

**I OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA****PURPOSE:** To illustrate God's love for His sinful people.**AUTHOR:** Hosea.**DATE:** 715 B.C.**SETTING:** Hosea began his ministry during the end of a prosperous but morally declining reign of Jeroboam II. He prophesied shortly after the fall of Israel to Assyria in 722 B.C.**KEY PEOPLE:** Hosea, Gomer, their children.

**BLUEPRINT:** A. Hosea's wayward wife (1:1-3:5)  
 B. God's wayward people (4:1-14:9)

1. Israel's sinfulness
2. Israel's punishment
3. God's love for Israel

**MEGATHEMES**

<b>The nation's sin</b>	<b>Just as Hosea's wife, Gomer, was unfaithful to him, so the nation of Israel had been unfaithful to God. Israel's idolatry was like adultery. They sought "illicit" relationships with Assyria and Egypt to give them military might, and they mixed Baal worship with the worship of God.</b>
<b>God's judgment</b>	<b>Hosea was solemnly warning Judah against following Israel's example. Because Judah broke the covenant, turned away from God, and forgot her maker, and forgot her maker, she experienced a devastating invasion and exile. Sin has terrible consequences.</b>
<b>God's love</b>	<b>Just as Hosea went after his unfaithful wife to bring her back, so the Lord pursues us with His love. His love is tender, loyal, unchanging, and undying. No matter what, God still loves us.</b>
<b>Restoration</b>	<b>Although God will discipline his people for sin, he encourages and restores those who have repented. True repentance opens the way to a new beginning. God forgives and restores.</b>

**II BACKGROUND**

God had kept His part of a 13-Century **conditional** Covenant agreement with Israel, first undertaken with Abraham (**Genesis 17**), and broadened under Moses (**Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**). God's love had been steadfast and His commandment unbroken. Israel, on the other hand, like Gomer, Hosea's wife, was adulterous and unfaithful, spurning God's deep love and turning to the worship of Baal, Asheroth and other idols. After warning of judgment, God reaffirms his love and offers reconciliation to those, His Remnant, who will repent and turn back to Him.

Images of God's love, judgment, grace, and mercy are then woven into the relationship of Hosea and Gomer. The Hosea-Gomer marriage is a true allegory of God's marriage to His unfaithful wife, Israel. God has outlined His case against Israel and her people: (1) Its sins will ultimately cause their destruction and, (2) The sins will rouse His anger (**Hosea 4, 6, 7**), resulting in punitive actions (**Hosea 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13**). But even in the midst of Israel's immorality, God is merciful and offers hope, expressing His infinite love for His chosen people (**Hosea 11**) and the remarkable fact that their repentance will bring about blessing (**Hosea 14**).

This lesson again focuses on God's impending judgment of Israel. Last week, God has focused on Israel's spiritual decay and the ultimate consequences of such behavior (**Hosea 4:1-7:16**). This week, we will focus on the political and social decay brought about by the root-cause spiritual decadence and why God will discipline them first through oppression and then through exile (**Hosea 8:1-10:15**). In today's Scripture, God has reached the point of judgment of His people for the people were drunk with idolatry and other assorted sinful behavior. Their addiction had progressed so far that they could not even turn back (**Romans 1:21-28**). God warned them through several prophets, but Israel did not even acknowledge that it had a problem and steadfastly refused to repent and return to Him as Lord. The only way to overcome this was harsh judgment of the unrepentant. God would then work His Covenant with the next generation that would be faithful (**Hebrews 11:6**).

### III SCRIPTURE

#### Hosea 8 - Sow the Wind, Reap the Whirlwind

#### INCAPABLE OF INNOCENCE (8:1-14)

There were 4 fundamental reasons why Israel will be judged: (1) Broken covenant oracle; (2) rejected idol oracle; (3) useless foreign alliance oracle; and, (4) empty ritual oracle. Hosea was inspired by the Lord to sound an alarm to Israel. The descending enemy is Assyria, coming to attack and take the people into captivity (II Kings 15:28-29). The people call to God, but it is already too late. They have broken their covenant to trust and obey Him (Exodus 19:5-6). If you do not trust God, you will defer your trust inferior things (e.g., idols). The lip service and foxhole prayer of Hosea 8:2 was much too little and far too late. Israel's doom was sealed.

