

Books of The Bible

Survey of The Prophecy of Hosea

The Times in Which He Prophesied

1) The Political Environment:

- a) Hosea prophesied during the reign of four kings: Uzziah (also called Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Hos. 1:1). Starting from Uzziah's father, who was a good king, however he did not have a perfect heart in allowing the high places to continue (2 Kgs. 14:1-6). (A high place was, to my understanding, a chief place for a particular worship. Just as there are many individual churches of England, yet the high place would be Canterbury).
- b) Uzziah, the first of the Kings mentioned, it was in his reign Hosea began his prophesy. He began as a good king, refortifying Eloth, a very wise choice since it was a seaport. In the early part of his reign he followed his father and sought Zachariah the prophet. The first part of his reign was peaceful establishment. However, the second part was retributive warfare (2 Chron. 21:16-17) building fortresses and equipping the army. Then, being lifted up with pride and for an unknown reason, decided he wanted to offer incense, a matter that was only for the priests and the Lord smote him with leprosy. The year he died Isaiah either was called to serve the Lord or a deeper entering into the glory of the Lord was granted to him (Isa. 6:1).
- c) Jotham was the second king of Judah under whom Hosea ministered. Jotham was co-regent with his father (2 Chron. 26:21), but he had learnt from the sin of his father and resulting leprosy to respect the rights of God. We read, "He did not enter the temple of God" (2 Chron. 27:2). As far as the military was concerned, he fortified the nation by building fortresses in various places. Of him it is recorded, "he prepared his ways before the LORD his God" (2 Chron. 27:6), being the only Hebrew king after Saul to whom God had nothing to report of evilness. He was the man Micah spoke about (Mic. 7:2).
- d) The third king was Ahaz and he was an evil king who wrought much wickedness by himself and in multi spiritual ways. He did not follow the footsteps of David, doing those things which were right in the sight of the Lord (2 Kgs. 16:2). His callous but fierce devotion to the idol enabled him to take his son and made him, "pass through the fire", that is offer the child as an offering (2 Chron. 28:3). Some translations indicate that it was not just one son but it is translated "Sons". What a heartless being he was. He was the first king to do such wickedness but later Manasseh did the same (2 Kgs. 21:6, 22; 2 Chron. 28:3). Thus, what he did affected others.
 - i) Added to this he showed utter contempt for the things of God, copying the altar at Damascus (2 Kgs. 16:10) and demanding it be made by the priest in Israel (2 Kgs. 16:10-11). The altar of the Lord, the altar of Burnt offering that Moses had made, was set aside to the north and on this pagan altar he offered sacrifices (2 Kgs. 16:13-14).
 - ii) He cut the bases of the sea Solomon had made and it is understood these were given to Tilgath-pilneser, King of Assyria (2 Kgs. 16:8, 17), but Tilgath-pilneser distressed Judah (2 Chron. 28:20). Ahaz trespassed the more against the Lord (2 Chron. 28:22) by sacrificing to the gods of Damascus. He shut the doors of the house of the Lord, cut the vessels of the Lord in pieces, and made altars in every "corner of Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 28:24) and in every city he made high places to burn incense to other gods and provoked to anger (2 Chron. 28:3).
- e) The fourth and final king under whom Hosea prophesied was Hezekiah. One of the first things said about him was, "He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD" (2 Chron. 29:2). In so doing, he repaired the doors of the temple and opened them (2 Chron. 29:3). He brought in the priests and Levites and commanded the temple to be cleansed and sanctified and the same with the priests and Levites (2 Chron. 29:4, 15, 16, 17). The holy vessels of the temple his father had cast away he restored as much as possible. The Lord prospered him (2 Kgs. 18:7). When Sennacherib came Hezekiah turned to the Lord for help. Later he got deathly ill, and having sent for Isaiah, who when

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he came, told Hezekiah to set his house in order. Hezekiah prayed and the Lord added fifteen years. Sadly, it was during those 15 years that he had a son, Manasseh, who was twelve when he began to reign at the death of his father (2 Kgs. 21:1). He was a wicked evil king. At times we face crisis points, a tragedy, and pray for the Lord's healing hand. It is not always the best when God postpones that which was to happen.

- f) The king of Israel, Jeroboam, reigned for part of the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz
 - i) Starting from King Menahem who gave Pul, the king of Assyria, one thousand talents of silver to confirm the kingdom (2 Kgs. 15:19).
 - ii) When he died Pekahiah, his son, began to reign but it was only for two years (2 Kgs. 15:23). He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, following the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin (2 Kgs. 15:24).
 - iii) Pekah, a captain in his army, conspired against him and slew him and he (Pekah) began to reign for twenty years. Like Pekahiah, he did that which was evil (2 Kgs. 15:28).
 - iv) During his reign Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came and depleted several areas of Israel of its peoples.

2) The Spiritual Environment:

- a) While there had been three good kings, yet the spiritual condition of the populous was dreadful. One has only to read the catalogue of wickedness God specifies concerning Judah. There had been:
 - i) rejection of the pleadings of God through His prophets, entreating them to return to the Lord (ch. 2:2)
 - ii) also, symbolically through Gomer his wife, but they went deeper into sin and idolatry (ch. 2:10-13; 3:1), there was an ignorance (ch. 4:6), consequently there was no truth, mercy or knowledge of God (ch. 4:1); swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery, murder (blood toucheth blood) (ch. 4:2)
 - iii) they set their heart on their iniquity (ch. 4:8).
 - iv) they left off taking heed to the Lord (ch. 4:10)
 - v) they took counsel at their stocks, sacrificing on the top of mountains, burning incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms; wives and daughters had become religious harlots (ch. 4:12-14).
 - vi) there was intoxication (ch. 4:11), false dealings (ch. 10:4), and oppression (ch. 12:7).
 - vii) they were a nation ripe for judgment and the judgment of God is according to that which they had done. They had rejected knowledge so God will reject them (ch. 4:6); they had forgotten the law of God so God will forget their children (ch. 4:6). God will change their glory into shame (ch. 4:7). God states the final judgment, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (ch. 4:17).

