



Overview for Hosea

Purpose: To proclaim and give an example of God's love for selfish and sinful people.

Author: Hosea, son of Beeri. Hosea means "God is help," or "salvation." He was the last great prophet of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

To Whom Written: Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and as a lesson for all God's people.

Date Written: Covers a span from about 760 B.C. to 715 B.C.; possibly compiled about 715 B.C.

Setting: About two hundred years had passed since ten tribes had seceded and set up a Northern Kingdom separate from the Southern Kingdom. God had sent Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, and now Hosea to proclaim His message of warning. The events likely took place during the last forty years of the Northern Kingdom. Hosea began his ministry during the end of the prosperous but morally declining reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. The rich and prosperous were doing well, but they were oppressing the poor. He continued to prophesy until the Assyrians conquered and put the people into exile.

Key People: Hosea, Gomer, their children, and the Northern Kingdom

Summary: The true and living God had been forsaken and in His place the people worshiped the Baals (the nature gods and goddesses). The Baal religion was one of the most depraved religions in the world. Its pagan temple rites involved sexual immorality and the people participated, believing that their evil practices would influence the reproductive forces of nature. Young girls were expected to give themselves to the temple leaders for sexual purposes before they

were given in marriage, and homosexual activity was also included in their rituals.

Approximately forty years before Hosea's ministry, Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, King of Israel, was an enthusiastic promoter of the Baal religion. The moral and religious degeneration that resulted brought about a total disregard for social and ethical values in Israel. Corruption had affected every segment of society.

Against this background of degeneracy, Hosea was called to a special mission by God. He was to share the Lord's anguish over the people's unfaithfulness, and urge them to return to God. Hosea was commanded by God to marry Gomer, a woman who would be unfaithful to her marriage vows. His relationship with Gomer, her adultery, and his subsequent restoration of her became a living and prophetic example to Israel. Like God's continuing love for Israel, Hosea continued to love Gomer and finally brought her home. The book is largely composed of sermons that Hosea must have spoken at various times in many different places.

The story of Hosea and Gomer dramatically portrays God's constant and persistent love, and reveals that God can use the evil experiences of men for His glory. There is an allegorical link to God's love for His bride, which emphasizes that even those who have committed spiritual adultery are still loved by God, and He calls them to return to Him. He is willing to pay the price owed for their freedom. The intent of the story is to show that in spite of the actions of sin, which are so repulsive and sickening, God wants the backslider to return. If the backslidden will understand that God still loves them in longing compassion, and if they will repent, He will have mercy and restore them.

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Prologue: the prophet's marriage (1:1 — 3:5)
 - A. Hosea's commission (1:1 — 2:1)
 - B. Jehovah's chastening (2:2-23)
 - C. Hosea's care (3:1-5)
- II. The prophet's message (4:1 — 14:8)
 - A. Jehovah's rejection of Israel (4:1 — 7:16)
 - B. Jehovah's retribution upon Israel (8:1 — 13:16)
 - C. Jehovah's restoration of Israel (14:1-8)
- III. Conclusion (14:9)