

Hosea Lesson One Handout

Hosea 1:1 **Set the context.** James Boice wrote in his commentaries of the minor prophets, "The prophecy of Hosea comes first in the Biblical order, not because it was written first, but because it is first in regard to its message." He goes on, "I have called it the second greatest story in the Bible. No Christian can doubt that the greatest story in the Bible is the story of the incarnation, life, suffering, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the story of Hosea is second precisely because it is an anticipation in pageant form of Christ's story."

In addition to that considerably weighty proposition, be prepared to entertain the claim that there are no other books of the Older Testament that so **poignantly capture the spiritual condition of the nation** in which we presently live than the twin books of Hosea and Amos.

Go to Deuteronomy 28, the rededication the Covenant and to the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, 1 Kings 8:22-61.

Set the stage with the **diagram/chart of the Prophets** of Israel in their kingly settings.

"Of all the events which diversify human history, there is none in which mankind more readily acknowledge the intervention of the Deity than in the revolutions of empires - the setting up and pulling down of kings. These great changes are usually attended by circumstances so unexpected and appalling that the eyes of the blindest are opened."

"The time had now come when good and evil, salvation and peril, were so obscurely confounded and intermixed, that the firmest minds, incapable of disentangling them, had become mere instruments in the hand of Providence, who alternately chastises kings by their people, and people by their kings." (From the introduction of the Cromwell biography by J. H. Merle D'Aubigne)

Draw the map of the region. Review the history of the division of the Kingdom after the death of Solomon. Geography is important. Think of the woman at the well in **John 4. The sins of Jeroboam I were still fatally lingering in this wayward land.**

Hosea brought the Word of God to a nation that was in a very unstable political condition. Jeroboam II must have been a very capable leader, although unrighteous in his ways (2 Kings 14:23-29). The nation of Israel experienced a degree of worldly peace and prosperity but these were years in which the cup of Israel's iniquity was filling up. Hosea announced the end of the Jehu dynasty. Then after the death of Jeroboam II the political situation continued from bad to worse. Jeroboam II was followed by six kings in thirty years, three of whom ruled for less than two years each and four of whom were assassinated. The dagger ruled. Kings were in charge by means of military coups. Draw a map of the important cities and surrounding nations.

2 Kings 14:23-29 Jeroboam II rules for 41 years (793-753), including a time as co-regent. He was politically strong, dominating the land from the north of Lebanon (Hamath) to the Dead Sea (Sea of Arabah). He defeated a weakened Syria. Jeroboam's reign is Israel's Indian summer. After his death the nation falls apart. Amos (2:6ff) and Hosea reveal the corruption within Israel: extremes of wealth and poverty: the grinding down of the poor and the weak. (Eerdman's Handbook to the Bible, page 277ff)

***"The New Testament is in the Old concealed;
The Old Testament is in the New revealed."***
(Augustine)

We **consider that the covenants** made with Noah of Preservation, with Abraham of Salvation, with Moses of Law, with David of an eternal Kingship all to be expressions of the “Covenant of Grace.” But in each of these covenantal dealings between Yahweh and His people, **how would you summarize the obligations placed upon mankind?**

End with John 14:21, 22 -

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not the world?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.”

Hosea Lesson 2 Handout (the marriage)

Compare Hosea's "call" with that of other Prophets.

Isaiah - when Uzziah died, "I saw the LORD... "Woe is me"... a touch on the lips, "Whom shall I send?"... I saw His glory.... It was earthshaking, terrifying, disintegrating, painful, sensational...

Jeremiah - very personal, startling, promising great authority, ambitious in a sense but calling for great personal courage.

Ezekiel - awesome in the true sense of the word, the glory of the LORD on display to a sinful captive. Stand against them and speak, etc. I have made you a watchman.

Amos - "the LORD roars"...

Hosea - marry a woman who will prove to be a prostitute.

There were times in redemptive history when God called His prophet not only make proclamation in audible words, but also to physically act out the message as one on a public stage. Such was the case for Hosea.

Where else does God command His Prophet to 'act out' the message? Some preached by symbolic, or we might say 'parabolic' (throw or set two things side by side for comparison) action.

Isaiah 8:3 - Publicly present your son Maher-Shal-al-Hash-Baz.

Jeremiah 13 Jeremiah bury the linen sash to disintegration.

Jeremiah 32:12 Buy the field, then bury the deed in a pot in the ground.

Jeremiah 28:10, 12 Jeremiah wear a 'yoke' before the people.

Ezekiel 4 Portray the siege of Jerusalem and lie before it.

Ezekiel 12 Go out as a fugitive escapee.

Ezekiel 24 Put the pot on the fire and burn it with its contents; then do not mourn for your dead wife.

