

HOSEA

DAY 1: Historical background:

1. Hosea's prophetic message was to the northern kingdom, AKA Israel, AKA Jacob or Ephraim. Jeroboam II, king of Israel was one of the most evil kings of Israel. Hosea's ministry covered about 25 years. The nation had enjoyed God's blessings, peace, prosperity and protections but had been on a long trajectory of forgetting God. Trouble followed.
2. Hosea accuses the leaders of anarchy, conspiracy, rebellion, and murder. They watched their backs, furthering their own interests so that their leadership turned to corruption and folly.
3. Hosea accused the people of murder, stealing, drunkenness, dishonesty in business, lying, deceit, breaking covenants, and adultery.
4. As a result, Israel was a rapidly decaying nation. Idols dominated the scene, predominantly Baal and calf worship. The Assyrian Empire invaded in 722 B.C., defeated Israel, and took most of the nation captive, never to return. That nation never existed again.
5. The people rejected preaching. God begins an audio-visual demonstration through Hosea.

Human problem: turning from God, spiritual adultery, and coming judgment (Hosea 1)

Hosea 1:2 When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD." ³ So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. ⁴ Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel.

1. Hosea becomes a living symbol for God's relationship with the people.
2. Gomer becomes a living symbol for the people's response to God: spiritual adultery.
3. The three children become living symbols for God's active response to turn the people around. Their names are:
 - "Scattered"
 - "Not pitied"
 - "Not My people"
4. There are times when no amount of teaching, preaching, promising or pleading gets our attention. Sometimes we must "hit bottom." This is what Hosea tells the people.

5. Though judgment will indeed happen since the people refuse to repent and change, that is not the end of the story. Hosea 1 ends on a tremendous note of hope.

Hosea 1:10 Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'children of the living God.' ¹¹ The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

6. What strikes you from today's message from Hosea?

DAY 2: Excerpts from God's charge against His people. (Hosea 4-11)

1. Hosea 4-11 details God's charges against the priests, the rulers and the people. We'll look at some excerpts.

Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. ² There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. ³ Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away;

Hosea 4:8 They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness.

Hosea 4:14 ...a people without understanding will come to ruin!

Hosea 4:18 their rulers dearly love shameful ways.

Hosea 5:4 A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD. ⁵ Israel's arrogance testifies against them;

Hosea 5:15 ...until they have borne their guilt and seek my face— in their misery they will earnestly seek me."

Hosea 7:9 Foreigners sap his strength, but he does not realize it. His hair is sprinkled with gray, but he does not notice. ¹⁰ Israel's arrogance testifies against him, but despite all this he does not return to the LORD his God or search for him.

Hosea 7:13 Woe to them, because they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, because they have rebelled against me! I long to redeem them but they speak about me falsely.

Hosea 8:7 "They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.

Hosea 9:6 Even if they escape from destruction, Egypt will gather them, and Memphis will bury them. Their treasures of silver will be taken over by briars, and thorns will overrun their tents.

⁷ The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great,

2. What observations do you make about the sins of the people?

3. People's sins are driven by corrupt hearts. That corruption includes rebellion, stubbornness, pride, willful blindness to truth, straying and a spirit of waywardness.

4. How would you describe God's warnings to the people?

5. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: The people's half-hearted response. (Hosea 6)

1. The people heard Hosea's preaching and realized that they were in sin, and that judgment was coming—significant judgment, like hitting bottom. Here is what they did and said.

Hosea 6:1 Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. ² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. ³ Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."

2. How does their repentance strike you?

a. What do you like about it?

b. What sounds fishy?

3. Here is God's response to their "repentance."

Hosea 6:4 "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. ⁵ Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth— then my judgments go forth like the sun.

4. You can hear the exasperation of the Lord with these people.

a. Their repentance will last as long as the morning's dew. (It is specious).

b. He reminds them of the very hard things the prophets have told them that still haven't broken their proud, arrogant and stubborn ways of life.

c. Judgment will come, just as sure as the sun will rise in the morning.

Hosea 6:6 For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. ⁷ As at Adam, they have broken the covenant; they were unfaithful to me there.

5. What does God say repentance should have sounded like? Over what should they have repented?

6. What strikes you about the nature of sin, seen in their half-hearted repentance?

DAY 4: Full-hearted repentance (Hosea 14)

Hosea 14:1 Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall!

² *Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: “Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.*

³ *Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount warhorses. We will never again say ‘Our gods’ to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion.”*

⁴ *“I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.*

1. At the end of the book, God has to:

a. Pinpoint exactly what they did that was wrong. What were their wrong deeds?

b. Pinpoint exactly what was wrong with their ways. What were their wrong ways?

c. Script the kind of repentance that would have dealt with their sin, restored relationship with God and gotten them back walking in the way of wisdom. What is different about this repentance than the pseudo-repentance in Hosea 6?

d. Pinpointed the remedy. (v. 4). What was the remedy?

2. God’s grace is offered to repentant people. But He just doesn’t desire to get them back on track. He still wants to bless them, and bless others through them!

Hosea 14:5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; ⁶ his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. ⁷ People will dwell again in his shade; they will flourish like the grain, they will blossom like the vine— Israel’s fame will be like the wine of Lebanon.

3. What strikes you about the promises God makes if proud, stubborn sinners like us truly repent?

4. The book ends with these gems!

Hosea 14:8 Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a flourishing juniper; your fruitfulness comes from me.”

⁹ *Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.*

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: God's love in two picture forms. (Hosea 2 and 3)

1. Hosea 2 pictures God's love for His people as a scorned husband who still loves His unfaithful wife. In the following excerpts look for (1) the people's wrong-doing, and (2) God's response to woo His people back.

Hosea 2:5 Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace.

She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.' ⁶ Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. ⁷ She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them.

Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.'

⁸ She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold—which they used for Baal.

2. What strikes you about the people's sin as depicted by an adulterous wife?

3. What strikes you about God's response to an adulterous people?

4. Here is what hitting bottom looks like.

Hosea 2:9 "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her naked body. ¹⁰ So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands.

Hosea 2:14 ¹⁴ "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵ There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor " a door of hope. There she will respond ^o as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. ¹⁶ "In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.'

5. God, the people's "husband" desires to reunite all over again, as if none of their spiritual adultery, pride, rebellion, stubbornness and rejection had ever happened. What is particularly striking is the language of tenderness! What strikes you from this passage?

7. Hosea 3 finishes the real-life story of Hosea, when he buys Gomer out of the equivalent of debtor's prison down at the slave auction, and takes her back home.

8. As we finish Hosea, what is the most striking thing to you about the book?