

# Hosea

Pathways of Discipleship Bible Survey

**ELM GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH**

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### Title, Author, and Date

- Named for its author, Hosea; means “Salvation”; same name as Joshua and Jesus
- Hosea is the first of the 12 Minor Prophets (based on length)
- Book is the only source of information about Hosea; he was probably from the northern kingdom of Israel (familiarity with history, circumstances, etc.)
- Hosea’s ministry was from 755-710 BC; followed Amos’ preaching in the north; was a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah, who prophesied in Judah

### Background

- **Historical Setting**
  - Hosea’s ministry began during the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel; included the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah
  - Reign of Jeroboam II (793–753 B.C.) in the north
    - Warning them against the coming Assyrian invasion
    - Because of their prosperity and false worship, they are guilty of spiritual unfaithfulness
  - The Northern Kingdom after Jeroboam II
    - Assyrian resurgence under Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.)
    - The kings of Israel
      - Rapid decline; Short reigns of kings; Unstable time
      - Reflection of the fact that when a society turns away from God, it will ultimately collapse
      - 4 of the 6 kings will be assassinated

### The Message of the Book of Hosea

- **Theme/purpose of the book**
  - God’s loyal love for His covenant people, Israel, in spite of their idolatry
- **Hosea’s marriage to Gomer**
  - The moral problem? (cf. Leviticus 21:7)
    - Hosea told to marry a prostitute
    - Priests were considered defiled if they did this
    - How could God ask his prophet to do something that is morally questionable?
  - Different interpretations of the marriage
    - Vision, allegory, or parable
      - Just a vision or a story
      - Seems, though, to be a real event
    - “An adulterous wife” – a prostitute or sexually promiscuous at the time of the marriage

- Most natural reading of the text
  - She has been an adulterous woman and is already promiscuous
- “An adulterous wife” – became sexually promiscuous after her marriage to Hosea
  - She will ultimately be unfaithful to him
- Gomer was a cult prostitute
  - Involved in fertility rites for the worship of Baal
  - Term for that isn’t used here
- Gomer is guilty of “spiritual” infidelity – she is unfaithful to the Lord/a worshipper of Baal
  - Just an idol worshipper
- Hosea was married to two different women
- Conclusions
  - Effectiveness of metaphor is gone if we’re not talking about a real marriage
  - Often the families and children are used by God as signs and messages to the people
  - Message is saying that the people have been unfaithful and violated the covenant
- **Message of Hosea**
  - **Hosea 1–3 – Hosea’s marriage to Gomer and God’s marriage to Israel**
    - God’s passionate love for Israel; it is permanent; He is loyal when they are not
    - God requires exclusive devotion
    - Condemnation of Baal worship and fertility cult
      - Sex with cult prostitute was a sacred rite that brought blessing and fertility on your crops, etc.
      - They are attributing to Baal the blessing that actually came from God
      - Worship at High Places (where Baal was worshiped but only God belonged)
      - Worship of Asherah; fertility without the moral stipulations
        - Idolatry today: something else offered as our source of security other than God, and we buy that, it’s idolatry
          - Prosperity, materialism, technology, relationship
          - When we buy into the prevailing thought of the culture instead of trusting God, it’s idolatry
          - Mixed the worship of God with other ideas; maybe it was the newest thing
          - Didn’t always stop worshipping God, but they brought it all together looking for the best of both worlds
      - Baal: the god of rain and fertility
        - Rider of the clouds
        - Son of Dagon (corn/grain)
        - God of blessing, able to control the rain, making it possible for their crops to be good
        - Canaanites thought Baal was constantly struggling against forces of chaos and Baal was helping the people
        - Baal defeats the sea
    - Israel bought into the prevailing demand of the culture

- We can have the blessings without the moral obligations
  - The Lord says he is the rider on the clouds (Isaiah 19)
  - The Lord's voice thunders in the storm (Job)
  - Yahweh defeats Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18)
- **Hosea's children and God's relationship to Israel**
  - Three children
  - First is a son: Jezreel (God sows)
    - Jezreel was a real place in Israel
    - Place where Jehu carried out bloody purge of house of Ahab
    - Hosea wants to remind people of this event
    - Another bloody purge is about to happen, but it will be the house of Jehu/Israel
    - Would be like someone today naming a child Columbine
  - Second child is a daughter: Lo-Ruhamah (Not pitied)
    - God will not have pity on Israel
  - Third child is a son: Lo-Ammi (not my people)
    - God temporarily sets aside the covenant relationship
  - The reversal of the judgment against Israel (1:10–11; 2:22–23)
    - God's involvement reverses the negative names of Hosea's kids
    - It's not permanent
- **The reconciliation of Hosea and Gomer (3:1–5)**
  - He bought her back
- **Hosea 4–14 – God's covenant lawsuit against Israel** (sin, judgment, and ultimate restoration)
  - Hosea 4:1–6:3
    - Accusation
    - Hope
  - Hosea 6:4–11:11
    - Accusation
    - Hope
  - Hosea 11:12–14:9
    - Accusation
    - Hope
- **The specific charge against Israel** – the sin of adultery/prostitution (4:10–12; 5:3–4; 6:10; 9:1–2). What are the specific ways that Israel prostituted themselves in their relationship with the Lord?
  - Worship of idols
  - Calf-god and religious syncretism
  - Violation of covenant commands
  - Alliances with foreign nations (they were trusting in the foreign nations to provide what God had said he would do)

### Resources

John MacArthur: *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*  
 Zondervan Handbook to the Bible  
 Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush: *Old Testament Survey*  
 Longman and Dillard: *An Introduction to the Old Testament*  
*Lecture Notes from Liberty Theological Seminary, Dr. Gary Yates*  
*Holman Illustrated Study Bible*  
 John MacArthur: *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*