

HOSEA

“The Lord loves Israel despite her sin.”

INTRODUCTION

A study of the prophet Hosea will enrich and strengthen our faith.

In times of spiritual and moral repression and decay, God raises up men (prophets) in whose mouth He puts His word and then He sends them to the people in an effort to turn them back to Himself.

The prophets emphasized the sole deity of God, pointed out His majesty, holiness, righteousness and justice and made known the principles on which God would act toward people—both His own and the heathen.

The prophets were inspired and spoke as the Spirit directed, but God allowed the personality and background of each man to shine through His message.

In the Old Testament there were at least five classes of speakers.

1. Moses, the lawgiver.
2. The wise men (sages) who gave counsel.
3. Priests, who taught the Law.
4. Prophets, through whom God spoke His Word.
5. Psalmists, who were the singers or poets in Israel. The prophet is a speaker of or for God.

A prophet is one who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit speaks the words and thoughts of God whether they relate to the past, present, or to the future.

There are two classes of preachers—the good preacher who has something to say, and the poor preacher who have to say something. There is yet another and higher class. It consists of those who both have something to say and who have to say it. Such are the prophets.

Along with the true there arose false prophets. These false prophets fall into two general classes, mercenary and political. Some prophesied for money, others for political favor.

There are three things one should keep constantly in mind as he or she studies a work of the prophets.

1. It is necessary to understand the political, moral, social, and religious conditions at the time in which the prophets lived and preached.
2. It is necessary to observe what the prophets consider is God's relationship to the heathen nations with whom the Jewish people came into contact with.
3. The student should particularly regard the prophets teaching of a future kingdom and the king to be fulfilled in One who was to come (Jesus Christ).

The message of the book of Hosea is that God is a great and unceasing lover. He is willing to go to any length to cause His people to pause, look upon, and come to know the lover who is wooing them.

Introduction for the book of Hosea

Hosea's name means "salvation", "deliverance", or "help." Hosea was a native of the north, possibly of Samaria. We know nothing of his occupation.

Hosea was married to a woman of harlotry, one brought up under the influence of idolatry and in whose character would have been planted the seeds of immorality. Out of this experience with Gomer, Hosea comes to understand God's feelings for Israel.

Through his own broken heart over the conduct of Gomer and the realization that his children were actually not his own, Hosea could see God and Israel through tear dimmed eyes and a broken heart in an experience not unlike that of the Lord.

Hosea was one of keen sympathy whose message was filled with loving kindness. He had a keen sense of righteous indignation at sin, pleading with people to turn away from sin, to serve God.

The people were without knowledge. They were ignorant of God and His laws. The people were victims of two systems of false religion: calf worship introduced by Jeroboam I, and the Baal worship stressed by Ahab and Jezebel.

Hosea's message to the people emphasizes the righteousness of God—God is love. It also emphasizes that the doom of the nation is inevitable.

Chapter 1

Verse 1

Hosea declares that his message was “the Word of the Lord” which God gave to him.

Verses 2-9

God's first instruction to Hosea was to take a wife of harlotry.

She was not a harlot prior to their marriage but was so influenced by her surroundings and environment that she became immoral.

To Hosea and Gomer were born three children: “Jezreel meaning “God will scatter” or “God will sow;” “Lo-ruhamah” meaning “no pity” or “no mercy;” and “Lo-ammi” meaning “not my people.”

Verses 10-11

The ten tribes are before the prophet's mind. At some future time they would be called the “sons of the living God.” This would come about when the Jews and the Gentiles accept Christianity.

Chapter 2

Verses 1-7

God is now saying to the nation through Hosea, “that which Hosea had experienced in his unfaithful wife, Gomer, God had experienced in the unfaithful nation, Israel.

Verse 2

God cannot be a husband to a wife (Israel) unless she puts away her adulteries. Instead of remaining faithful as a wife, Israel had played the harlot after “her lovers,” (the baalim), bearing children of wickedness.

Verses 6-7

She would be unable to escape because of the path hedged up with thorns, and a wall built against her. She would seek after the baalim but would not find them. Completely baffled, she would return to her first husband, God, realizing it was better with Him than where she was now, serving idols.

Verses 8-13

Israel had refused to recognize God as the source of her blessings and wealth and had used those riches in praise of Baal. Baal was considered the father of the gods, and the worship of Baal was associated with certain fertility rites.

Israelites two sins are mentioned in verse 13, “worshipping the Baals, and forgetting God.”

Verses 14-20

“Wilderness” means spiritual discipline, guidance, and blessing. To Israel’s heart God would speak a message of love. They would have their blessings restored.

