

Living Between Promise and Reality

I. Brief Introduction to Hosea

A. Historical (Hos 1:1)

Hosea's ministry began during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of the Northern kingdom, and spans at least a portion of the reigns of four kings of Judah. Huge debate about dates: (785–725); (750–714); (755–710)???

1. Kings of Judah

Uzziah (Azariah)

Became king at 16, reigned 52 years; got leprosy near the end of his life (for wanting to offer sacrifices as if he were a priest); Didn't destroy the high places

Jotham

Governed for his father when Uzziah got leprosy; didn't destroy the high places; rebuilt the gate of the temple; reigned 25 years

Ahaz

Reigned 16 years (or became king at 16 yrs old?); sacrificed his son in the fire; burned incense on the high places; sent gold and silver to the Assyrians from the temple; copied a pagan altar he saw in Damascus

Hezekiah

Reigned 29 yrs; broke up the altars; broke up the snake Moses raised in the wilderness; holiest of all the kings (2 Kgs 18:5); God added 15 years to his life (the next king, Manasseh, also sacrificed his children in the fire)

2. King(s) of Israel

Jeroboam II (great grandson of Jehu)

Jeroboam (great grandson of Jehu) and Uzziah (above) became king only a year apart. Jeroboam was one of the worst of Israel's kings, but he had military victories – expelled Syria from the north of Israel. Hosea doesn't bother mentioning the other kings of Israel after Jeroboam, because the political scene became totally violent and chaotic – kings getting assassinated and usurped repeatedly.

B. Theological: The Marriage of God and his Bride

(Hos 1:2 and throughout) God's unfailing love for an ungrateful and disobedient people

If you want to know why the devil is going after sexuality and the family in our times, remember that the whole theme of the Scripture is: God searching out and preparing a bride for himself (See Ezekiel 16). He knits into creation a vivid picture—one man/one woman unified in

marriage; both in the image of God; to take dominion over the earth. Implications for both the church and for culture. The *defacto* marriage of Adam and Eve, when God presents Adam with a bride who is just the right one, is actually the first announcement of the gospel and it is knit into our very beings. The Bible ends with the huge marriage feast of Christ and his Church.

Hosea fits into this huge covenantal picture and is calling God's Bride to turn back to her heavenly Husband.

II. The Anguish of Reality

A. Spiritual Prostitution

1. God's People: An Unfaithful Wife (Hos 1:2-3)

As do all the prophets, Hosea brings a court case against the people.

"The land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord"

The whole land is corrupt (many different historical incidents and geographical places that recall the unfaithfulness of the people). Gilgal, Bethel, Gibeah, Baal-Peor, etc.

They worship the Baals; practice cult prostitution; sacrifice their children to idols; See chapter 4 for details!

[Hosea] knows[their worship] its practices, its purposes, its perversions. Its theology...gives credit to the Baals for Yahweh's gifts. ...The sacrifices are...offered to the wrong gods in the wrong place for the wrong reasons; their means of revelation are lifeless instruments that can discern neither the will nor word of God; its sexual acts are brazen blends of lust and magic; prophet, priest and king are all corrupt; people are kissing calves and worshiping their own craftsmanship. They are even sacrificing their own children (Hubbard, 27 – not exact wording)

Our culture? What do you think?

2. God's People: An Unfruitful Son—Jezreel (Hos 1:4)

Jezreel = God sows. Does this imply that God is punishing what Jehu sowed?

Jehu's demise. (Hosea 1:4) God told Jehu he would be king and instructed him to wipe out the house of Ahab. Although Jehu obeyed, he went overboard, spilling unnecessary blood and caring mostly about his own pride and power. Supposedly a new beginning to the throne, he turned out to be an unfruitful son. But this text is also speaking of Jehu's descendants: Jehoahaz, Jehoash, and Jeroboam II, the last stable king. The fourth generation was Jeroboam II's son, Zechariah, who was murdered after reigning only six months. Just as Jehu had brought Ahab's house to a bloody end, so Jehu's dynasty would see a bloody end, for he never turned away from the sins of his great-grandfather.

2 Kings 10:28-31 *Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel. But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin- that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan. And the LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of*

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Israel." But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD the God of Israel with all his heart. He did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin.

3. God's People: An Unloved Daughter—Lo-Ruhamah (Hos 1:6-7)

“No mercy”

I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel. Hos 1:6

Israel will be rejected; Judah will be saved but not by the strength of an army.

