

HOSEA SESSION 1

Background: The prophecies given by Hosea took place in the eighth century BC. The northern kingdom of Israel experienced a deceptive mix of surface wealth and deep moral decay before being crushed by the Assyrian Empire. Hosea's name means "salvation" or "deliverance" and his prophetic ministry spans roughly 40 to 60 years. That makes his time as a prophet one of the longest recorded of any in the Bible.

Economic Prosperity and Social Injustice

- **Wealth for the Elite:** Israel started Hosea's ministry during the prosperous and peaceful later years of King Jeroboam II. Merchants and the ruling class grew very rich.
- **Exploitation of the Poor:** This wealth came at the expense of ordinary people. The rich pushed the poor into debt, practiced severe social injustice, and corrupted the legal system.

Political Chaos

- **Rapid Successions:** After Jeroboam II died, the government collapsed into extreme instability. Israel had six different kings in a span of just 25 years.
- **Assassinations:** Four of those kings were murdered by their own people in violent political coups.

Religious and Moral Decline

- **Baal Worship:** The Israelites mixed the worship of God with Canaanite fertility religions, especially worshipping Baal and Ashtaroth.
- **Temple Prostitution:** These pagan religious rites included ritual prostitution and drunken parties. The culture lost its moral foundation, leading to widespread dishonesty and spiritual emptiness.

The Assyrian Threat

- **Foreign Danger:** The brutal Assyrian Empire grew stronger and began aggressive military campaigns in the region.
- **Fall of the Nation:** Hosea warned the people that their bad choices and political revolts against Assyria would lead to total ruin. His warnings came true in 722 BC

when the Assyrians captured the capital city of Samaria and forced most of the Israelites into exile.

Hosea himself and his family are used as an illustration to Israel: The LORD commands Hosea to take a “wife of whoredoms” and “children of whoredoms”. This means that he was instructed to marry a promiscuous woman that had habitual behavior of unfaithfulness. She has three children while married to Hosea and only the first child is positively his. The shift in phrasing strongly implies that Gomer had already wandered, and the younger two children were likely the product of her affairs. Hosea represents God in that he is faithful, loving, and long-suffering husband. Despite being betrayed, humiliated, and abandoned, his love does not fail. Gomer represents Israel because she is an unfaithful wife. God had “married” Israel through a holy covenant at Mount Sinai, but Israel repeatedly abandoned God to chase “other lovers”-the pagan Canaanite gods like Baal. The children are prophetic milestones of judgment. Their names are both reflections of Israel’s state and serve as warnings of God’s wrath. After all that Gomer does God commands Hosea to take her back to illustrate the faithfulness and unfailing love God has for His people. The story of Hosea's family does not end in tragedy, which provides the ultimate symbolic message of the book. After completely abandoning Hosea and falling into destitution (likely sold into debt slavery), God commands Hosea to go find her, buy her back, and restore her as his wife. This final act symbolized God's future redemption of Israel. It proved that while judgment was necessary, God's ultimate goal was not destruction, but restoration. He would allow Israel to go into exile, but He would eventually pursue them and pay the price to redeem them.

Hosea 1:1-2 The word of the LORD that came unto 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 beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, *departing from the LORD. The first verse gives a list of the kings that Hosea prophesied under. The kingdom of Israel is split during this time. The northern kingdom is called the “house of Israel” and the southern kingdom is called the “house of Judah”. The northern kingdom is comprised of 10 tribes while the southern kingdom is made up of just 2. The LORD gives the command for Hosea to go and marry an unfaithful wife who will have children as the result of her unfaithfulness to reflect what was going on in the land at that time.*

Hosea 1:3-5 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son. And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little *while*, and

I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. *Hosea marries Gomer and she conceives and bares him a son which the LORD told Hosea to name him Jezreel. This son is the only child that is definitely his. Jezreel means "God scatters" and is symbolic for the judgment that would come upon Israel. Jezreel was a valley known for a bloody royal massacre. Jehu put the family members of the house of Ahab to death there and God was going to put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. The name of Hosea's son was a banner of this coming judgment.*

Hosea 1:6-7 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen. *Notice the vague phrasing of conceiving and having the second child. The first son was said to be born to him (Hosea) but this daughter is just said that she was born. The LORD names this child Lo-ruhamah which means "not pitied" or "no mercy". This marked a terrifying shift. God was warning Israel that His divine patience had run out. He would no longer protect them from their enemies, leaving them to face the consequences of their actions. But God announces that He will have mercy on Judah and save them by Himself (which came to pass in the days of Hezekiah).*

Hosea 1:8-9 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. *In Bible times, a child was typically weaned between 2 and 4 years old. Because infant mortality rates were incredibly high in the ancient world, successfully reaching the age of weaning was a major milestone. It meant the child had survived the most fragile stage of infancy and could transition to solid foods and basic independence. Gomer has another son and this one is also not directly attributed to Hosea making these last two children the "children of whoredoms". God names this son Lo-ammi which means "not my people". This represents the ultimate tragedy and the spiritual climax of the judgment. God was effectively divorcing the nation, declaring: "You are not my people, and I am not your God."*

Hosea 1:10-11 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great *shall* be the day of Jezreel. *Right at the height of the bad news, God turns in a*

different direction and speaks of future blessings of Israel in the last days. This is a pattern God repeats in the writings of the prophets. They all announce coming judgment for Israel's sins, and they all foretell of Israel's blessings in the end.

- **Promise of replenishing** – No matter how many perish in judgment, the number of the people shall be replenished to be innumerable.
- **The great name reversal** – “Ye are my people” directly undoes the curse of Hosea’s youngest son. “In the place where it was said unto them” implies that this blessing will happen right where the brokenness occurred (in the land of Israel).
- **The reuniting of kingdoms and one leader over all** – The split that happened after King Solomon and lasted for centuries will be healed. The northern and southern kingdoms will become one again and the “one head” over them is a prophetic reference to Jesus Christ.
- **Great shall be the day of Jezreel** - He is using a brilliant play on words to announce that God is going to transform Israel's ultimate place of shame, defeat, and scattering into a future place of triumph, restoration, and planting. Jezreel means “God scatters” but it also means “God sows” showing that God will sow his people back into the land He once scattered them from.

Tonight’s application: Even though this scripture is written to Old Testament Israel, there are spiritual applications to be made to New Testament Christians. We often look at our sins as minor rule-breaking or occasional mistakes. Hosea 1 forces Christians to see sin for what it truly is: spiritual adultery. When we prioritize money, comfort, career, or relationships above God, we are chasing “other lovers”. Understanding this we repent. True repentance isn’t just saying “I broke a rule”; it is realizing “I have broken the heart of my loving Savior”. True spiritual emptiness doesn’t happen all at once. It happens gradually as we try to find our identity, safety, and fulfillment apart from Christ. We eventually find ourselves feeling empty, disconnected, and spiritually bankrupt. Being in this state is meant to turn us back to Christ from whence we departed. **James 4:4,7-10** Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