The judgment through which she must pass and the captivity in Assyria (11:5), would be a door through which Israel must enter into the new life with God.

A new covenant would restore the relationship between God and His people; a spirit of peace would characterize them. This new covenant would be spiritual. God would be their protection and peace. God’s people would be betrothed to Him forever in an uninterrupted betrothal. The betrothal indicates a new marriage based on the New Covenant.

Verses 21-23

These verses contain promises referring to the Christian Age under Christ. They have been fulfilled in Christ and do not refer to some future dispensation.

This prophecy has been fulfilled. God brought His people back into Canaan, then brought them to Himself under a New Covenant, and bestowed all spiritual blessings on them in Christ.

He established His kingdom, showered mercy on them, and made them His own. (Ephesians 1:3)

Chapter 3

Verses 1-5

Hosea, the prophet, tells of his second symbolic marriage in which he buys Gomer back to himself. God still loved Israel even though she had turned to Baalism. Hosea buys back Gomer for the price of a slave—a wounded slave. (Exodus 21:32)

But until she proves herself, she would not be to Hosea as a wife, nor would he be to her as a husband.

Verse 4

Israel would go into Assyrian captivity for a period of time and be without worship. From this short chapter we can learn:

1. Israel had gone into captivity—left God.
2. She would be destroyed as a nation and scattered.
3. Later they would be gathered together becoming God's people obtaining mercy.
4. Their fullness would come in a later dispensation under Christ.

Chapter 4

Verses 1-5

God has a lawsuit against His people. Moral corruption has infiltrated everyday life on every hand and as a result the people will be carried away.

Hosea is speaking to the Ten Tribes of Israel. His experience with Gomer had prepared him to see the nation and its harlotry behavior toward God.

God's case against the people was that there was no faithfulness or kindness or knowledge of God in the land—no truthfulness either in their speech or in their actions.

Verses 6-10

The “stumbling block” was a lack of knowledge. The priests were primarily to blame because they are responsible for the instruction of the people. For this the people were being destroyed.

The priests fed themselves on the sins of the people; for the more the people sinned the more the sacrifices were offered for sin, the more the benefit to the priests.

Verses 11-14

Their altars were usually erected on the top of the mountains, under trees of heavy foliage. In such places of worship their daughters and brides committed adultery, a practice that resulted from their base concept of religion.

Verses 15-19

God's Warning is that Judah learn from Israel. Do not act like a lamb that follows or a stubborn cow refusing to yield to the yoke.

Ephraim (Israel) is so joined to her idols that recovery now seems impossible. There is no hope. Israel heads straight ahead into the chasm of utter ruin. Destruction must come and when it comes it will be as a tornado, wrapping the nation up in its wings and carrying the people away.

Chapter 5

Verses 1-7

Idolatry is found in all phases of life and makes punishment inevitable.

They cannot hide from God nor can they return because they know not, nor were they in a condition of heart to be taught. Israel was proud of her

arrogance, combined with the worldly wealth, false power, idolatry, and accomplishments.

Judah will stumble too, about a century later. There will be an attempt to seek the Lord, but they will not find Him. Their search will come too late. As Gomer bore children of harlotry to Hosea, so Israel had born strange children to God.

The “new moon” as used by the prophet means that the sacrifices to their gods at the time of the new moon would bring full and complete destruction and not deliverance.

Verses 8-15

The prophet sees judgment beginning to fall on the nation coming from without and within. There is still time to avert the judgment but Israel ignores the alarm. Moth and rotteness work slowly, but they destroy completely.

Ephraim and Judah would be brought to nothing. Instead of Ephraim turning to God, she sought to make an alliance with Assyria.

God would be as a lion tearing to pieces and then going away. Assyria was God’s instrument of judgment. They will be carried away as booty. God will leave them until they are ready to seek Him.

Chapter 6

Verses 1-11

After a short period of time they would seek the Lord but they would not be sincere. Their attitude was lacking in deep and genuine repentance. God is not deceived by their shallowness of their conduct.

God delights in a loyal and faithful love, and not sacrifice.

God had placed Adam in Eden, made a covenant with him and when Adam violated that covenant, he was expelled from Eden. God had placed Israel in a good land and made with them a covenant which they had broken and now they must be expelled.

Verse 9

The priests are characterized as gangsters who lie in wait to murder and rob. They commit great deeds of lust and wickedness.

Shechem was a city of priests and a city of refuge. But now she has become a city which was a sanctuary for murder—and priests at that.

Hosea looks toward Judah and says God has a harvest laid up for you also. God is no respecter of persons.

