

# HOSEA

## 1. Not His problem, but our problem

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Hideyoshi, a Japanese warlord who ruled over Japan in the late 1500s, commissioned a colossal statue of Buddha for a shrine in Kyoto. It took 50,000 men five years to build, but the work had scarcely been completed when the earthquake of 1596 brought the roof of the shrine crashing down and wrecked the statue. In a rage Hideyoshi shot an arrow at the fallen colossus. "I put you here at great expense," he shouted, "and you can't even look after your own temple." That's about what idol can do, nothing.

The mankind has been having problems with idolatry from the day one. At the garden of Eden, Eve desired to be like God, replacing God with herself from her heart. Whether it is a concept of replacing the one True God with something else in our hearts, or worshiping some objects that were made by the hands of humans, or nature things, or position, or whatever that is, God will not allow us to have that in our hearts.

The two most important commands in the Bible are: "Love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, minds and souls," and "Love our neighbors as ourselves." If you've noticed, the first one is our relationship with God and the second for the relationship with others. Do you ever wonder why God mentioned the first command in the OT & NT and repeated it in the Ten Commandments in Ex 20:3-17? Because we have a problem to astray away from the Lord.

Let's go over the Ten Commandments:

- (1) *You shall have no other gods before Me.*
- (2) *You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth*
- (3) *You shall not bow down to them nor serve them.*
- (4) *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*
- (5) *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.*
- (6) *You shall not murder.*
- (7) *You shall not commit adultery.*
- (8) *You shall not steal.*
- (9) *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*
- (10) *You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey.*

God want us to have Him in our hearts all the time, not replacing Him with anything else. When we don't do that, the trouble starts.

The entire Bible is pretty much dealing with the people who astray away from God and starting to worship the things they should not.

## A. INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Beginning with Hosea and concluding with Malachi, there are twelve short prophecies designated as the Minor Prophets, while Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel are called the Major Prophets. The Minor Prophets are so called because of the size of the books, not because of their content. Actually, the so-called Minor Prophets are not minor. Each of them batted in the major league and was a star in the message that he brought.

The Minor Prophets were exceedingly nationalistic, but they were not isolationists. They dealt with the fact that God's people had broken the law of God, the Ten Commandments. The Minor Prophets warned against godless alliances with other nations. They were extremely patriotic and denounced political and moral corruption. They warned Israel against an isolationism from God.

I think we could use this kind of prophets right here in America right now.

## B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*Hosea 1:1 The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, 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.*

The name Hosea means "salvation." It comes from the same Hebrew root 'hoshed' as the names 'Joshua' and 'Jesus'. Throughout the book, Hosea will show us that salvation is found in turning to the Lord and away from our sin.

After days of David and Solomon, when the people of God divided in a civil war, creating two nations: Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. This is some 250 years after the time of King David, and some 650 years after Israel came into the Promised Land.

Hosea's ministry was in the northern kingdom of Israel and its capital city Samaria. But for the benefit of his readers in the southern kingdom of Judah, Hosea gives them a reference point for the days of his ministry according to the kings of Judah.

Hosea began his ministry in the days of Jeroboam II. From a political and economic standpoint Jeroboam II was a successful and good king according to 2 Kings 14:23-29. Israel prospered politically and materially under his reign, but it was a time of significant spiritual and moral decay. The terrible result of this decay wouldn't become evident until the days of Jeroboam II were finished.

Here are the kings of Israel during the ministry of Hosea, 760 to 720 b.c.

Dynasty of Jehu

Jeroboam II	793-752 B.C.	Gave throne to his son
Zechariah	753-752 B.C.	Assassinated

Dynasty of Shallum

Shallum	752 B.C. (one month)	Assassinated
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Dynasty of Menahem

Menahem	752-742 B.C.	Gave throne to his son
Pekahiah	742-740 B.C.	Overthrown in coup d'etat

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Dynasty of Pekah

Pekah	740-732 B.C.	Assassinated
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Dynasty of Hoshea

Hoshea

732-722 B.C. Died in exile

Hoshea began his ministry at a time when things were so politically successful and economically prosperous that people just didn't look to the Lord the way that they should.

### C. GOD'S OUTRAGEOUS COMMAND TO HOSEA

*Hosea 1:2-5 When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry And children of harlotry, For the land has committed great harlotry By departing from the Lord." 3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4 Then the Lord said to him: "Call his name Jezreel, For in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5 It shall come to pass in that day That I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel."*

God's first word to Hosea was something for his own life. This is how God almost always works. Hosea probably would have preferred it if God gave him a word for someone else. But before the prophet can speak to the nation, he first has to hear from God for himself.

We always have a great godly and right theology for others. But when it comes to the things that effect us, we look for loopholes from following every commands of God's Word. That is why God put a tremendous emphasis on the prophet and teachers of the Word to follow His Word as an example to others.

The word God had for Hosea wasn't easy. Hosea was told to take a prostitute for a wife. Why? Because the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord.

