

Lesson 29 - Hosea

Key Verse:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." (4:6)

HOSEA is the first book to classify in the Old Testament books known as the **MINOR PROPHETS**.

The Israelites were careful in giving names to their children. Names often stood for traits which the parents felt the child had, or would have in the days to come. Sometimes the name was tied up with the events present in the country when he was born. Jeremiah's parents named him "Jehovah hurls." He was born during the dark days of Manasseh's reign. They hoped God would use their son to "throw" a message to the nation and even to the king himself. Habbakkuk wrestled with the age-long problem of why the righteous suffer. His name means "embracer," which describes his career well. The word "Hosea" means "salvation" and is identical with the proper name Joshua. It is very close to the name of our Savior. Hosea's name fit his task well.

The northern kingdom is usually referred to in the book as Ephraim because that was its largest tribe. **Hosea** was the last writing prophet in the northern kingdom before it fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. He pleaded for the people to turn to God and be saved. He may be called the prophet of the decline and fall of the Northern Kingdom. He sought to call the sinful and estranged nation back to God.

I. THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF ISRAEL

- A. The nation had sunk to the depths morally, but the book of Hosea emphasizes divine grace if the people would repent.
- B. The nation was economically prosperous but spiritually impoverished
 - 1. Gross immoralities were introduced, worship was polluted, oppression, murder, lying and stealing were tolerated,
 - 2. The people substituted the worship of Baal in the place of God.
 - 3. The Assyrian Empire was poised to crush Israel for her sins.
 - 4. Israel's unfaithfulness is seen in
 - a) Her rebellion to authority - various kings and princes had been assassinated
 - b) Her dependence upon foreign powers instead of Jehovah ([5:13](#); [7:11-13](#); [10:13](#); [14:3](#), etc.)
 - c) Hosea summed up Israel's spiritual condition in one word: WHOREDOM.

II. THE MAN

God sent more than a series of sermons to decaying and doomed Israel in the 8th century before Christ. He sent a man. God spoke to Hosea in many ways and especially through his experiences. Hosea in turn spoke God's message to Israel. We have those messages in this book that bears his name.

- A. The son of Beer (1:1). This is all we know about his family.
- B. His name indicates "salvation", "deliverance", or "help"
 - 1. Hoshea (salvation) was the name of Israel's great leader who succeeded Moses. His name was changed to Joshua, "salvation is of Jehovah" ([Num. 13:8, 16](#))
- C. Nothing is known of his early life or native home
 - 1. It is generally believed that he was a native of the North, possibly Samaria. The prophet's references to farm life suggest a rural background. Yet he had knowledge of

current events. His language is terse, but beautiful, and contains many figures of speech which only a cultured man would employ. Hosea may have been a member of the wealthy rural class.

D. His occupation

1. Two ideas have been set forth. First some believe he was a priest. He referred often to them and their work. He also felt free to condemn them sharply. He spoke of the "law" (4:6; 8:12) and referred to "unclean food" (9:3), to "the shameful thing" (9:10), and to the "house of God" (9:8). Ezekiel spoke the same way and you know he was a priest. Others think Hosea was a baker. He describes the heated oven and the flaming fire (7:6-7). But there are not enough facts to make an assertion of either vocation for Hosea.

E. His marriage

1. He was directed to Mary "a wife/woman of whoredom" (one living under the influence of idolatry - a daughter of the times)

F. Characteristics of Hosea:

1. A man of great sympathy whose message was filled with loving-kindness
 - a) He also had a righteous indignation of sin -- while pleading with the people to turn from sin, he could see the justice of God's righteous judgement
2. Both as a man and a prophet Hosea was a colorful person. As one who felt deeply, he came to his gospel through his grief. He was a poet with keen insight, though a man of contrasts. He could be the saddest and happiest of men. The prophet could see heaven and hell at the same time. Hosea saw the coming gloom, yet could see beyond the dark cloud to God's dawning light. He was the Jeremiah of the northern kingdom.

III. KEY TO THE BOOK

- A. The parallel of Hosea's experienced with Gomer and Jehovah's experience with Israel

IV. DATE OF HIS PROPHECY

- A. He prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, and probably after Amos
- B. He probably prophesied ca. 750 B.C. until several years later, possibly to 725 B.C.

V. HIS MESSAGE

- A. The righteousness of Jehovah: GOD IS LOVE (2:19)
 1. Hosea has been called the prophet of love
- B. The doom of Israel -- he warned of the impending divine judgement (1:4)

VI. SOME PREDICTIONS

- A. The downfall of Samaria (5:5-7)
- B. The deliverance of Judah (1:7) (See 2 Kings. 19:35)
- C. The punishment of Judah and her cities (5:10; 8:14)

VII. STEPS IN ISRAEL'S NATIONAL DOWNFALL

- A. Lack of knowledge (4:6)
- B. Pride (5:5)
- C. Instability (6:4)
- D. Worldliness (7:8)
- E. Corruption (9:9)
- F. Backbiting (11:2)
- G. Idolatry (13:2)

VIII. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- A. Israel's adultery (chapters 1-3)
 - 1. Israel's sin, illustrated by the tragedy of Hosea's marriage.
- B. The prophetic discourses (chapters 4-14)
 - 1. Israel's sins (chapters 4-8)
 - 2. Israel's approaching punishment (chapters 9-11)
 - 3. Israel is entreated to repent and return to Jehovah (chapters 12-14)