The Man

The goal of the book is not the man but his marital situation. It was a sad affair, but God used the dreadful situation as a living type of Israel and God. His name means "salvation" or "deliverance". His father's name was Beeri, but of him we know nothing. From the way in which he rebukes the priests, it would indicate he was not one of them.

His marriage:

- a) He had one of the saddest marriages in the scriptures, one of the strangest for God told him to marry Gomer. To my understanding, God would not have told Hosea to marry a prostitute for it would have broken the type of Gomer being typical of the nation of Israel. True, Israel practised idolatry in Egypt (Ezek. 20:7), in the wilderness (Ezek. 20:17), and in the land (Ezek. 20:28, 31).

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- b) Even though he knew she would be unfaithful, Hosea deeply loved Gomer. -It must have broke his heart when after the birth and rearing of the three children she left him to be a prostitute. It is possible that only the son was his offspring for it says, “He took Gomer . . . which conceived, and bare him a son” (ch. 1:3). After the birth of his son it simply says, “she conceived (ch. 1:6, 8) but there is not mention of them being Hosea’s daughters, yet he viewed them as his own (ch. 2:1). Time passed and Hosea asks his children to plead with their mother to come back to him again and stop her prostituting (ch. 2:2). In this tragic story the love of Hosea was greatly tested for God told him to go and take her back. To do so, he had to pay for her (ch. 3:1-2).
- c) Hosea is set in contrast and similarity to Ezekiel:
 - i) Both loved their wives (Hos. 3:1; Ezek. 24:16).
 - ii) Ezekiel was told his wife would die and he was not to weep for her (Ezek. 24:16).
 - iii) Hosea was told to go and take a wife whom he apparently knew would commit whoredoms (Hos. 1:2).

The Key Words

“Return” and “Turn”

(ch. 2:7, 9; 3:5; 5:4, 15; 6:1, 11; 7:10, 16; 8:13; 9:3; 11:5, 9; 12:6, 14; 14:1, 2, 4, 7).

Hosea, The Book of The Heart

It would be easy to see the first three chapters as a sad story, of a very tragic marriage, and then the following chapters as long generalizations of the sins of Israel and the kindness of God to her. This is not the case.

- a) Chapters 1-3 form the foundation for the truths being presented. Hosea had take a wife from the whoredoms just as Abraham was, by God, taken from the midst of idolatry (Josh. 24:2).
 - i) In love Hosea had married Gomer but she began to be unfaithful, departing to be with her lovers and even prostituting herself. With genuine pleading Hosea yearns for her to return and pledging that if she refused, there would be dark repercussions. The problem was a heart problem. The heart of Hosea was one of genuine and sincere love being stretched to the extreme, but in contrast, the heart of Gomer was unfaithful, and not only being an adulteress, but giving birth to other children out of wedlock.
- b) Having placed the narrative, Hosea now starts to apply it to Judah. In this section we see the heart of Judah displayed in rebelliousness against God and unfaithfulness to Him, despite Jehovah having betrothed them to himself. Then there is displayed the heart of God, which like Hosea, longed for the return of his wife and the rejection of pagan lovers or religions. At last, by the kindness of God, there is the restoration and unity of the house of Israel and Judah. Added to this the people of Israel reunited to the Lord, and at the end they are not just reunited to Him, but have seen the glories of His grace and say, “What have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him: I am like a green fir tree” (ch. 14:8).
- c) Chapters 4-10 form a section by themselves being divided into two sections:
 - i) Chapters 4-7 deal with a series of indictments. They were not trivial slip ups, they were blatant deliberate acts disregarding God’s law and therefore Himself. There had been a restoration under Kings Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah, but it was not true repentance. The indictments are mentioned above under “The spiritual environment”. -They were a toxic nation.
 - ii) Chapters 8-10 deal with the reality that judgement must come and it is a dreadful anger. Read and ponder the severity of the expressions: “He shall come as an eagle” (ch. 8:1); “Mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?” (ch. 8:5); “they shall reap

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- the whirlwind” (ch. 8:7); “now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins” (ch. 8:13); “I will send a fire upon his cities (ch. 8:14). God is not making empty threats but frightening words of judgment which was about to fall.
- d) Chapters 11-14 we finally see the heart of God. There is brought to remembrance the Exodus when God brought his son out of Egypt (ch. 11:1). His tender care as a parent teaching a little one to walk (ch. 11:3); drawing them with the cords of a man, with bands of love (ch. 11:4); “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?” (ch. 11:8); “how shall I deliver thee, Israel?” (ch. 11:8). As I write, this is the story of hearts, the faithful heart of Hosea and God, and the unfaithful heart of Gomer and Israel, yet God brings Israel back into perfection of fellowship of heart with Himself.

Its Similarity to The Church Today, Local and Corporate

The book of Revelation supplies for us the main spiritual condition of the closing days of the church in this age. The characteristics of the other churches are disregard for the word of God, fraternizing with the world, a superficial spirituality. Hosea prophesied in time of great outward prosperity but little inward piety. Formal religiosity marked the day.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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