

Hosea

“God’s Steadfast Love”

I. Introduction to Hosea

Hosea is the twenty-eight book of the Old Testament and begins the final section, commonly referred to as “the Minor Prophets”. The Minor Prophets consists of the final twelve Old Testament Books. These books were lumped together because collectively, they could fit on a single scroll. By word count, the twelve books of the Minor Prophets are 18% smaller than the book of Isaiah.

These twelve books originate from four different periods of history.

Obadiah, Joel and Jonah: the end of the 9th Century B.C., as Assyria rises in power.

Amos, Hosea and Micah: the end of the 8th Century B.C., as Israel falls to Assyria.

Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk: mid-7th Century B.C., the rise of Babylon

Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: mid-5th Century B.C., after the exile, when Persia ruled.

The term, “Minor Prophets,” is unfortunate for it implies a marginally important message compared to the “Major Prophets.” As a result, many have neglected a careful study of these twelve books. Both their message, to their generation, and the completed picture they give, concerning the Messiah, are worth our attention.

It is clear from the Minor Prophets writing, God would bring an end to Israel and Judah; only to establish a new kingdom under the reign of the Messiah, whose coming was promised since the fall of man in Genesis.

Hosea is the first book of the Minor Prophets. He gave his messages in the 8th Century B.C. at a time referred to by some as “The Golden Age of Prophecy.” Jonah prophesied earlier in the 700’s B.C., and Amos, just prior to Hosea. Isaiah would come on the scene at the end of Hosea’s ministry, and Micah would join Isaiah. Their messages included both warnings and promises.

The book of Hosea is named after its own main character. Hosea was a prophet to the Northern tribes. He prophesied until the fall of Israel to Assyria. Some have suggested he migrated to Judah to live out his final years. His ministry may have lasted upwards of sixty years.

Hosea means salvation. His life is a picture of the work of Jesus, whose name is derived from Hosea – Joshua. Hosea was married and fathered at least three children. They all play a critical role in the message delivered to Israel.

The book of Hosea is second in size to Zechariah among the Minor Prophets. It contains fourteen chapters that can be divided into two sections:

Section 1 Chapters 1 – 3 Prologue and introduction to the main message

Section 2 Chapters 4 – 14 A series of sermons

Hosea contains 111 verses with 28 distinct predictions. Fifty-six percent of his message is predictive. These prophecies consist of:

The fall of Israel

The deliverance of Judah

The coming Messiah

The return of Israel to the Lord

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II. Outline of Hosea

As mentioned, the fourteen chapters divide into two sections

Section 1 Chapters 1 – 3 Prologue

Section 2 chapters 4 – 14 Sermons

This section may also be divided for the sake of simplicity into three themes:

Chapters 4 – 7 Cause of sin

Chapters 8 – 13 Coming Judgment

Chapter 14 Promised restoration

Section 1 Prologue Chapters 1 - 3

Chapter 1:1

Hosea 1:1 provides the background and setting for Hosea. The book covers the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel, until the reign of Hezekiah in Judah.

Jeroboam II reigned for forty-two years, 786 – 746 B.C. His reign was marked with prosperity and military victory. Archeological evidence confirms his reign to be the most prosperous in Israel’s (north) history. Sadly, his reign was also marked with immorality. During his reign, God raised up Jonah, Hosea, Joel, and Amos to call the nation back to Himself. Regrettably, their messages went unheeded.

After the death of Jeroboam II, the nation went into rapid decline. For the next forty years, a series of six kings reigned; none of which are even mentioned by Hosea. This time period was noted by political chaos matched by the immorality of the people. Jeroboam’s son was assassinated by Shullum, who, one month later was killed by Menahem. His son, Pekahiah, killed by his general; and Pekah who in turn killed by Israel’s final king, who also bore the name of Hosea (not the Prophet and author of the book). The reference to Hezekiah, king of Judah, implies that Hosea lived to see the fall of the nation of Israel.

Chapters 1:2 – 3:5 These verses not only introduce the book of Hosea, but also contain the heart of the book’s message. Hosea is given a series of three commands:

First – Hosea 1:2 “Go take yourself a wife of harlotry. . .” There is some question as to God’s intention:

- Take a woman who has had a history of adultery for your wife. Like many with a soiled past, God has a future plan.
- Take a wife, though God knows she will be unfaithful
- Or a combination of both these viewpoints

Hosea obeys and marries Gomer. Her name means “completion.” Hosea is a picture of Christ, who chose a marred bride in order to complete her. Unfortunately, like Israel and like us, Gomer did not remain faithful (Hosea 6:4 “O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away.”)

