

Hosea

"God's Unconditional Love"

Background Information

The name "Hosea" is another form of "Joshua," and the name means "salvation." It is also a form of the name "Jesus."

Since the book is so concentrated in its content, we know very little about the setting, or about Hosea himself. However, it seems that Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom (Israel), making him and Jonah the only writing prophets from that kingdom.

Like other prophets (such as Ezekiel), Hosea is told by the Lord to live out his prophecy, marrying an unfaithful woman to symbolize the unfaithfulness of Israel to the Lord.

Time Covered and Outline

Though the book is brief, Hosea's working life covers a long span of history. His prophecies occur under the reigns of four kings of Judah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah). It also would have lasted been occurring during the long reign of Jeroboam II in Israel. His ministry seems to span about 45 years.

The book breaks down into two basic parts. First, we see the living example of Hosea, then the prophecy itself of the unfaithfulness of Israel toward the loving God.

- I. Adulterous Wife and Faithful Husband (chapters 1-3)
 - A. Hosea's marriage to Gomer (1:1-11)
 - B. God's relationship with Israel (2:1-23)
 - C. Reconciliation (3:1-5)
- II. Adulterous Israel and the Faithful Lord (chapters 4-14)
 - A. The guilt of unfaithful Israel (4:1-6:3)
 - B. Israel is put away for unfaithfulness (6:4-10:15)
 - C. Israel is restored by the loving Lord (11:1-14:9)

Major Themes

The gross nature of sin
God's unconditional love

Marry a Prostitute?

Due to the rather shocking command God gave Hosea to marry "a woman of whoredom," there are various views of this book. Some have written it off as nothing more than an allegory, but there is too much historical detail for that to be valid.

Others suggest that Hosea marries a woman who was already a prostitute. That is possible (from the way the wording is found in both English and Hebrew). It is also possible that God was telling Hosea what would happen: he would marry a woman who would, then, give herself over to unfaithfulness, even to the point of harlotry.

God's Character in Hosea

Good (3:5)

Kind (2:19)

Accessible (14:2)

Loving (11:4)

Merciful (2:23)

Providence (2:8-9)

Jesus in Hosea

While there are no direct prophecies of Jesus in the book, Hosea clearly pictures the relationship of God and His people in that of a husband and wife. The perfect nature of God's side of this relationship prefigures the perfect way in which Christ would love His church.

Key Words in Hosea

Stumble (Hebrew *kashal*); "to totter" or "to trip." 4:5; 5:5

Commit harlotry (Hebrew *zanah*); refers to illicit sexual relationships, especially with a prostitute; 2:5; 3:3; 4:15

Elsewhere in the World...

During the life of Hosea, the city of Rome was founded (753BC)

Elsewhere in Scripture...

Second Kings 14-20 and 2 Chronicles 26-32 serve as the historical background to the events taking place during Hosea's work.

Amos would have prophesied before Hosea in the north, and Isaiah and Micah would have been prophesying in the south at the same time as Hosea.