation is godless. A godless land is full of cursing, lying, murder, stealing, adultery and violence. The land mourns, and birds and fish die.

2. Like people, like priests (4-9)

When priests and prophets do not teach the word of God, but only feed on the sins of the people, the people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Those who ignore the law of God cannot be God's servants.

3. Ephraim is joined to idols (10-19)

The idolatry invented by Jeroboam had become deeply ingrained in Israel's culture. Baal worship had been added by Ahab. These, with the Canaanite religions, encouraged free sex and drunken orgies. Spiritual adultery destroys people. When people are not faithful to God, they will not be faithful to human commitments either. Ephraim persisted in unfaithfulness to God until the nation was destroyed.

Prayer: Lord, turn our nation back to the Bible, so that we may not be destroyed from lack of knowledge.

One Word: Don't reject God's word

UNTIL THEY ADMIT THEIR GUILT

Hosea 5:1-15

Key Verse: 5:15

1. A spirit of prostitution in the heart (1-12)

Idolatry is spiritual prostitution. Northern Israel had persisted in idolatry since its first king, Jeroboam I, put idols in Dan and Bethel to keep the people from going to Jerusalem. Their unfaithfulness to God had become like a disease in their bones. Their hearts were infected with a spirit of prostitution. So they did not acknowledge the Lord; their arrogance had grown. Their evil deeds and pride kept them from repenting. Now, even though they seek God with many animal sacrifices, they cannot find him (6). They must first repent.

2. Only God can heal (13-15)

Israel sought to strengthen her position by asking for Assyrian support. But Assyria was bent on military conquest. Ephraim did not want to give up her idols. She was like Hosea's prostitute wife. Judah was in danger of making the same mistake. God can heal and protect his people when they admit their guilt and seek his face.

Prayer: Lord, take away our pride and help us to come to you with repentant hearts.

One Word: Admit guilt and seek the Lord

COME, LET US RETURN TO THE LORD

Hosea 6:1-11

Key Verse: 6:3

1. He has injured, but he will heal (1-3)

We can trust God's love. Sometimes he wounds his people so that he can really heal them. We must not give up when he punishes, for that is the very time to press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear, and we will live in the warmth of his presence.

2. Your love is like the morning mist (4-11)

Israel, both north and south, claimed to love God. But they were quick to change their affections for the sake of small benefits. How can God help such people? He sent Bible teachers to them, to teach them that God wants mercy, not superficial religious ceremonies. He wants righteousness, not violence. His word is like a sharp sword. It pierces the heart. He wants his people to acknowledge him as God and keep his covenant.

Prayer: Lord, your love for me is steadfast and sure; my love is like the morning mist. I come to you today as I am. Heal me and put your faithful love in my heart.

One Word: Press on to acknowledge God (3)

I LONG TO REDEEM THEM

Hosea 7:1-16

Key Verse: 7:13c

1. Their hearts are like a hot oven (1-7)

God longed to restore Ephraim, but each time he extended his hand of healing to them, their unrepented sins were exposed. The leaders practiced deceit and robbed the people; the hearts of king and people smoldered with passion like a hot oven. The passions of intrigue, deceit and lust smolder unseen for a while; then burst into the flames of violent acts. Four kings of Israel were assassinated during Hosea's lifetime.

2. Ephraim is like a senseless dove (8-16)

Ephraim's only hope was to repent and turn to God. But like a senseless dove, she flitted here and there, looking for help from foreign nations and committing adultery with foreign gods. The

people wailed on their beds at night, but still did not call out to God. They would surely be destroyed. Still, God longed to forgive and heal them--if only they would come to him.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to be like a hot oven or a silly dove. Help me to live according to your word.

One Word: God longs to forgive and heal

ISRAEL HAS FORGOTTEN HIS MAKER

Hosea 8:1-14

Key Verse: 8:14a

1. An eagle is over the house of the Lord (1-6)

The eagle stands for Assyria. The Assyrian invasion was imminent. This was God's hand of judgment on those who broke his covenant. Israel cried out to God for help too late. Jeroboam I had set up two calf idols and said, "Here are your gods!" Every king who followed him continued this idolatry. Israel's history was a series of bloody coups d'etat (4).

2. Sow the wind, reap the whirlwind (7-10)

In time of crisis, Israel did not seek God's help, but sought the help of the super-power Assyria. They would be soon swallowed up in the Assyrian invasion.

3. Altars for sacrifice or for sinning? (11-14)

God is not pleased when his people worship him in their own way. He has taught us how to serve him in the Bible. We must remember our Maker, read his Book, and do what is right according to his standards. Doing it "my way" leads to death.

Prayer: Lord, take the root of pride and the idol of selfishness from my heart and life.

One Word: Remember your Maker

WHEN GOD'S SERVANTS LOOK LIKE FOOLS

Hosea 9:1-17

Key Verse: 9:7b-8a

1. God and his servants watch over the land (1-9)

Because the people of Ephraim prostituted themselves with idols, they could not please God, no matter what they did. It was like the time of the Judges (Jdg 19). God would punish them and

scatter them throughout Egypt and Assyria. Their sins and hostility to God had become so great that anyone who tried to teach the Bible was called a fool and a maniac. God's servants became candidates for mental hospitals. Yet, God's servants were the ones who, with God himself, watched over the land.

