

### The Lord Directs Hosea into an Unusual Marriage

#### Hosea 1

Hosea 1:1-9 - *“The word of the Lord that came to 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. <sup>2</sup> When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea: “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord.”*

*<sup>3</sup> So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. <sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said to him: “Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. <sup>5</sup> It shall come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”*

*<sup>6</sup> And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then God said to him: “Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away. <sup>7</sup> Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword or battle, nor by horses or horsemen.”*

*<sup>8</sup> Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. <sup>9</sup> Then God said: “Call his name Lo-Ammi, for you are not My people, and I will not be your God.”*

#### Background Notes

There are four “Major Prophets” in our Bible: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. There are twelve “Minor Prophets”: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Hosea is the first Minor Prophet.

What’s the difference between a Major Prophet and a Minor Prophet? Were the Minor Prophets less spiritual or less important than the Major Prophets? No! The term “minor” has to do with the length of their books. The Minor Prophets wrote shorter books.

Here’s a little historical background to bring you up to date. Kings Saul, David, and Solomon reigned over the united kingdom of Israel. After Solomon’s death the kingdom split into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Although kings from both kingdoms are mentioned in verse 1, we will see that Hosea’s ministry was primarily directed to the northern kingdom of Israel. The northern kingdom is sometimes called “Ephraim,” because Ephraim was the largest and most prominent tribe in the northern kingdom.

Hosea ministered during the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of the southern kingdom of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam II, king of the northern kingdom of Israel (v1).

In verse 2 the Lord said to Hosea, “*Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry.*” Why would the Lord ask Hosea to do such a thing? It will soon become clear that Hosea’s marriage to Gomer is an illustration of God’s “marriage” to His people Israel. As Gomer turned away from Hosea’s love and committed physical adultery, so Israel turned away from God’s love and committed “spiritual adultery” by becoming involved in the worship of foreign gods.

Was Gomer was a prostitute before Hosea married her, or did she became a prostitute after he married her? My own position is that she became a prostitute *after* Hosea married her. The statement of verse 2 is proleptic – that is, it was written in view of what Gomer would become.

For example - I might say to you that I’d like you to greet your fellow church members Maurice and Arlene Martin, travelers to the Holy Land - even though the Martins haven’t been to the Holy Land yet! But they’re going in the near future, so I’m making that statement in anticipation of an event that I already know will take place in the future.

If Gomer became a prostitute *after* the marriage, the marriage is a better illustration of the relationship between God and Israel. There was a “honeymoon period” between God and Israel when God chose the descendants of Abraham as His special people. He redeemed them out of Egypt, and at first they were true to Him. But just as Gomer turned away from Hosea’s love after the marriage, so Israel turned away from God’s love after the nation’s redemption out of Egypt - after that initial honeymoon period. And it wasn’t long after the honeymoon before Israel turned away. Remember the golden calf?

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Israel turned away from God’s love in the past.

Hosea did as God directed him, and married Gomer (v3-8). The Bible doesn’t tell us when Gomer turned away from Hosea and committed adultery. Hosea was the father of the first son (v3), but we can’t be sure whether or not Hosea was the father of the next two children. “*Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry*” (v2).

In any case, Hosea gave all three children their names, and he considered them all part of his family. The important point about the naming of the children is that God told Hosea what to name them. All three names have special meaning. The names are part of the overall illustration of the relationship between God and His people Israel.

The name of Hosea’s firstborn child was Jezreel (v4-5). The name “Jezreel” means “*God sows*” or “*God scatters.*” The reason for this name was that God would scatter the people of the northern kingdom of Israel as judgment for their sin.

There were no good kings in the northern kingdom of Israel. Jehu (v4) was one of those bad kings. Although God used Jehu to put an end to the reign of wicked Ahab and Jezebel, Jehu went much too far in his bloodbath. The judgment of the northern kingdom of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel (v5) took place at the hands of the Assyrians in about 724BC - just as Hosea predicted. Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, fell to the Assyrians in 722BC.

Gomer's second child was a daughter, and God told Hosea to name her "Lo-Ruhamah" meaning "unloved," or "unpitied" (v6). The reason for this name was that Israel had turned away from God's love. As a result, Israel would be shown no mercy, but would be judged and taken away. All this came true at the hands of the Assyrians.

Notice that mercy was extended to the southern kingdom of Judah (v7). The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, but they never fully conquered the southern kingdom of Judah. Under Sennacherib, the Assyrian armies besieged Jerusalem in 701BC - but God miraculously delivered King Hezekiah and the capital city. In one night the angel of the Lord struck down 185,000 Assyrian troops, and Jerusalem was spared. What a miracle! It's recorded three times in the Bible – 2 Kings 19, 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 37. Hosea's prophecy that Judah would be spared (v7) was fulfilled.

The third child was named "Lo-Ammi," meaning "not my people" (v8-9). God told Israel that if they turned away from His love, He could not be their God and they could not be His people. How terribly sad!

God will not force His love on anyone. Let me ask you: Have you turned away from God's love? God loves you so much that He sent His only Son to die on the cross for your sins - but He will not force you to come into His family. And He cannot be your God if you turn away from His love.

Don't be like Israel! Israel turned away from God's love.

## **2. Israel will turn back to God's love in the future.**

Hosea 1:10-11 - *"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.' <sup>11</sup> Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head. And they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!"*

What a change of conditions from the earlier part of the chapter! In a coming day, Israel will turn back to the Lord. We believe these promises will *literally* be fulfilled to *literal Israel*. They should **not** be "spiritualized" and applied to the Church rather than to Israel.

These promises certainly can be extended to the Gentiles who have believed in God's plan of salvation, and have thus come under the covenant blessings of God. In fact, this is taught in Romans 9, where Paul quoted Hosea 1:10. But the idea that these promises *no longer apply to Israel* and will be completely fulfilled only in the Church is untenable!

Israel is back in The Land. Israel is now a nation once again. Israel is already "one nation," as verse 11 says. They are not two divided kingdoms as in the day of Hosea. The Jews of today represent all twelve tribes - there are no "lost tribes."

But what we see in Israel today is only a foretaste of what's to come! The Abrahamic Covenant will be fulfilled. The number of "Abraham's children" will be as the sand of the sea - a number that cannot be measured or numbered!

And better yet, a spiritual revival will take place in Israel! Notice that the names of Hosea's children reappear in verses 10-11, but now in blessing. Israel is no longer "unloved" and "unpitied," and no longer "not my people." No longer will Jezreel be known as "scattered," but now in the sense of being sown in the land!

*"Great will be the day of Jezreel!"* when the Lord returns as Israel's King! Israel will turn back to God's love in the future.

## **Practical Application**

### **Where are you in relation to God's love?**

This is certainly an appropriate application from Hosea 1. Where do you stand in relation to God's love? Have you turned to God and experienced His love? Are you in God's family? Do you know God's love - or have you turned away from God's love?

Romans 5:8 says, *"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

That's a lot of love! You can experience the wonderful love of God if you turn to the Lord Jesus and trust in Him as your personal Savior.