

# HOSEA

## HOSEA 1-3 — THE SWEEP OF THE BOOK

It will be seen by the opening verse of this lesson that we are back in the land of Israel before the Babylonian captivity. Examine <sup><1240></sup>2 Kings 14-20 and the corresponding chapters in 2 Chronicles for the history of this period, and the more carefully you read those chapters the more interested you will be in Hosea, and the more you will get out of it. While four of the kings named in verse 1 reigned in Judah, and only the last-named, Jeroboam, in Israel, nevertheless it is to Israel rather than Judah that Hosea's prophecies apply.

### THE PROPHET'S DOMESTIC HISTORY (1:2-9)

God called upon him to do an unusual thing in taking an unchaste woman to wife (v. 2), but it had a symbolical significance which the last part of the verse explains.

Other prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, were called upon to do strange things with the same purpose, so we are not surprised. It was not wrong for Hosea to contract such a marriage because God commanded it, and because his motive was to exalt the woman to his own moral sphere. When he married her, and it became known in Israel, his opportunity came to show the loving-kindness of Jehovah to a nation that had no more to commend itself to Him than this woman had in Hosea's case. See the marginal references for the proof of this.

The children of his union are symbolical in their names (vv. 4-9). For historical reference to Jezreel and Jehu (v. 4), see <sup><1210></sup>2 Kings 10:11; but notice that there are two predictions in this verse, separated by the comma after "Jehu," which are at least forty years apart in their fulfillment. Judgment fell on the house of Jehu in Zachariah's reign (<sup><1251></sup>2 Kings 15:12), while the kingdom of Israel did not cease till the Assyrian captivity in King Hoshea's day (<sup><1280></sup>2 Kings 18).

The names of the other two children are given (vv. 6, 8-9) with reference to this captivity. For the fulfillment of verse 7 see the marginal reference to ~~2 Kings~~ 2 Kings 19:35 in the light of its context.

### **THE BETTER DAY COMING (1:10-11)**

Like all the prophets, Hosea speaks of Israel's happy future, which shall come to pass after the tribulation of which we learned in Daniel. How is her increase indicated? Her restoration to her own land? Her reunion with the two tribes? In explanation of the last clause it should be noted that the meaning of Jezreel is "the seed of God."

### **AN UNFAITHFUL WIFE (2:1-23)**

This chapter begins at verse 2, and we see that Hosea's wife, failing to appreciate her blessings, went after her former lovers, took up with her old life of sin again. In this the prophet's domestic history carries further the symbolic reference to Jehovah's relationship to Israel. That nation did in the spiritual realm what the wife did in the physical. It is difficult to determine just where the symbol ends and the history of Israel begins in the chapter, because the two are so closely blended, but there is little doubt that the nation is in view at verse 3 and the following. Students will recall earlier teachings about "the law of double reference" which finds illustration here.

Going through the chapter, note the punishment to fall on the adulterous nation (vv. 6-13); her political bewilderment (v. 6); her disappointments in the expectation of help from the Gentiles (v. 7); her deprivation of the divine blessing and the positive suffering entailed by it (vv. 9-13). All of these came to her in her captivity, and are her experiences still among the nations.

But again we see the future bright when, in repentance and faith, she returns to the Lord (vv. 14-16). *Ishi* means "My husband." *Baali*, "My master" (see margin). Millennial conditions follow (vv. 17-23).

### **A LOVING HUSBAND (CHAP. 3)**

"The law of recurrence," finds an illustration in chapter 3, where the story of the preceding chapter is repeated with additional data.

The prophet is commanded still to love his wandering and faithless wife as Jehovah still loves Israel in her disobedience (v. 1). His love takes shape in material provision for her, though she is separated from him (v. 2), as Jehovah is still caring for Israel that she should not perish from the earth. In the meantime the wife is not to take up with another husband, and the prophet will not marry again (v. 3), the application of which is stated in the next two verses. The foregoing lessons in the prophets have made this plain.

