

HOSEA

Chapters One, Two & Three

Introduction

“The Husband and the Harlot” would be a fitting subtitle for the book of Hosea.

Hosea 1:2 When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry *by departing* from the LORD.”

God had a message for His people. He gave it by way of illustration, asking Hosea to become husband to a harlot.

God wants you to understand that He is Husband to those He loves. He is Husband to the nation of Israel; He is Husband to the believers of the church age.

1. Hosea will make it clear that God is Husband to Israel. In verse sixteen of chapter two God says to the Jews, “in that day, says the Lord... you will call Me ‘My Husband’...”
2. In the New Testament letter of Second Corinthians, in chapter eleven and verse two, the apostle Paul tells believers of the church age, “I have betrothed you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

This marriage metaphor causes you to think about both *yourself* and *your Savior* in a very intense manner.

1. Concerning yourself: You are the betrothed bride of Jesus Christ. If and when you are unfaithful in your walk with the Lord, metaphorically you are a prostitute... an adulteress... a harlot.
2. Concerning your Savior: God is your Husband. Your unfaithfulness does more than just affect your fellowship with Him. It affects God’s heart.

God is not diminished in any way by your unfaithfulness. But He wants you to know that it affects His heart the way marital unfaithfulness affects the heart of any husband. And, since He is

God, He wants you to know that it affects His heart in ways beyond mere human reactions. In these first three chapters of Hosea we will see three ways God's heart is affected: #1 You Have A Husband Whose Heart Breaks For Spiritual Harlots, #2 You Have A Husband Whose Heart Beckons To Spiritual Harlots, and #3 You Have A Husband Whose Heart Brings Back Spiritual Harlots.

#1 You Have A Husband Whose Heart Breaks For Spiritual Harlots (Chapter 1)

Hosea is the first book of what are referred to as the Minor Prophets. They are minor in their size, *not* in their significance. The opening verse sets the historic scene.

Hosea 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

The minor prophets ministered during the time the nation of Israel was split by civil war into two separate kingdoms – Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The ten tribes that comprised Israel would eventually be overrun by the Assyrian Empire. The two tribes that comprised Judah would be taken captive by Babylon, then return to Jerusalem after their seventy years of captivity were ended.

Hosea was a young prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. He was a contemporary of Isaiah and Amos. God had a very special ministry for him:

Hosea 1:2 When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry *by departing* from the LORD."

Prophets sometimes do strange things! For three years, Isaiah embarrassed people by walking the streets dressed like a prisoner of war; for several months Jeremiah carried a yoke on his shoulders. These were illustrated messages. The people of God were ignoring His Word so God called upon His prophets to illustrate His Word in the hopes His people would heed His message.

No prophet preached a more painful illustrated message than Hosea. He was called upon to marry a woman who would prove herself unfaithful – an adulterous, a prostitute, a harlot. She would bear him three children, and he wasn't even sure if the last two children were fathered by him. She would leave him for another man, go from man to man until destitute and enslaved, and Hosea would have the humiliating experience of buying back his own wife.

It was a vivid illustration of what the children of Israel were doing by prostituting themselves to the pagan gods and thereby committing spiritual adultery. You and I face this same temptation. James 4:4 is written to Christians and says,

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Throughout our study of Hosea, and our studies of all the Minor Prophets, and throughout the Old Testament, it is good to remember that "...all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Hosea 1:3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

I said earlier that prophets do strange things. It is more accurate to say that God sometimes requires His prophets to do strange things. Hosea took Gomer to be his wife, fully aware she would later prove not only unfaithful, but become a despicable harlot.

Part of the illustrated message was in the naming of the children:

Hosea 1:4 Then the LORD said to him: "Call his name Jezreel, for in a little *while* I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.

Hosea 1:5 It shall come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel."

Hosea 1:6 And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then *God* said to him: "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away.

Hosea 1:7 Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the LORD their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword or battle, by horses or horsemen."

Hosea 1:8 Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son.

Hosea 1:9 Then *God* said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi, for you *are* not My people, and I will not be your *God*."

“Jezreel” means *cast away* or *scattered* and was a name of shame in Israel. It related to the story of King Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab cheated his neighbor out of his inheritance and Jezebel is the one who accomplished the terrible deed. God’s judgment fell upon her when, as she was looking out her upper story window, general Jehu, down below, ordered her servants to throw her out the window. They threw her out, she fell to her death, and dogs ate her remains. The courtyard below was called Jezreel ever since.

God was warning Israel they would be cast away if they didn’t turn from their spiritual harlotries.

Lo-Ruhamah means *not pitied* or *no mercy*. It meant God’s longsuffering was coming to an end.

Lo-Ammi means *not my people*. It was a final, desperate warning that God would act towards them as if He were not their God.

Can God break His covenant with Israel? He immediately says,

Hosea 1:10 “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ *there* it shall be said to them, ‘You are sons of the living God.’
Hosea 1:11 Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great *will be* the day of Jezreel!

Hosea 2:1 Say to your brethren, ‘My people,’ and to your sisters, ‘*Mercy is shown.*’

God *must* and *will* keep His covenant to the Jews. He promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as sand on the seashore. One day “not My people” will become “My people,” “not pitied” will be shown mercy. Judah and Israel will be united as one nation and will submit to God’s ruler. Instead of Jezreel being a place of being cast away it will be a place of blessing as the Jews are scattered as seed back in their land. All of this looks forward, beyond own time, to the return of Jesus Christ to earth to rule and reign in His one-thousand year kingdom of heaven on earth.

God wants you to understand that spiritual unfaithfulness breaks His heart the way marital unfaithfulness breaks a heart. It is awful to think of how sin affects the Lord Who bought you from the world to set you free to love Him.