Chapter 7

Verses 1-7

Chapters 7 and 8 contain Hosea's exposure of Israel's corrupt political conditions and the consequences that must follow.

Emphasize: Weakness in the political arena encouraged violence throughout the land. They had left God out of their hearts and their thinking, refusing to acknowledge Him, as a result, He was left out of their actions.

Verse 2

The king is glad of their wickedness because they are carrying out his wicked desires.

Verses 4-7

The wicked companions of the king plot his overthrow. They make their plans and wait for the opportune time. They plan to carry out their overthrow "on the day of our king" while their hearts are heated with wine giving them the courage to strike.

All are inflamed with the spirit of anarchy, greed, and lust. They devour their leaders. There is complete moral and political chaos.

Verses 8-16

Looking at these verses as a whole, Israel was like a silly dove flitting from Egypt to Assyria playing both ends against the middle.

Verse 8

“A cake not turned” is a cake that is burned on one side and uncooked on the other and is not fit for anything. They were “cooked” by heathenism but “uncooked” or raw in their relationship to God.

Verse 9

Time is running out for Israel. Their strength is gone but they are unaware of it.

Verse 14

Israel’s plight was that they denied God’s sole deity by turning to idols, and they lied to Him in word and action. They deny Him the opportunity and privilege of redeeming them.

Verse 16

They leave the impression of returning to God, but they do not return. They are like a deceitful bow—it misses the mark; it will be as a boomerang returning to them.

The “insolence of their tongue” had been their arrogant boasting, their defiance of God, and their lies against God. As a result, their princes shall “fall by the sword” for leading the people astray.

Chapter 8

Verse 1

The purpose of the “trumpet to your lips” is that the trumpet sounds of alarm of war; the threat is that of Assyria swooping down as an eagle on the people of Israel.

Israel has transgressed the covenant God had made with them at Sinai and the second covenant made at Moab concerning their retention of the land after they possess it.

Verses 2-3

They did not know God. They rejected their only true God and now the enemy would pursue them. It was too late to cry.

Israel had set up kings but not one of them served God. All served the calf, the baalim, or both. Idolatry and rebellion were their downfall.

Verse 5

God has determined that the calf erected at Bethel would be cut off, destroyed. God is angry with those who erected it and those who worshiped it.

Verse 7

The meaning of the “wind” and the “whirlwind” is that they sow the wind, nothingness. They will reap the “whirlwind,” destruction.

Verses 8-10

The nation is almost ruined, it is being swallowed up. Israel does not even receive respect among the nations, they are despised. God is going to gather up Israel before Him in judgment to carry them into Assyria, whose help they had sought.

Verses 11-14

God decreed one altar but Israel had multiplied altars to the worship of the calf and baalism.

Verse 13

Return to “Egypt” means bondage. They would not return to physical Egypt, but would be carried into Assyrian bondage.

Verse 14

Judah had followed in Israel’s footsteps in forgetting God. Now God would destroy the fortified cities of Judah. The devouring fire would be Assyria.

Chapter 9

Verses 1-9

Israel was rejoicing over their prosperity, but it was only temporary. They were attributing their prosperity to the baal gods.

Exile in a foreign land now faced them. The captivity would be in Assyria where they would eat unclean bread.

There would be no “house of God” in which to bring their offerings, and no altar upon which to offer burnt offerings. Egypt stands for their captivity and Memphis, a city of Egypt, represents a burying ground for their luxuries.

Verses 10-17

God had found Ephraim (Israel) as one greatly to be desired, but they had corrupted themselves beyond God’s ability to claim them. Their lust for the material and the physical had caused them to begin idol worship.

A PERSON BECOMES LIKE WHAT THEY WORSHIP

Verses 11-12

The women would be barren. To the Jews this was a mark of divine disfavor.

God had given Israel a land where they could become strong and prosperous, beautiful in the divine sight, protected in a secluded spot. But instead of enjoying prosperity, Israel would bring out their children to be slaughtered by a foreign power.

Verse 14

“Let the judgment be complete” is saying, let the nation be brought to an end by lack of offspring brought to maturity.

Gilgal was the scene of many of God’s blessings, but now idolatry of the basest sort had been found in Gilgal; and for this the people would be cast out. They will be wanderers among the nations all because they did not harken unto God in the day in which He had called to them.

WHAT A WARNING FOR TODAY!

Chapter 10

Verses 1-3

Israel, as a luxuriant vine, should have filled God's land and borne a satisfying harvest to God, but instead served idols. They gave lip service to God, but in their hearts they had worshiped the Baal.

Verses 4-8

These verses expose and condemn their hypocrisy.

Bethel, "house of God," has now become Beth-aven, "house of vanity," for it is the essence of emptiness.