Through His command to Hosea, God brings to life a consistent picture used throughout the Old Testament. In this picture, the Lord is the husband of Israel, and their passionate, chronic attraction for idols was like the lust of an adulterer. His people were as unfaithful as a prostitute was.

In this vivid picture, we see how our idolatry and rejection of the Lord feels to God. When we put anything in front of the Lord, it hurts Him like unfaithfulness hurts the victim of an adulterous marriage. By commanding Hosea to take a wife of harlotry, God will put Hosea in the place where he feels what God feels – and it won't feel good.

It showed a lot of obedience for Hosea to actually carry out this difficult command.

No doubt, when Hosea and Gomer first married, she probably promised eternal love and devotion. She probably showed every sign of being committed to Hosea. But after a while, and in difficult circumstances, she fell back into prostitution. Perhaps it was out of boredom. Perhaps it was out of a feeling of neglect. Perhaps it was out of a sense of need. Sadly, we share the same inexcusable reasons for our idolatry, when we prefer another god to the Lord God.

Some commentators believe this never really happened, and that Hosea is only telling a vivid story. They think it could never have happened because God would never have a prophet marry a prostitute. But if Hosea's story cannot be real, then

neither is the story of salvation real, because that is precisely what Christ has done for us.

The divinely chosen names for Hosea's three children served as reminders of the broken relationship between the Lord and Israel and pointed ahead to judgment.

The first son born to Hosea and Gomer was "Jezreel" and the name spoke of two things. First, Jezreel means "Scattered," and Israel would soon be scattered in exile by an conquering Assyrian army. Second, Jezreel refers to the Valley of Jezreel, where Jehu – the founder of the dynasty that put Jeroboam II on the throne - massacred all the descendants of Ahab, thus establishing his throne (2 Kings 10:11). God directed Hosea to name his son Jezreel to confirm His promise to avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel by judging the house of Jehu.

#### **D. NO MERCY**

*Hosea 1:6-7 And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then God said to him: "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, But I will utterly take them away. 7 Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, Will save them by the Lord their God, And will not save them by bow, Nor by sword or battle, By horses or horsemen."*

The name Lo-Ruhamah means "No Mercy." Every call to this child with the unfortunate name would remind Hosea and everyone else of coming judgment and exile.

God miraculously fought on behalf of Judah against Assyria when the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 soldiers in the camp of Assyria in one night according to 2 Kings 19:35.

The fact that God had no mercy to Israel and had mercy towards Judah shows two things. First, it is true that Judah and her kings were more faithful unto the Lord during these years, as exemplified by King Hezekiah. Second, it does not really matter if Judah was more worthy of mercy than Israel was, because by its very nature mercy is mercy. If one deserves leniency, then leniency is a matter of justice, not mercy. Mercy is only shown to the guilty. Therefore it is within the wise and loving heart of God to show mercy to whom He will show mercy.

#### **E. NOT MY PEOPLE**

*Hosea 1:8-11 Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. 9 Then God said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you are not My people, And I will not be your God."*

Since Gomer did not give up her prostitution, there may have been a cruel irony in the name Lo-Ammi. Perhaps this son really was not the son of Hosea, but of another man. The message God had to deliver to Israel through Hosea was hard enough, but God also made Hosea have to live it.

The people of Israel rejected God, and here the Lord simply recognizes that fact.

*Hosea 1:10 – 2:1 "Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.' 11 Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel Shall be gathered together, And appoint for themselves one head; And they shall come up out of the land, For great*

*will be the day of Jezreel! 2:1 Say to your brethren, 'My people,' And to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.'*

Though God has promised judgment, the days of judgment won't last forever. After judgment, there will come a day of prosperity, increase and blessing. One day Israel will return to the Lord, and once again be called sons of the living God.

This shows that the redemption is complete. The child named Jezreel has his name redeemed, and now the next two children – Lo-Ruhamah, "No Mercy" and Lo-Ammi, "Not My People" – have their name redeemed as Israel is once again regarded as "My People" unto the Lord and "Mercy is shown" unto them. What was a sign of judgment is now evidence of redemption.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

**1) No doubt, God is merciful. But we should not think that His mercy is his approval for our disloyalty.**

Yes, God's mercy endures forever and His patience is beyond what we can expect. But His righteousness will not ignore our sins.

**2) Our God wants all of our hearts, not partial, not 99%, but 100%.**

Does our God have an ego problem? No, we have idolatry problems. We may not worship some idols, but we have tendencies to replace our God with something else. God won't share our worship with anyone or anything else.

**3) Even though we betray Him, or become faithless, He remains faithful. Our God's anger lasts for a short time, but His favor lasts forever.**

He sent his prophets to warn us. He gave a book called the Bible that is filled with guidelines and warnings to direct us, He gave us His only begotten Son to show us the way. He gave His Spirit to indwell in us to lead us into the right direction. That is the God of love. That is the God of mercy.