

The Book of Hosea

HOSEA- his name means ‘salvation.’

MINISTRY: To the backslidden northern kingdom of Israel (which was often called ‘Ephraim,’ from the name of the largest tribe).

TIME: Hosea prophesied for about 40 years, during the rule of the last 7 kings of Israel before the nation was destroyed (about 750 B.C. to 710 B.C.).

During the first of these kings, Jeroboam II, Israel was a prosperous kingdom, but under the last 6 kings the nation became weak and very corrupt. (These 6 kings had short reigns, as 5 were murdered & one taken as a prisoner to Assyria.) Hosea prophesied God’s last warnings to Israel, just as Jeremiah gave Judah their last warnings.

THEME: A holy God will judge sin, but His love and forgiveness never fail.

OVERVIEW: Hosea’s personal relationship with his wife is prophetic of the theme of his ministry. His wife, Gomer, is unfaithful, turns to harlotry, and finally becomes a slave, 1:2-3, 2:2, 3:2. Hosea forgives Gomer, redeems her from slavery, and restores her to be his wife, 3:1-3.

In the same way, Israel was unfaithful to God, committing spiritual harlotry with many idols and gods, 2:13, 4:12. As a result, God would judge them with punishments, 2:11-12, 4:6, 8:3, 11:1-7. These judgments are to bring repentance and cleansing, 2:5-8, 3:3-5, 6:1-3, 14:1-8.

HOSEA REVEALS GOD’S HEART ABOUT DIVORCE: Although his wife became an adulteress, God told Hosea to take her back, Hos.3:1-2. In the same way, God was going to restore His adulterous wife Israel. God was married to Israel (Ezek.16:8) and although He would punish them for their sins (Ezek.16:36-42) God also said He would still remember His covenant with them, Ezek.16:60 & 16:63. This is a revelation of God’s character - divorce is not part of His nature. If we know His character we will understand truth and doctrine!

In Malachi 2:13-16 God gave His view on divorce. He said, I HATE IT! God calls it treachery. God calls marriage a covenant in Malachi. God does not honor broken vows or covenants, Eccles.5:4-6. He wouldn’t listen to their prayers, Malachi 2:13.

Although divorce was permitted in the Old Testament under Moses, God was not pleased to give this permission. In Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:5-9, Jesus interprets Deut. 24:1-2 as being against His will.