Second - Hosea 1:2 “. . .and children of harlotry . . .” Gomer gives birth to three children. *First born is Jezreel.* His name means “God will scatter”. Jezreel is a portrait of God scattering Israel to Assyria for their disobedience. A promise is given in Hosea 1:4, I will “. . .bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.”

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Second born is a daughter named Lo-Ruhamah. Her name means no mercy. God is declaring the time for mercy has come to an end. Israel will face judgment. This is true for every man! Hebrews 9:27 states, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment . . .” Right now is the only guaranteed time you have to make a decision for Christ. Two promises associated with Lo- Ruhamah’s life: 1) there would be no mercy for Israel; they will fall. In 732 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser conquered most of Israel and placed Samaria under tribute. After a meager attempt to revolt, Tiglath-Pileser’s successor, Shalmaneser V, marched on Samaria, besieged the city and in 722 B.C. Israel fell. Assyrian records show 28,000 captives were taken. 2) There was mercy for Judah. God declares in Hosea 1:7 “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.” After Shalmaneser’s death, Sennacherib turned his attention toward Judah and conquered many cities. His attack was halted when tribute was paid by Jerusalem. Later, when tribute ceased, he returned to destroy Jerusalem and Judah. His armies surrounded the city, but were miraculously defeated by divine intervention. This failed attempt is recorded in your Bible in 2 Kings, as well as on stone reliefs found in Nineveh.

The third child born to Gomer was a son named Lo-Ammi. His name means “not my people.” Tragically, Gomer returned to her former life and became pregnant with another man’s child. He was called “not mine”. Although loved and raised by Hosea, his life was to illustrate those who were once God’s people, and are no longer His people.

After all that had happened, God promises in Hosea 1:10 – 11, to restore Israel.

Chapter 2 The personal story of Gomer’s unfaithfulness, and restoration. Her account is the all too common story of the backslidden believer. Verses 6 – 7 shows how God deals with the backslider.

Chapter 3 Hosea receives his third command. He is told to go love her again. Hosea hunts Gomer down. She is no longer the sought after escort enjoying the pleasures of sin. She is now enslaved and must be purchased from the stocks. Sin always leads to slavery, but Christ can always deliver.

Section 2 Sermons Chapters 4 – 14

These chapters mark the second division of Hosea. This section consists of a series of sermons delivered by Hosea without giving reference to time.

The message theme highlights:

Hosea 4:1, 4:6 They had no knowledge of God. They removed the Word of God and worshipped the golden calf. This resulted in immorality, social confusion (verse 4:2) and spiritual confusion (verses 4:12 – 13)

Hosea 4:11 If we build places to sin, we will sin. If we tear them down, we will succeed.

Hosea 6:1 – 2 This is an invitation to come back to the Lord. Verse 2 is interesting when seen in the light of a day to the Lord is as 1000 years.

Hosea 7:9 The danger of ignoring warnings.

Hosea 10:12 The solution to ungodly living.

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III. Why Study Hosea

First, it is a picture of salvation. Men, like Israel, have been chosen for salvation, yet have left God for the temporary pleasures of sin. God, like Hosea, has bought us back. Second, it is a message to the backslider. There is God’s love for the backslider. In Hosea 11:7 God mourns, ‘My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him’. But in Hosea 14:4 God offers forgiveness, "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him." This is the message of Scripture. You can return to the Lord. But Hebrews 6:4 – 6 states, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” This is a warning and does not replace all the promises given that we can return. Luke 15 tells the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, the Prodigal son. We need to be praying for the lost.

Third, Hosea is an illustration of marriage. Hosea’s marriage was to portray the love of God; and so is yours. Ephesians 5:22 and 25 tell us, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. . .”

IV. Type of Christ

1. Hosea is a type of Christ. His choosing, loving, redeeming forgiving, and multiplying Gomer, is a picture of the work of Christ in the believer.
2. Hosea 11:1 “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son”.

Matthew 2:14 – 15 “When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

3. Hosea 6:2 “After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight”. This may allude to the resurrection.
4. Hosea 1:11 “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!” Jesus is the one who will reign during the 1000 years.