Compare this with 2 Corinthians 3:1-3

"Go, take for yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry" (Hos. 1:2) **Did Hosea really marry a prostitute?** Here are the general options for understanding or comprehending Hosea's marriage command:

There is a moral and ethical dilemma in that it seems to be contradictory to the clear instruction and restrictions for marriage that God gives to His people.

See Leviticus 21:7 for instance and the requirements for leadership in the church. What about God's commands not to intermarry or to "Marry only in the Lord." Was not the woman caught in the act of adultery to be stoned to death!

The answers fall generally into 2 broad categories: Was the marriage only hypothetical or was it literal? From Longman and Dillard: "Hosea's marriage with Gomer - whether it was historical, symbolic, allegorical, or visionary - is used by God to indicate both His disgust with and His love for His covenant people."

I. **The Hypothetical view:** Both Calvin and Burroughs hold to some form of this.

“When, therefore, the Prophet began to teach, he commenced somewhat in this way: ‘The Lord places me here as on a stage, to make known to you that I have married a wife, a wife habituated to adulteries and whoredoms, and that I have begotten children by her.’ The whole people knew that he had done no such thing; but the Prophet spake thus in order to set before their eyes a vivid representation. Such, then, was the vision... that the people might see, as in a living portraiture, their turpitude and perfidiousness. It is, in short, an exhibition, in which the thing itself, is not only set forth in words, but is also placed, as it were, before their eyes in a visible form.” This is quite unreconcilable with the holiness of God! This disallows the fact but not the significance of the marriage.

Did God show this hypothetical situation in a vision, by word of the LORD coming, by speech, in a dream? Burroughs: “We shall understand this in a way of vision, not that Hosea did really marry such a wife, but it appeared to him in a vision, as if such a thing were really done, to declare what the condition of the people of Israel was at this time in respect of God.” (for instance, did Ezekiel really go to Jerusalem to witness the idolatries? Did Isaiah really have his lips cauterized by a hot coal from the Temple of heaven?)

Well, it was a parable, not inwardly experienced and personally felt, but it did convey an actual condition that was very serious.

Such a view, however, “seems to be forced by theological expediency rather than by textual evidence.” (Barrett) What in the text forces only a hypothetical understanding? What is written that suggests this was a symbolic representation?

II. **The Literal, Historical View** is expressed in a variety of ways. Augustine wrote that Gomer probably had been engaged in prostitution earlier in her life. This was a part of her past public history. She had, however, left that lifestyle before she married Hosea, yet her past reputation still haunted her.

a. The harlot viewpoint. Gomer was in fact impure, perhaps even a temple prostitute, when Hosea married her. God overruled His previously established moral rules to show how much He loved Israel in spite of their atrocities.

b. The idolatries viewpoint. Gomer was an idol worshipper when Hosea married her, a blatant unbeliever. In other words, Gomer’s harlotry was a spiritual harlotry.

c. The proleptic view. “The representation or assumption of a future act or development as if it is presently existing or accomplished.” Gomer was sexually pure at the beginning of the marriage but soon became unfaithful after the marriage. “Prolepsis is the use of a descriptive word in anticipation of a later occurrence that will make the term appropriate.” (Barrett) “My wife loved to swim when she was a young child growing up in South Dakota.” She wasn’t my wife then, but you understand. So Gomer was initially pure when God told Hosea to take a wife of harlotry. It maintains Gomer’s purity and avoids the violation of the legislation from the Pentateuch.

So does God’s command to Hosea refer to what Gomer will be, but not what she was?

Or this view adjusted: the word translated ‘harlotry’ it is not the word that normally designates a prostitute. It is an abstract plural word that would more likely describe an inner characteristic than an outward behavior. It most likely refers to Gomer’s latent bent toward immorality that surfaced not long after the marriage. God revealed to Hosea up front something about

Gomer's inner self that would potentially jeopardize the sanctity of the marriage. God allowed Hosea to see Gomer in a way that otherwise only God could see."

Temptation is not sin. Oswald Chambers (MUFHH, Sept 17) "A man's disposition on the inside, i.e., what he possesses in his personality, determines what he is tempted by on the outside. The temptation fits the nature of the one tempted, and reveals the possibilities of the nature. Every man has the setting of his own temptation, and the temptation will come along the line of the ruling disposition. Temptation is a suggested short cut to the realization of the highest at which I aim - not towards what I understand as evil, but towards what I understand as good." (Remember Christ in the wilderness.) "Every man is tempted by his own lust."

"Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous *sins*; let them not rule over me." (Psa. 19:13)

"At the beginning of the marriage she was innocent of any physical fornication, but Hosea knew both what she was capable of doing and what she most likely would do. It was just a matter of time before the propensity would become practice."

In any case, the general public, at the beginning of the marriage or some time after, would see the condition of Hosea's marriage and family life. It was all on display, and Hosea was given advance warning that in the midst of his broken and tumultuous marriage God had given him this set of trying circumstances because he was to be a living message from the LORD to the nation.