

THE PROPHET HOSEA

Lesson 1

Background

Historical setting. The glory days of David's kingdom were long past by Hosea's day. After Solomon's reign (970-930 B.C.) the Kingdom of Israel was divided. Prior to Solomon's death, an Ephraimite named Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon. Since Solomon had gone astray after false gods, the Lord told Jeroboam that he would tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give Jeroboam the ten northern tribes after Solomon's death. For the sake of David and the messianic promise through David's line, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin would remain under the Davidic dynasty. When Rehoboam inherited the kingdom from his father Solomon, he vowed to rule with an even heavier hand than his father. As a result, the ten northern tribes made Jeroboam their king. The Lord commanded Jeroboam to walk in the Lord's ways and do what is right. Jeroboam, however, set up golden calves at Bethel and Dan so that Israel would not go to Jerusalem to worship. (See 1 Kings 11-12).

Hosea began his ministry over a century after the kingdom divided. *"The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah (792-740 B.C.), Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.), kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam (II, 793-753 B.C.) son of Jehoash king of Israel"* (Hosea 1:1). The kings of Israel following Jeroboam II are not mentioned here perhaps because they usurped the throne. The kings of Israel following Jeroboam II struggled maintain stability in the kingdom and sought alliances with Assyria and Egypt.

In short, Israel lusted after other gods and they sought refuge in other nations.

Who was Hosea? Hosea is not mentioned outside of this book of prophecy. He was a prophet in and from the Northern kingdom. However, his prophecies also address the nation of Judah. Given the political and religious climate of Hosea's day, he had a difficult task but he faithfully proclaimed the word of the Lord.

Outline

- I. The Unfaithful Wife and the Faithful Husband (ch. 1-3)
- II. The Unfaithful Nation and the Faithful Lord (ch. 4-14)
 - a. Israel's Unfaithfulness (4-6:3)
 - b. Israel's Punishment (6:4-10)
 - c. The Lord's Faithful Love (11-14)

Hosea's message. Through Hosea's life and preaching, the Lord portrays a vivid picture of his enduring love for the loveless. His people, Israel, had acted unfaithfully turning to false gods and other nations. The Lord rebukes them and pronounces judgment on their sin. The same Lord seeks his wayward people and calls them back to his unconditional love. Through Hosea's prophecy we see not just how much the Lord loved his people of long ago; we see how much he loves us!

Hosea's Wife and Children

What qualities does one typically look for in a spouse?

Read Hosea 1:1-2:1.

What did the Lord want Hosea to look for in a wife?

What is the significance of Hosea selecting an adulterous wife?

What is the significance of each child's name?

Jezreel

Lo-Ruhamah

Lo-Ami

Were these Hosea's children?

Compare what the Lord says in 1:4-9 to what he says in 1:10-2:1.

What is being prophesied in 1:10-2:1?

Rebuke and Restoration

Read Hosea 2:2-23

Which phrases highlight Israel's sin of idolatry in verses 1-13?

Which phrases highlight the Lord's judgment upon Israel's idolatry in verses 1-13?

Which phrases highlight the Lord's love in verses 14-23?

The phrase "In that day," is used in verses 16, 18, and 21. To what "day" is Hosea's prophecy looking forward?

Hosea Reconciles with Gomer

Read Hosea 3:1-5

What does the Lord tell Hosea to do in verse 1?

How is God's grace pictured in verse 2?

What expectations are laid out in verse 3?

What is being prophesied in verses 4-5?

Discussion

- What puts strain on a marriage?
- What strengthens a marriage?
- Do you find it hard to understand how Hosea could enter into such a marriage?
- For those who have been impacted first hand by the sin of adultery, the imagery in Hosea likely cuts even deeper. How might these chapters resonate with the one who has committed the sin of adultery? How might these chapters resonate with the one who has been the victim of adultery?
- Hosea's life would speak a powerful message to people in his day. While we were not called to live nearly in the same way as Hosea, what powerful messages might we convey through the way we live our lives?