

The Prophet And The Prostitute

Hosea 1

Today we start our study on the minor prophets of the Bible. Who can tell me how many minor prophets there are? (12)

Who can tell me who they are? (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi)

Why are they called minor prophets? Simply because the books are much shorter than the others in comparison. Not because they are less important.

Why are the minor prophets important? Because they show us just how God communicated with His people. They also hold a lot of prophecy that not only predicted future events, but also emphasized the truth of God's promises, laws, and perfect character.

So let's dig right in.

¹The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash^[a] king of Israel:

I think that this scripture clearly tells us that Hosea was a prophet. It says here that the word of the Lord came to him. As a prophet he spoke the word of God and applied it to his own life and used it in every circumstance. He also used it to teach those around him. He was a normal person just like you and I but God chose to use him and speak through him because of his obedience.

The name **Hosea** means "salvation." It comes from the same Hebrew root (*hoshea*) as did the names *Joshua* and *Jesus*. Throughout the book, Hosea will show us that salvation is found in turning to the LORD and away from our sin.

Now let's talk a little bit about the time that Hosea lived in. The scripture tells us that it was during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash^[a] king of Israel.

His ministry was around 760 to 720 B.C. This was during the days of the divided monarchy. This period in time was after David and Solomon, when the people of God divided in a civil war, and the two nations were created. Israel to the north and Judah in the south. This is some 250 years after the time of King David, and some 650 years after Israel came into the Promised Land.

Hosea's ministry was in Israel. We know this because later in the book of Hosea he calls the king of Israel, our king. However, for the benefit of his readers Hosea also mentions the king of Judah so that everyone would have a reference point for his ministry.

Hosea began his ministry during the time of Jeroboam II. According to several writings, from an economical and political standpoint, he was a good and very successful king. We also know this from scripture in 2 Kings 14:23-29, which you can read later. Israel prospered politically and materially under his reign, but it was a time of significant spiritual and moral decay, much like today. The results of this decay wouldn't become evident until the days of Jeroboam II were over.

So, Hosea's ministry was at a time when things were so politically successful and economically prosperous that people just didn't look to the Lord the way that they should. As we should today. Idolatry, spiritual failure, and moral corruption during the days of Jeroboam II led to a tragic outcome that would last for years.

Significantly, Jeroboam I was the first king of a divided Israel, leading a popular revolt against the high taxation of Rehoboam, son of Solomon (1 Kings 12). Jeroboam II followed in the wicked footsteps of his father.

Why is all of that so important, you might ask? Well, I think it lays a foundation for Hosea's ministry, why he was chosen, and things to come. Let's get into that.

² When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD."

The very first words that God spoke to Hosea was to go and marry a prostitute. Isn't that exactly what you wouldn't want to do? I mean go and marry a kind of woman that would be considered the worst of the worst. So why would God tell him to do that? Well, it was because the land was in such a corrupt and immoral state and was acting as an unfaithful adulterer towards God.

Through this command that God gave to Hosea, God brought out things that were happening throughout the Old Testament. Such as the peoples constant desire to serve idols like the lust of an adulterer. God wanted Hosea to feel what He was feeling. Our rejection or adultery toward God makes Him feel the same way we do when we find ourselves with an unfaithful spouse. I don't know if you have ever experienced that, but I have, and it hurts. Perhaps for you it was just a boyfriend or girlfriend that cheated on you. Either way it is a painful thing to go through.

God wanted to put Hosea in a situation where he would feel what God feels when we are unfaithful to Him. Now we cannot say that God grieves in the same way that we do because all things work together for His good and perfect will. Nevertheless, there are many correlations between God's feelings and our own. We see this throughout scripture when it speaks about things like anger, sorrow and love.

I should mention that several biblical scholars believe that Hosea's wife, Gomer, was not a prostitute when they first got married. They say that she became one at some point during the marriage and God was just letting Hosea know that this was going to happen. I however, believe that it is exactly as it reads. She was already a promiscuous woman and God knew she would cheat on him. Scripture doesn't really tell us which way it was so it is possible but either way it was God letting Hosea feel as He did and does with us when we ignore or are unfaithful to Him.

