

Finer Grounds

Hosea Lesson 2: Chapter 1

This week we will start our verse by verse study of the text of Hosea. Hosea was the only writing prophet of the Northern Kingdom. His ministry lasted about 60-80 years and he most likely wrote this book around 750 B.C. This would place him as a contemporary of Isaiah. The name "Hosea" is the Hebrew equivalent to "Jesus" in the Greek meaning "savior" or "God is salvation." This is extremely appropriate when you consider the example Hosea is used to illustrate. He was Gomer's salvation just as Christ is ours.

Read Hosea 1:1

This verse tells us exactly who the kings were during Hosea's ministry. Keep in mind that his main audience would have been the Northern Kingdom of Israel; however, he did have a few warnings scattered throughout to Judah. Because we are mainly focused on the Northern Kingdom, let's take a closer look at what was going on there at this time.

Read 2 Kings 14-17. Look up these specific verses and list the Israelite king, how long he reigned and if he did good or evil in the sight of God.

- 2 Kings 14:23-24:

- 2 Kings 15:8-9:

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- 2 Kings 15:13-16:

- 2 Kings 15:17-18:

- 2 Kings 15:23-24:

- 2 Kings 17:1-2:

While only one of these kings (Jeroboam) was listed in Hosea 1:1, based on the list of the kings of Judah we know that Hosea was still prophesying during the time of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah and Hoshea.

Throughout these passages many of the kings are said to have not departed from the sins of Jeroboam. Look back at lesson 1; what is this referring to?

The people of Israel obviously did not heed Hosea's warnings and Hosea most likely saw them fall into Assyrian captivity.

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Read Hosea 1:2

As you read through this account, let the reality of the situation sink in. God asked Hosea to marry a prostitute. He knew the quality of character of Gomer before he married her. Can you imagine marrying a man whom you knew was most likely going to cheat on you? Can you imagine what your wedding ceremony would be like knowing that the vows he was making were probably a lie? This is the reality that Hosea faced when he took Gomer to be his wife.

According to Hosea 1:2, why does God make this request of Hosea?

At this point in history, Israel had reached a time of great material prosperity. King Jeroboam had extended the kingdom and had led them to military victory (2 Kings 14:23-27). For the first time since Solomon was king over a unified kingdom, Israel's borders had been reclaimed. On the outside looking in, the nation seemed to be at their peak. God looked straight through their great wealth and saw their complete spiritual bankruptcy. Something had to change or our just God would fulfill the promises He made in Leviticus 26.

What are some of the spiritual problems we face that are concealed by the wealth and prosperity of our nation?

What are some things you can do to make it easier to identify and change these issues in the future?

Read Hosea 1:3-9

Looking further at this love story of Hosea and Gomer we see three children being born. If you notice the wording of scripture and some of the implications made in chapter 2, it seems as if only Jezreel was born to Hosea. The other two were most likely a result of affairs on Gomer's part. Again, allow that betrayal to sink in with you. Also understand the great mercy Hosea had; the crime of adultery was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 22:22).

In the Hebrew culture, names usually carried important meanings. We already looked at the meaning of Hosea; let's look closer at the significance of his children's names.

Jezreel means "scattered," but it also held another special significance to the Israelites. Read 2 Kings 8:25-10:31 and answer the following questions.

- Who was the king of Israel? (2 Kings 8:25)
- Who was the king of Judah? (2 Kings 8:25)
- Who did the Lord anoint as the new king of Israel? (2 Kings 9:2-3)
- What did Jehu do to Joram and Ahaziah? (2 Kings 9:24-27)
- Who was killed in Jezreel? (2 Kings 10:11)

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- *What kind of worship did Jehu destroy in Israel? (2 Kings 10:28)*
- *To what generation did God tell Jehu his descendants would sit? (2 Kings 10:30)*

The name Jezreel would have had a terrifying significance to the nation of Israel. They would have remembered the bloodshed and death that occurred. Even though Jehu was used as God's instrument against the house of Ahab (1 Kings 21:29), he still caused Israel to walk a sinful path. God was going to have His vengeance.

The other two children also had significant names. Lo-ruhamah means "no compassion" and Lo-ammi means "not my people." No doubt every time that Hosea called his children he was reminded of the unfaithfulness of his wife and the extreme sinfulness of the nation of Israel.

In verses 6 and 7 we see what will happen to Israel and Judah. Just as Hosea prophesied, Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:14-23). Judah, however, was saved by divine intervention from the Assyrian army (Isaiah 37:36-37)

Read Hosea 1:10-11

This passage is the first glimmer of hope Hosea would offer to the Israelites. While he warned that they would be cut off from God, he offers them a glimpse at a coming leader who would unite them. This leader would be Jesus Christ!

List the names and meanings of Hosea's children:

These were punishments God was pronouncing on His people: they would be scattered, He would have no compassion on them and they would no longer be His people.

In Hosea 1:10-11 list the reversals of these punishments (hint-they are exact opposites):

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10 and explain its significance to this passage in Hosea.

As you go throughout your week, remember that you are God's possession. He bought you at a huge cost even though He knew you would be unfaithful at some point. Think about the heartbreak the Lord feels each and every time you place something or someone in His rightful place as Lord of your life.