**(1-6) Casting off God and embracing idols:** In 932 BC, when the nation divided, the Lord chose Jeroboam to be king over the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and stated that He would establish a dynasty if Jeroboam obeyed Him (**I Kings 11:29-38**). However, not only did Jeroboam not obey God, but other kings, appointed by the people, also did not obey God. This consistent disobedience kindled God's righteous anger.

At this time in history, trumpets were used to assemble God's people and call troops to battle. Here, God commands the trumpet to sound to gather the mighty Assyrians against Israel for judgment because they have transgressed His covenant. Although Israel will cry to God that they know Him, their cry is not sincere, because Israel has rejected God by setting up rulers and princes against the Lord, and was steeped in idolatry.

My God, we know You! But they didn't really know God. It will be the same way for many church-goers today. Jesus said, "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:22-23)

They set up kings, but not by Me: "To choose leaders without the direction of God is not only sinful, it is foolish. Those who follow their own wisdom in the choice of leaders inevitably get what they deserve." (Boice)

**(7-10) Israel judged and re-gathered:** Israel will complain that their judgment is harsher than the sin they committed. This is true only in how judgment feels because our sin is sown over a long period of time but often reaped in a more contracted period of judgment.

Although God promised that Israel would face the conquering Assyrians and exile, He also promised that one day He would re-gather them. This note of mercy is sprinkled through the warning of judgment.

By trusting in idols and foreign alliances, Israel put her confidence in military strength, strong defenses, and economic stability. But because of the people's inner moral decay, these sources of strength were totally inadequate. Without God, there is no sustainable and lasting security. It is extremely important where you seek stability in life (Psalm 40:1-3). All attention to idols yielded destruction and loss as God likened Israel to a wild donkey wandering alone in the desert and left to fend for itself.

**(11-13) Israel considers God's word a strange thing:** Israel foolishly built many altars for executing sinful behavior, so those altars became altars for sinning. When we give ourselves opportunity and occasion for sin, it is never surprising when we end up sinning.

Even worse, in their sin and idolatry, Israel also rejected the Word of God. God had great plans and things for Israel, but they seemed like a strange thing because their hearts were far from God.

"This volume is the writing of the living God: each fether was penned with an Almighty finger; each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips, each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit." (Spurgeon)

There is nothing in Scripture which is unimportant (**II Timothy 3:16**) as every verse has a solemn meaning even if we have not understood it yet. However, the Word of God and the things of the spirit are great things, but seem strange when man is in his sinful and depraved state. Scripture is received differently by natural man as Paul expressed in **I Corinthians 2:14**: "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Israel still brought sacrifices to the Lord, but it was just an outward ceremony because they were still steeped in idolatry. Therefore, their sin remained uncovered, and God will remember their iniquity and punish their sins.

**(14) When God's people forget their Maker, there is no refuge:** Israel built temples, but not unto the Lord who made them. While Israel practiced outright idolatry, Judah was guilty of a more subtle sin as they trusted in the fortified cities they built against the Assyrians. Those cities would be a useless defense for only the Lord would preserve Judah from total destruction (**Isaiah 37:33-36**).

We can capture some of the ungodly heart of Israel and Judah by examining our own attraction to big and nice facilities. What could be wrong with success and nice buildings? They easily become idols if your heart turns from God. If God brings size and great buildings, it is wonderful, as long as we don't turn our eyes of Him, making those things idols.

## Hosea 9 - Exiled and Dried Up

**BOUND FOR EXILE (9:1-10:15)**

Israel's discipline would include a small harvest and result in Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C. with Egypt "inheriting" Israel's possessions. They would also be unable, even if they wanted to, to observe the ceremonial laws as Assyria did not have the available infrastructure. Israel's leaders vacillated between alliances with Egypt and Assyria, and not God. They chose poorly!!