³So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. ⁴Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. ⁵In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel."

Now, I don't believe that man in his right mind would marry a prostitute much less have children with one. I would have to assume that his friends were telling him he was crazy. In fact, this may be where the saying we use, "why buy the cow when you can have the milk for free", comes from. However, I think that this shows a deep commitment and obedience to God. This is the kind of obedience that we must have if we want God to work through us.

Understand here that when Hosea married this woman that she didn't stop being a prostitute as will be made clear later. This isn't a story where through love,

kindness, and learning about God from her husband that her virtue was restored. I don't doubt that Hosea hoped this would be the case, but it wasn't. I think that she probably started out being fully committed to Hosea, but she couldn't stop being who she was. She was hopelessly bound to the sin and immorality of the time. Sadly, we as human beings share the same inexcusable reasons for our adultery when we prefer another god over the Lord God.

Anyway, God told Hosea to name his son Jezreel. This name has two meanings. First, it means "Scattered", and Israel will soon be scattered by the Assyrian army. Second, it refers to the Valley of Jezreel. This is where Jehu, the founder of the dynasty that put Jeroboam II on the throne, massacred all of the descendants of Ahab. This is what established the throne in 2 Kings 10:11. God told Hosea to name his son Jezreel to confirm His promise to avenge the massacre of His people in the Valley of Jezreel by judging the house of Jehu.

God also said that He would break the bow of Israel and Israel was defeated, destroyed, and taken captive by the Assyrian Empire. (2 Kings 17:20-23) The bow was a symbol of power because it was the main weapon used in warfare. Thus, breaking the bow means to take away the power. Can you see how all of this brings together many other stories in scripture?

⁶Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means "not loved"), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. ⁷Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the LORD their God, will save them."

God tells Hosea to name his daughter not loved. Can you imagine that. What that name did to her and how it made her feel? Every time her father called her name was a reminder that she was not loved. Now I don't think that he really didn't love her, but the name was a constant reminder to him of the coming judgement on Israel. Think about this for a second. Do you not think that perhaps God is doing this to us here and now? Not to us personally but to this country and the world as a whole. That maybe, He has named us "not loved" because of our adultery towards Him. That He has taken away His love toward us as He did Israel.

Scripture tells us that Satan would be loosed for a season because of our unfaithfulness. You don't see this happening now? Guys we have got to get it together and save as many as we can.

Thankfully, look at what it says in verse 7, "I will show love to Judah and will save them". Let's read it this way, "I will show love to my church and will save them". The same Assyrian army that destroyed Israel went up against Judah and they could not conquer them. Instead, God fought on their behalf and the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 soldiers in their camp in one night. (2 Kings 19:35) In the same way God is going to come in all His might and glory and save those by mercy who have given themselves over fully to Him.

The simple fact that God showed mercy on Judah but none toward Israel should show us two things:

First, Judah and her kings were far more faithful to God than Israel as explained in 2 Kings 18:1-8.

Second, that God shows mercy on those who are worthy of mercy.

What you must understand here is that mercy can only be shown to the guilty. Let me tell you that we all are guilty, including you and I, and fall short of the glory of God. But we will be shown mercy if we are covered by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We don't deserve it, but we will get it. Cmon now, if that doesn't make you worship and praise Him then I don't know what will.

⁸After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. ⁹Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.^[b]

Every time that Hosea called his sons name he was reminded about how Israel had pushed God away and thus should no longer be considered His people.

Here again, I cannot help but see a correlation between this and what is happening today. We have fought so hard as a nation to push God out of everything that He is saying, "you are not my people, and I am not your God".

The people of Israel rejected God and He simply recognized that fact and pulled away. Scripture tells us that He will give us the desires of our hearts.

When our desire is for Him to leave that is what He is going to do. God does not play some sort of halfway game or let's pretend. You are either in or your out. The time for games is over.

We need to make a covenant with God, not only as a church but as individuals, to be all in. To be covered in His blood that we might receive mercy. To stand up and boldly proclaim that we are His people and bring restoration and hope to those who are lost.