

Minor Prophets #1 HOSEA

HOSEA took a faithless wife and spoke of judgement, love and life

What would you think if someone told you that God wanted you to marry a prostitute? Would you accept it as a word from God? This is what happened to Hosea...

The divided kingdom

Around 930 BC, the kingdom was divided into two – Israel and Judah
To avoid people from Israel going to Jerusalem to worship, Jeroboam set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan.

For a period of nearly forty years in the mid-eighth century BC, Hosea prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel (also called Ephraim or Samaria, after the capital city), warning them of impending judgement because of their idolatry

The story

God told Hosea to marry a prostitute (1:2-4). There is some debate over whether this was just an allegory, but there seems no good reason to doubt that it really happened. Three children were born, each presenting a message from God (1:3-9)

Jezreel = God scatters. His birth was a warning of pending destruction because of the excessive massacre by Jehu at Jezreel. See 2 Kings chapters 9 and 10.

Lo-Ruhamah = no mercy. This little girl may have had a different father (as Hosea is not named as the father – compare 1:3 and 1:6). God declares he will no longer show love to Israel. The message was that God was no longer showing mercy on Israel.

Lo-Ammi = not my people. This child may also have had a different father. Israel was no longer seen as the people of God.

Theme #1: Regeneration

Yet the days would come when these judgements would all be reversed. The Israelites would be born again as the children of God (Hosea 1:10; 2:23).

This promise was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. All who need mercy and who are not the people of God find new life through him. See Romans 9:25-26; 1 Peter 1:3; 2:10

Theme #2 Restoration (2:19-20)

God warned Israel that she was like an adulterous woman. Adultery is a biblical type of idolatry: both are sinful.

Therefore God would remove everything from her (2:1-14). Sometimes God does this with us – he strips us so we have no alternative but to turn to him. Just as Absalom burned Joab's barley fields (2 Samuel 14:31) to get his attention, so God sometimes removes things from us to draw us to himself.

Even then, he speaks tenderly to us! (14)

God's great faithfulness. He remains true to us no matter what –

- In righteousness and justice ie integrity
- In steadfast love and mercy ie charity
- In faithfulness ie verity

Theme #3 Reconciliation (3:1-5)

Gomer had evidently been unfaithful again and then sold into slavery. So Hosea bought her back (3:1-2). She was now to be faithful only to him (3). In the same way, Israel would be reconciled to God and enjoy his blessings.

Theme #4 Rebellion

What God said about worship of idols –

- Only wood or silver (4:12; 8:12)
- Man-made (4:12; 8:4; 13:2)
- A spirit of prostitution behind them (4:12)
- Shameful and vile (9:10; 10:6)
- To be destroyed (10:5)
- A cause of death (13:1)
- Sinful (13:2)
- Involved human sacrifice (4:13; 13:2)
- Nothing to do with God (14:8)

In summary, Hosea makes three major points—

- Idols themselves are nothing – just man-made objects to be scorned. See how Isaiah makes fun of idols in Isaiah 44:9-20. It is only when they take the place of God that they are evil.
- The worship of idols is like spiritual adultery ie giving ourselves to another. See 1:2; 4:11-12; 4:15-18; 5:3-7; 6:10; 7:4; 8:9
- Judgement will come on those who practice idolatry. See 5:9; 6:5; 7:13; 13:7, 8

What are our idols today?

- Statues? Images?
- Possessions?
- Passions?
- Ambition?
- Security?
- Reputation?
- Revenge?
- Music?
- Sport?

Theme #5: Return

- Our love is like the morning mist (6:4; Rev 2:4)
- But God will restore and revive us (6:1, 2)
- As surely as the sun rises or the winter rains he will come (6:3)
- We need to break up our fallow ground (10:12)
- We need to return to the Lord (6:1; 14:1)

Note the tenderness of God towards us (6:4; 14:4; 14:5)

Come, let us return to the Lord!

SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT

Biblical

1. Why did God tell Hosea to marry a prostitute? (2)
2. What are the three messages God wanted to give to his people through Hosea's children? (4-8)
3. God's judgements are usually accompanied by promises. What are the promises in chapter one?
4. What are the five attributes of God's faithfulness (2:19-20). Describe what you think each of these words means.
5. In chapter two, what do you think verses 21 and 22 mean?
6. Read chapter 14. What inspires you most from this passage? Why?

Personal and practical

7. Hosea has much to say about idolatry (eg 1:2; 4:11; 8:4; 14:8). What kind of idols might he address today if he were to come to your city? Your home? Why?
8. Why is idolatry like adultery? (1:2)? Give examples from your own life or experience.
9. What kind of knowledge do you think Israel might have lacked? (6:4) What kind of knowledge is important for us today?
10. Hosea warns us that our sins will be our downfall (14:1) What sins might bring about the downfall of the church today? And for you to think about yourself: What sins might bring about your downfall?
11. Read 10:12. What does fallow (unploughed) ground need to be broken up? What plots of fallow ground are there in your life that need to be ploughed? What do we need the Lord to do for us? (10:12b)
12. Read 6:4. To what extent does our love seem like this? What can we do about it? When you have thought about this, read Revelation 2:4-5.

About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

Terms of Use

This material is not for sale. You are free to download and reproduce it for personal use or for free distribution to groups such as your local church Bible study group or Christian fellowship. Please include the following acknowledgement:

‘This study is copyright © Barry Chant 2005. Reproduced with permission from www.barrychant.com.’

This study is one of a series of 12 studies on this theme. The rest can be found at www.barrychant.com.