**(1-4) End of the good life in Israel:** At the time Hosea brought this prophecy, things may not have been that bad in Israel. There were plenty of good times among the people, but judgment was on the way and the people had no clue since they ignored the prophets God sent to them.

Israel practiced idolatry on the threshing floor, a place where grain was processed. They worshipped idols here because they believed that it helped the harvest. Because of their idolatry, the Lord would curse their harvest and famine was on the horizon.

Not only would God curse their grain and grape harvest, but He would also cast them out of the land in exile to both Egypt and Assyria. In the lands of exile there would be no food for sacrifice to the Lord, only a small amount for survival.

**(5-9) Days of Israel's punishment in Egypt:** By the time that Israel began to experience the consequences of her sins, she was no longer listening to God's messengers and punishment was already upon them. Israel's depravity had reached the level of the Gibeon sex pervert murder in **Judges 19:14-30**, but on a national level!

When things prospered and everyone was happy, Hosea announced coming judgment and called for repentance. The people of Israel called Hosea a fool and said he was insane; continuing their merry way to judgment. They would never know what hit them!

Israel did not honor the Lord in their appointed feast days, so they Lord will take them away. In their lands of exile, they will not be able to honor the feasts of the Lord.

"They said in effect, 'Who in his right mind would prophesy a judgment like this when we are in the midst of such a bountiful harvest, in itself a proof of God's blessing?'" (Boice)

**(10-14) God sends barrenness and bereavement:** God reminds the Israelites of the early days when He led them through the wilderness and how satisfied He was with their love. But soon, the Israelites showed their propensity for idolatry by being enticed into sexual sin and idolatry (**Numbers 13:21-23; Numbers 25:1-9**) and they became as corrupt as the gods they worshiped.

We must be wary of our relationship with the Lord at all times, for our adversary, the Devil, roars like a lion waiting to devour us, if we let him!

Israel's sin and idolatry in the days of Hosea is like their sin at Baal Peor in **Numbers 25**, associated with sexual immorality and idolatry. Israel loved their disgraceful idols, and have become like them. We in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will also become like the god we love and serve, whether it is the Lord or an abomination.

In contrast to their past fruitfulness, now Israel will experience barrenness and bereavement given to them by the God they rejected. The punishment was going to be severe. There will be stillbirths, infant deaths, or failure to even conceive. If the children do survive, their fathers will be forced to lead them to slaughter by the ruthless Assyrians. When Hosea saw this vision of Israel's destruction, he prayed (II Kings 17) that women would not even get pregnant and that children would actually die as infants so that they would not have to experience the tremendous pain and suffering that would lie ahead for them.

**(15-17) God sends dryness and wandering upon Israel:** As mentioned before in **Hosea 4:15**, God despised the city of Gilgal as a center of idolatry in Israel; where at one time, Gilgal was a place where prophets were trained under Elijah and Elisha (**II Kings 2:1; II Kings 4:38**). But in Hosea's day it had become a center of false worship (**Hosea 4:15; Hosea 12:11; Amos 4:4; Amos 5:5**).

One of the major reasons Israel worshipped idols like Baal and Ashtoreth was because those gods were thought to bring fruitfulness and fertility. God reminds Israel that He is really the Lord over the womb, and that He will turn their fruitfulness into barrenness.

The Lord promised under the terms of the Old Covenant (**Deuteronomy 30:24-28**) to cast out Israel. Thankfully, we can come to God by faith in a new and better covenant, where He promises to remember our sins no more (**Hebrews 8:12; Hebrews 10:16-17**). In this sense, exile was the perfect punishment for Israel who had disgraced God's house and His land.