### QUESTIONS

1. State the time of this book.
2. Have you re-read the history of the time?
3. To which of the kingdoms was Hosea particularly sent?
4. Relate the story of the prophet's domestic history in your own words.
5. What two prophecies are found in 1:4?
6. In the reign of what king of Judah was 1:7 fulfilled?
7. What is the definition of the name Jezreel?
8. What two laws of rhetoric find renewed illustration in this lesson?

## HOSEA 4-14 — JEHOVAH'S LOVE FOR ISRAEL

With Hosea begins the "Minor" prophets, extending to the close of the Old Testament, and so-called to distinguish them from the "Major," the first four already considered. The major are the more important not as to their contents but their size; and yet the minor prophets are, in principle, only repeating what the major prophets have recorded over and over again.

For this reason the minor prophets will be considered briefly. It may be repeated that we are not attempting to treat every chapter and verse in the Bible in detail. So far as the prophets are concerned, however, we have set forth the great subjects with which they alike deal, and in the laws of recurrence and double reference have indicated the path by which the student may with care find his own way through any of them. Of course, there will always be things calling for explanation which only the larger commentaries or Bible dictionaries can supply, but along the broader lines

of study we trust these comments will be found helpful. In their use it is presupposed the reader is going through the Bible in regular order for the purpose of studying or teaching it in its completeness as a revelation of God.

## **THE GENERAL CONTENTS OF THE CHAPTERS**

With the above understanding in view, the following chapters in Hosea simply detail what the first three reveal in outline. They speak of Israel's unfaithfulness to Jehovah, enlarging on the expressions of that unfaithfulness.

For example, chapter 4 charges the nation with "swearing and lying, and killing and stealing, and committing adultery" (v. 2). People, priests and prophets are alike (vv. 4-5). Idolatry flourishes with all its licentious accompaniments (vv. 12-14). Judah is warned by Israel's declension (vv. 15-19) but the next chapter indicates that the warning will profit her little.

Chapter 6 opens with a prophetic expression of repentance on Israel's part — prophetic in the sense that as a nation she has not yet taken that attitude, although she will be led to do so in the latter days (vv. 1-3). Suddenly, at verse 4, Jehovah is introduced as pleading with her under the name of Ephraim her chief tribe, and pleading with her sister Judah as well. The plea is accompanied by explanation of their chastisement (vv. 4-11).

This thought is continued in the next chapters where Israel's folly in turning for help, first to Egypt and then to Assyria, is pointed out (v. 12).

The marginal references direct the reader to Kings where these matters were spoken of in their historic setting.

The style of Hosea is abrupt and broken, but the ejaculations in which it abounds are frequently expressions of God's wonderful love for His people. Examine especially 11:1-4, 8-9. Sometimes it is difficult to determine when the prophet is expressing only his own feelings toward his nation rather than Jehovah's, and yet even in those instances it is the Holy Spirit using the feelings of man to illustrate the tenderness of the heart of God.

## THE APPEAL TO THE BACKSLIDER

But the chapter expressing this tenderness the most is the last, and though the reader finds it necessary to hasten over those intervening, he should pause here.

Note God's appeal coupled with His condemnation (v. 1). Consider His kindness in setting before His people the way to return (vv. 2-3). They are to take words, not works — words of confession, faith, consecration, repentance. Look at the attitude in which he will meet them, and the promises He gives them (vv. 4-7). Here is growth, strength, expansion, loveliness and beneficence — all to be theirs in that day.

Verse 8 is a kind of divine soliloquy. Jehovah hears Israel's repentance, and her testimony to renewing grace, and assures her of Himself as its source.

The chapter closes with an exhortation as applicable to us as to her.

### QUESTIONS

1. To what division of the prophets does Hosea belong?
2. Why are the "Major Prophets" so-called?
3. How would you describe the contents of the chapters of this lesson as distinguished from the preceding one?
4. What are some of the charges against the nation?
5. What characterizes Hosea's literary style?
6. How would you analyze chapter 14?
7. How would you describe verse 8?
8. Can you quote verse 9 from memory?