#2 You Have A Husband Whose Heart Beckons For Spiritual Harlots (Chapter 2)

You are going to read some severe statements. A verse to keep in mind as you do is verse fourteen,

Hosea 2:14 “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her.”

For all her harlotries, God **beckons** to Israel. The same is true of **all** spiritual harlots – *you and I included!*

Hosea 2:2 “Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; for she *is* not My wife, nor *am* I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

Hosea 2:3 Lest I strip her naked and expose her, as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.”

By now you must be asking yourself: What does God mean by spiritual harlotries? Hosea will focus on three things: *idolatry*, *ingratitude*, and *insincerity*.

Idolatry:

Hosea 2:4 “I will not have mercy on her children, for they *are* the children of harlotry.

Hosea 2:5 For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has behaved shamefully...

The Jews still worshipped God; but they also worshipped the gods of the pagan nations around them, especially the Canaanite rain God Baal. Pagan worship involved having sex with male and female temple prostitutes. Idolatry **was** harlotry - both literal and figuratively.

In the New Testament you are told that “covetousness... is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). Whenever you covet, rather than remain content, you are an idolater. You are committing spiritual harlotry. Isn’t it interesting that often the things you covet are advertised by and accompanied by real sexual sin. Like the Jews, you run the risk of being a harlot both literally and figuratively.

Ingratitude:

Hosea 2:5 For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.'

Hosea 2:6 "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths.

Hosea 2:7 She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find *them*. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for then *it was* better for me than now.'

Hosea 2:8 For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold - *which* they prepared for Baal.

Hosea 2:9 "Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time and My new wine in its season, and will take back My wool and My linen, *given* to cover her nakedness."

Instead of thanking God for His material blessings, the Jews thanked their idols and even used God's material blessings as gifts for their idols! They were ungrateful.

Ingratitude is a little more serious than you might think. Warren Wiersbe calls it "one of the first steps toward rebellion against God." One way to see if you are ungrateful is to examine how you use the material blessings God has given you. Are they being offered to God? Or are they being spent upon the idols of this world?

Insincerity:

Hosea 2:10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall deliver her from My hand.

Hosea 2:11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her New Moons, her Sabbaths - all her appointed feasts.

Hosea 2:12 "And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, 'These *are* my wages that my lovers have given me.' So I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

Hosea 2:13 I will punish her for the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, and went after her lovers; but Me she forgot," says the LORD.

The Jews still celebrated their festivals and feast days, but in their hearts they gave glory to Baal and the other false gods they worshipped. They were insincere in their worship.

God is not interested in ritual, rules, and religion. He desires true relationship.

For all their harlotries, God beckoned to the Jews:

Hosea 2:14 "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her.

Hosea 2:15 I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.

Hosea 2:16 “And it shall be, in that day,” Says the LORD, “*That* you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer call Me ‘My Master,’

Hosea 2:17 For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more.

Hosea 2:18 In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and *with* the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely.

Hosea 2:19 “I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy;

Hosea 2:20 I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD.

Hosea 2:21 “It shall come to pass in that day *that* I will answer,” says the LORD; “I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth.

Hosea 2:22 The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel.

Hosea 2:23 Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on *her who had* not obtained mercy; then I will say to *those who were* not My people, ‘You *are* My people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’”

The repeated “I will” statements in these verses assure you of God’s wonderful future dealings with the nation of Israel. They promise God will lead them through the wilderness of the Great Tribulation, restore them to their land, renew His everlasting covenant during His kingdom reign on earth, restore the fallen creation, and walk with them forever in eternity.

God beckons to you in your harlotry. Yes, He will chasten you as a Father. But His heart is like that of a Husband Whose love knows no boundaries and will pursue you through the most vile of rebellions.

#3 You Have A Husband Whose Heart Brings Back Spiritual Harlots (Chapter 3)

In Chapter three we return to Hosea and Gomer. Whatever became of the harlot?

Hosea 3:1 Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman *who is* loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love *the* raisin cakes *of the pagans*.”

Hosea 3:2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley.

The phrase “loved by a lover” refers to Hosea. He was the lover of Gomer, just as in the next phrase God is the lover of Israel. Despite her harlotries, Hosea loved her. Gomer had left Hosea and passed

from man to man. At last she was to be sold as a slave. Hosea went to the auction and offered fifteen pieces of silver – half the price of a slave – and some barley. He purchased his own adulterous wife after her vile life of harlotry.

Hosea 3:3 And I said to her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man - so, too, *will I be toward you.*”

Hosea pledged his love to Gomer – fully and unconditionally. His love broke her heart! She became a loving, faithful wife. The rest of the book goes on to apply this illustrated message to the nation of Israel.

Hosea 3:4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.

Hosea 3:5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

Again you are instructed to look beyond our own day to God’s future dealings with Israel. It has indeed been “many days” since the Jews were overrun by Titus and the Roman Legions in 70AD. All that time they have been without king, Temple, priesthood, or sacrifice. But their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, will set all that right when He returns, rules and, reigns upon this earth. “David their king” refers to Jesus as the descendant of David. The key word is “return,” in verse five – used twenty-two times in Hosea’s writing.

God will bring back the harlot, Israel. He brings back harlots; it is in His heart to do so.

Conclusion

J. Sidlow Baxter wrote,

“Sin does not merely break God’s law, it breaks His heart.”

If you’re not careful, your intellect will be over-drawn to analyze your walk with God as a merely legal relationship rather than a love relationship. You will consider your sin as missing the mark... falling short... failing to measure-up to God’s standards. Those are accurate statements; but all the while God’s heart is broken as you play the harlot! It’s a much more passionate appeal to remain faithful.

Or, if and when you are unfaithful, to return and be restored to your heavenly Husband as He beckons to bring you back.