

Overview of Hosea

Author & Date: There is little debate over Hosea as the author of the book that follows his name. Indeed, few would want the ministry that God assigned to this prophet who faithfully carried out the work God had called him to. Hosea served primarily as a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Samaria), but interestingly dates his ministry by the kings of Judah (see 1:1). This fits the message of the book dealing with Israel's unfaithfulness and the ultimate restoration of the entire nation of Israel – both North and South, and God's recognition of the Davidic line of Kings. Hosea ministered somewhere 753 and 715 B.C. Because the fall of Samaria occurred in 722 B.C. and is not mentioned in the book, Hosea likely completed the writing a few years before the fall of Samaria – say around 728 B.C. The majority of Hosea's ministry occurred during a time of extreme prosperity for Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II. This prosperity would have made Hosea's message of impeding judgment seem misplaced.

Purpose: God calls Hosea to marry a woman who will prove unfaithful. Hosea's family life then becomes an example of Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord and God's love for His people. The purpose of the book is three-fold: 1) to show the enormity of Israel's sin, 2) to show the depth of God's love, and 3) to call Israel to repentance, giving hope in the face of judgment.

Outline for Hosea

- I. Illustration of Israel's Unfaithfulness (Hosea's family) (ch. 1-3)
 - A. God's Call (1:1-3)
 - B. Hosea's Children (1:4-2:1)
 - C. The Parallel of Adultery (2:2-23)
 - D. Restoration (3:1-5)
- II. God's Dealings with Adulterous Israel (ch 4-13)
 - A. Charges & Promised Judgment (4-5)
 - B. God's Frustration (6-8) (see 6:4 "what shall I do to you?")
 - C. God's Judgment (9:1-10:11)
 - D. God's Love for Israel (10:12-11:12)
 - E. A History of Unfaithfulness (11:12-13)
- III. Hope of Restoration (ch 14)

Key/Interesting Passages:

- 6:6 For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.
- 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For *it is* time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.
- 11:1 "When Israel *was* a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. (Mat 2:15)
- 13:14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes. (1 Cor 15:55)
- 14:1 O Israel, return to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your iniquity;
- 14:4 " I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him.
- 14:9 Who *is* wise? Let him understand these things. *Who is* prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD *are* right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them.

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Food for Thought

1. What do you think of Hosea's "call" in 1:1-2 and his response in v. 3?
2. Hosea's life as recorded in chapters 1-3 serve as an object lesson for Israel (and us). What are some of the lessons we learn:
 - A. God's use of adultery as the lesson (note, there is some debate as to whether Gomer was a prostitute before being married or became one after – compare 1:2 with 3:1).
 - B. Hosea's children
 1. Jezreel
 2. Lo-Ruhamah
 3. Lo-Ammi
 - C. The interplay described in 2:6-8 (Note: chapter 2 is a parallel description of Gomer's adultery and that of Israel)
3. How does God's direction to Hosea in chapter 3 demonstrate God's love for Israel? What observations can you make about how this restoration happened and parallels for us today?
4. From chapters 4 and 5, what are some ways Israel has committed Spiritual Adultery? How can we avoid the same pitfalls?
5. Chapter 10 describes the future (for them) captivity of Israel. How does God use the image of farming to both illustrate the sin and call them to righteousness in 9:9-15?
6. How does the imagery God uses in chapter 11 to show his continuing love for Israel fit with the object lesson of Hosea's family life? How can that help us relate to God's love for His people?
7. What hope does Hosea 14 give Israel? How about us when we backslide (v. 4)?