The prophecy in Hosea 9:17 was fulfilled many times. Due to their disobedience and lack of attention (**Isaiah 59:1-2**), Israel's remnant would be wandering and homeless among many nations. The nation of Israel that was conquered by the Assyrians never reformed and the Samaritans were nomads around Jesus' time. Judah went into exile to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. for 70 years. The remnant was under Roman rule around Jesus' time, losing the power to have capital punishment (**Genesis 49:30**). In 70 AD, in fulfillment of Jesus' words, Titus destroyed Jerusalem. Israel did not re-emerge as a nation again until 1948 AD. and even today is threatened by many nations. In the future, she will be threatened again (**Ezekiel 38**).

## COVERED WITH SHAME (10:1-8)

### Hosea 10 - Israel Has No King

There is no such notion in Scripture that God's anger is inconsistent with His unfailing Love. God can and does feel intense anger towards those He loves for anger burns more intensely when we are offended by those whom we sincerely love, because we feel the offense more personally.

**(1-2) Israel's empty vine:** Israel prospered under Jeroboam II, gaining military and economic strength; but the more prosperous, the more Israel lavished on her idols. As we prosper, we must be cautious that we are good stewards of what God, the Owner of Everything, has provided to us. The better stewards we are, the more God will entrust us to manage for Him.

God blessed Israel with material abundance, but they spent it on themselves and idolatrous desires. Israel enjoyed the blessing of God, but used those blessings in ungodly ways.

Paul warns against the same sin in **Galatians 5:13**: For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. Sometimes as Christians we take the liberty and blessing God gives and use them in ungodly ways.

Because Israel has received blessing, they were more responsible than ever to use it wisely (i.e., noblesse l'oblige). Since they used God's bounty in wicked ways, God will break down their altars to pagan gods and ruin their sacred pillars made unto idols.

God now tells Israel it has a smooth, flattering insincere heart. Israel is like the unfaithful spouse (i.e., Gomer) who will say they love their partner, all the while living a lie.

Israel had this divided, insincere heart and expressed it on the altars of idolatry. Now, He will break down their altars. "Now God will do in judgment what they should have done in contrition, 'break down their altars, and spoil their images.'" (Clarke)

**(3-8) Israel's empty throne:** Under the judgment of the Lord, foreign powers will dominate Israel so they no longer will have their own king. Even the idols they honored and trusted so much will be taken to foreign lands as treasure for foreign kings. God was angry at Israel for her insincere promises. Never make a promise unless you can keep it (**Ecclesiastes 5:4-5**).

After the desolation of exile, the once-busy pagan altars of Israel are now overgrown with thorns and thistles; a result of Israel's rejection of the Lord and embrace of pagan gods.

### TIME TO SEEK THE LORD (10:9-15)

**(9-11) God tells Israel to see their sin and to submit to His chastening:** Gibeah was already mentioned in **Hosea 9:9**, recalling the horrific sin described in **Judges 19**. Even though there was a battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity, there was still iniquity in Israel. Here, God wants a willfully blind Israel to see their sin and repent of it.

**(12) God tells Israel to break up the hard ground of their heart:** God had to judge His corrupt people, but offers refuge to the righteous remnant; encouraging them to plant seeds of righteousness to reap a crop of His Love (see **Proverbs 11:18**). Israel had sown the seed of sin, and would soon reap judgment from God.

God builds on the picture of sowing and reaping by telling Israel to break up your fallow ground that hasn't been plowed for more than a year. It is ground that is hard and stubborn, resistant to the seed. It does little good to sow seed on fallow ground; it must be broken up.

God use of the figures of sowing and reaping remind us that harvest is sometimes a season away. Sometimes people expect to sow sin for years, but to immediately reap in mercy after sowing righteousness for one day. Stick with sowing in righteousness, you will reap in mercy in due time.

**(13-15) God tells Israel the terrible result of resisting Him:** Israel put their confidence in military might rather than in God, as a result they would be destroyed by a military power, with Israel's King the first to fall.

Because you trusted in your own way is the essence of all sin. We trust in our own way instead of in God's way (**Proverbs 3:5-6**). Ruin always comes when we trust in our own way instead of God's way, and that ruin was about to come upon Israel.