The priests of the calves and the people will mourn as the idols are carried away and given as a present to the king of Assyria.

Verses 9-11

Israel's 'double guilt' is their rejection of God as their King when they asked for a king like other nations and their rejection of God, when they introduced idolatry.

Verses 12-15

The threat of judgment is followed by a call to repentance. Instead of repenting they plowed wickedness and reaped injustice. Instead of trusting God, they trusted in lies.

Just as Beth-arbel had experienced a terrible battle where mothers and children were dashed to pieces, so will Israel be destroyed.

Chapter 11

Verses 1-4

The more God sent prophets to warn and call the people back to Him, the more they served the baalism and burned incense to their images.

Verses 5-7

For this spirit of ingratitude and contempt, the people will go into Assyrian captivity. They will return to bondage.

Verses 8-11

The feeling we receive is that God's heart is heavy. His compassion was deeply kindled.

God pours out His wrath on Israel. He will have mercy on the remnant. Out of Assyrian bondage, some would return to serve God.

This word is a ray of hope to be realized under the Messiah, through whom they would be called by the gospel to peace and protection by the Messiah.

Chapter 12

Verses 1-6

Tying chapter 11:12 and 12:1 together, God is saying, Israel is charged with surrounding God with falsehood. Judah is unbridled toward God. They would not escape the punishment for their sins.

To "wait for your God" is to put one's trust in Him and let Him lead the way.

Verses 7-14

Instead of being an "Israel" the nation became a "Canaan" a trafficker with false balances in his hand. He loved to defraud and felt in so doing they had committed no sin. Because of their corrupt practices God would drive the people out of their land and they will dwell in tents again, as in the wilderness of Sinai.

Israel had no excuse for their ignorance of God, for He had spoken to them through prophets, numerous visions, and through parables. Gilead represents all that is false and wicked.

God again appeals to them recounting the life of Jacob and Moses. But instead of being grateful to God for what He had done, Israel provoked God to bitter anger. Punishment now was a must.

Chapter 13

Verses 1-3

Ephraim had stood tall among the tribes and was well respected, but his death warrant was sealed when he introduced idolatry.

Verse 2

“Kiss the calves” was an act of homage or devotion expressed toward the false deity. Job 31:27; 1 Kings 19:18

Verses 4-8

God tells them how He had been their God from Egypt, He had delivered them, providing their needs. But as a result, the richer the blessings, the farther they went from Him.

They became proud, worshiping the creatures of their own imagination, rather than the true God. In their prosperity, they forgot God.

God would treat them as a lion treats its prey. He would be like a leopard. He would also be like a bear robbed of her cubs. These are pictures of complete destruction. The judgment had already begun.

Verses 9-14

Our refusal to recognize God as God, along with our rejection of Him, brings destruction.

Their kings had lead them not in the way of truth, but had led them into idolatry and rebellion—the very kings that they had clamored for. These kings were weak and without faith, they could do nothing to save the people.

The sorrows and pains as of childbirth are upon the nation however, the picture is that of a woman unable to give birth. When birth is retarded, the life of the mother and the child is endangered. Out of the pains of this experience there would be a new birth; a new nation would come forth.

They will go into captivity and there suffer the pangs of travail and sorrow; yet God will redeem them.

Verses 15-16

Ephraim whose name meant “double fruitfulness,” would now become fruitless, because of the east wind.

The “east wind” is Assyria, who would sweep them away as the terrible sirocco from the Arabian desert does, destroying the fields and orchards.

Samaria’s destruction is not a very pretty sight as pictured in verse 16.

Chapter 14

Verses 1-9

From the dark picture of judgment and destruction the prophet looks with hope to the future when the faithful few will return.

The call is to repentance and a complete conversion.

Verse 2

These “words” are pleas for forgiveness. The fruit of the lips is that of praise and thanksgiving.

Repentance will be expressed in a complete trust in and dependence on God. No more reliance on Assyria and Egypt, the powers of evil. God will heal their sin of apostasy and their reward will be His great love.

Verse 5

God is pictured as being to His people as the refreshing dew. Israel will “blossom as the lily.”

“Blossom of the lily,” suggests beauty, purity, sweetness of odor, and erectness in its growth.

The “cedars of Lebanon,” suggest strength to withstand the tempests that may beset Israel. They will also become a great influence to others. What words of encouragement!

Ephraim (Israel) will have nothing more to do with idols. They will have learned their lesson.

Hosea came to see the depths of God's divine love more clearly than any other prophet.

Based on his own life with Gomer and her unfaithfulness and not knowing if the children were his, he could see how God felt about Israel.