How *is* Judah saved? She does return from exile...but are we to think of the true Son, born to Mary? She says:

“His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts, ...remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.” Lk 2:50-51, 54

Zechariah: “to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant...to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God...”

4. God's People: A Rejected Son—Lo-Ammi (Hos 1:8)

“Not my people”

B. Lived out in Physical Prostitution

Problem: How could God ask a prophet to go against His own law? Lev 21:7 – a priest must not marry a harlot or a defiled woman but was to marry “a wife in her virginity” (Lev 21:13). Adulteress women were to be stoned (Deut 22:21-21)

Solutions proposed:

1. Calvin argued that it was purely hypothetical; how could a man minister if he went against God's law?
2. Real marriage: Gomer really was a prostitute. It emphasizes God's gracious love for sinners.
3. Real marriage to an “idolater” but not a physical adulterer
4. Real marriage to a pure woman who then became idolatrous
5. Real marriage to a child of her times: taken by the cultural norms. (First son by Hosea, then falls into adultery)

We must not forget that Jesus went against many of the laws of the Old Testament – touching dead bodies; touching a woman with an issue of blood; eating with a dwarf; accepting the profit of a prostitute; eating grains of wheat with his disciples on the Sabbath. He could not be corrupted by “unclean things.” Those unclean things were always made holy by him! Perhaps Hosea is a preview of this. Does he make clean his wife, his children?

III. The Assurance of Promise

A. The Source of the Promise: God's Unfailing Word (Hos 1:1)

1. To the Prophet

Signs of a prophet: **Called**, caught up into **visions**, often into the heavenly counsel, given a **word, compelled to speak**, often **exemplifies the message physically**. God speaks to Hosea both by giving him a message for the people, but also by telling him how he is to live out the message!

What he says to the prophet is also lived out in a life-long picture as the people watch Hosea's "unlawful" marriage.

2. Through the Prophet

Other prophets were asked to do strange things: walk hundreds of miles to bury dirty underwear; walk around with a yoke around the neck; build a model city complete with siege ramps and clay soldiers; cook food over dung; lie on one side for a year and a half; walk through the streets naked, and so forth. Hosea is called to live out unconditional love in relation to a real human being. We sometimes see this in admirable believers, strong in very difficult marriages.

Anyone who saw or knew about Hosea's ordeal could only feel sorry for him. The Lord was using his whole miserable, tragic experience of personal sorrow and emotional distress to portray a vivid lesson to Israel. Hosea's constant love and loyalty to Gomer was a beautiful picture of the Lord's unfailing love and loyalty to Israel. Gomer's unfaithfulness to Hosea was a tragically clear picture of Israel's treacherous unfaithfulness to the Lord." (Barrett, 73-4)

B. Promise and its Fulfillment

1. The Promise

Hosea 1:10-11 *Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the **sand of the sea**, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," **it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."** And the **children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together**, and they shall appoint for themselves **one head**. And they shall **go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel**.*

2. Fulfillment

a. Short-term Fulfillment (Hos 1:11)

A return to the land— this occurs after 70 years of captivity, though few from the northern kingdom return.

The unification of the two kingdoms—this is true after the exile, but how many northerners returned? And the temple was a terrible disappointment to those who had seen it before.

One leader for both— we know of no strong leader after the exile, though the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah bring unity for a short time.

A forgiven and beloved people— those who did return were brought to repentance and eager to rediscover and obey the law of God.

Sand of the sea?

Children of the Living God? No use of this that I could find in the OT

b. Long-term Fulfillment (Hos 1:10-11)

But the beauty of these promises has a greater fulfillment.

Sand of the seashore

We don't see this promise fulfilled after the exile. Some of that promise we are seeing today!

Under one Leader: Jesus Christ

*And he put all things under his feet and gave him as **head over all things** to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. **Eph 1:22-23***

True unification of Two Kingdoms (Jew and Gentile)

“separate from Christ”; “excluded from citizenship in Israel;” “foreigners to the covenants of promise”; without hope and without God in the world”

*“Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has **made the two one** and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...to create in himself **one new man out of the two**...and to reconcile both to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. **Eph 2:12-14***

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.** 1 Peter 2:9-10*

Children of God

*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become **children of God**, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. **John 1:12-13***

God sows – and God reaps (Jezreel); “Great will be the day of Jezreel.”

Our Eternal Husband

***Isaiah 54:4-17** "Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing anger for a moment I*