2. As vile as the thing they loved (10-17)

When God saved Israel and cared for her in the desert, she was so beautiful (10). But she turned to Baal and became as vile as what she worshiped. So God would drive them out of his house as a man drives out an unfaithful wife. But God still longs for his people to repent and return to him.

Prayer: Lord, give me courage to be a fool for Christ. Help me to grow in his image. Turn the heart of our people to God in repentance and faith.

One Word: Those who abandon God are the fools

IT IS TIME TO SEEK THE LORD

Hosea 10:1-15

Key Verse: 10:12

1. Sow righteousness; reap fruit of love (1-13a)

Israel is compared to a fruitful, spreading vine. Though he seemed to be prosperous and healthy, he was sick. The people worshiped the calf-idol and many other idols as well, for they had been deeply corrupted by Baal worship with all of its immoral practices. There was no stable leadership. Revolution after revolution rocked the land and filled men's hearts with malice. The sin committed in Gibeah (Jdg 19 ff) was like the sin of Sodom, and the fratricidal war which followed was certainly not God's solution to the sin problem. It was time to sow righteousness, not wickedness.

2. Don't depend on your own strength (13b-15)

When the Israelites tried to bring order to their land by building a bigger army and a stronger police force, they only made a society that was more corrupt and violence-filled. The only hope of a nation is people who seek the Lord with repentant hearts.

Prayer: Lord, we turn to you. Help us to sow righteousness. We can only trust you to bring good fruit from the seed.

One Word: Seek God; sow righteousness

HOW CAN I GIVE YOU UP?

Hosea 11:1-11

Key Verse: 11:4

1. Out of Egypt I called my son (1-7)

God loved Israel. Israel was his firstborn son. God brought him forth from the womb of Egypt, and taught him to walk in the desert. God led his people with cords of love; he lifted the yoke from their necks and stooped to feed them. But they rejected his love. They turned instead to idols they could see, and to sensual, corrupt religious practices. What could God do? He would allow the aggressor to invade, conquer and rule them.

2. I am God, not man (8-11)

When God thought of giving up his people, destroying them as he had the cities around Sodom, his heart was moved. His compassion was aroused. It is his privilege as God to change his mind, so he would give them another chance. He would teach them to fear God. He would roar like a lion, and they would come trembling to him. God is the Redeemer. He never gives up hoping.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to hope, not despair. Give me a love like yours.

One Word: God's steadfast love

YOU MUST RETURN TO YOUR GOD

Hosea 11:12-12:14

Key Verse: 12:6

1. Ephraim's deceit; God's grace (11:12-12:8)

Jacob was a deceiver who tasted the grace of God and was changed into a man of blessing. Now, Jacob's descendants were reverting to his deceptive ways--and God was displeased. Hosea reminds Israel of how Jacob had supplanted his brother, and how he had struggled with man and with God--and how he had talked with God at Bethel. Now was the time to return to God and talk with him again--not the time to boast about wealth acquired by deceitful means. Wealth cannot hide sin.

2. Listen to the prophets (12:9-14)

Israel had become rich and proud. God reminded them of how he had brought them out of slavery in Egypt and watched over them as they lived in tents in the desert. God's word came to his people through the prophets. He cared for his people through shepherd prophets like Jacob and Moses. To ignore God's word and seek help from Egypt or Assyria was to feed on the wind.

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember your grace, and to remember who I was. Help our people to return to you.

One Word: Listen to God's word

THERE IS NO SAVIOR BUT GOD

Hosea 13:1-16

Key Verse: 13:4

1. Ephraim worshiped idols and died (1-3)

When Israel worshiped God she was a powerful nation. When Israel worshiped Baal, she died. She lost her conscience and her national purpose. She even stooped to the depth of offering human sacrifices. So she would become like the chaff which the wind blows away.

2. Remember and repent (4-6)

God brought them out of Egypt. He cared for them in the desert. He is their only Savior; but people forget so quickly. God's people forgot as soon as they were fed and were satisfied.

3. God punishes and God redeems (7-16)

God's punishment would be like a lion that attacks and tears apart. He would destroy them. But even his most terrible punishment is to lead them to repentance; he longs to redeem and restore them (14).

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember your basic grace; you set me free from bondage to sin and gave me your life.

One Word: God is our only Savior

YOUR FRUITFULNESS COMES FROM GOD

Hosea 14:1-9

Key Verse: 14:8b

1. Take these words with you and return (1-8)

What are the words we must take to the Lord? "Lord, forgive my sins, and receive me by your grace. Help me to offer to you the fruit of my lips" (2b). Anyone who returns to the Lord with humble repentance in his heart and on his lips is welcomed. Assyria cannot save Israel, nor can war-horses or idols. Only God can heal man's waywardness and love them freely. God's love is

like dew that waters the lilies; he is like a great tree in whose shade his people can dwell.
Fruitfulness comes from God.

2. Who is wise? (9)

The one who realized that repentance is the way of life; the one who discerns that the way of the Lord is right, and leaves the path of rebellion to walk in God's ways, is wise.

Prayer: Lord, I return to you with a repentant heart to claim your promised forgiveness. Help me to drink the dew of your love, rest in your shade and walk in your ways.

One Word: Repentance brings blessing