

THE MINOR PROPHETS

HOSEA

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Introduction to the Minor Prophets

Refers to the shorter prophetic books, mostly written at the time of the divided kingdom (between Solomon's death and the exiles – North to Assyria in 721BC, South to Babylon in 606BC) although, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were written after Judah's return from exile. They were ordinary men chosen by God to speak on his behalf by word, picture and demonstration.

God used these Prophets

- To rebuke and challenge the two kingdoms regarding their unfaithfulness to Him.
- To warn them of the consequences of their unfaithfulness (sin). i.e. Exile
- To reassure them of His love for them and of His desire to bring restoration to them.
- To address the surrounding nations.

Reading the Prophetic books helps us to understand God's plans and purposes, and to understand more of His character. (Immutability, justice, grace, love etc.)

Hosea

Followed on from Amos and was the last of the northern Prophets before the exile. His ministry lasted for around 40 years starting under King Jeroboam II, through to the last King of Israel, Hoshea. All we know about Hosea is written in this book.

Hosea's Prophetic Ministry

Hosea didn't just speak God's word; he was called to be a living example of God's word.

Chapter 1

He was told to marry a promiscuous woman and have promiscuous children.

When the Lord first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, he said to him, "Go and marry a prostitute, so that some of her children will be conceived in prostitution. This will illustrate how Israel has acted like a prostitute by turning against the Lord and worshiping other gods." So Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave Hosea a son. (Hosea 1:2-3, NLT)

To Illustrate

- Israel's unfaithfulness and the consequences of their lifestyle.
- God's faithfulness and tenacity in love for His people.

Chapter 2 – Regarding Gomer

Hosea

- Rebuked
- Reminded
- Restored

But now bring charges against Israel your mother for she is no longer my wife and I am no longer her husband. Tell her to remove the prostitute's makeup from her face and the clothing that exposes her breasts. (Hosea, 2:2 NLT)

I will punish her for all those times when she burned incense to her images of Baal, when she put on her earrings and jewels and went out to look for her lovers but forgot all about me, says the Lord. (Hosea 2:13, NLT)

I will make you my wife forever showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion. I will be faithful to you and make you mine and you will finally know me as the Lord. (Hosea 2:19-20, NLT)

Chapter 3 – Regarding Hosea, he was:

- Faithful
- Principled
- Sacrificial

Then the Lord said to me, “Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover. This will illustrate that the Lord still loves Israel, even though the people have turned to other gods and love to worship them.”

So I bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and five bushels of barley and a measure of wine. Then I said to her, “You must live in my house for many days and stop your prostitution. During this time, you will not have sexual relations with anyone, not even with me.” (Hosea 3:1-3, NLT)

Chapter 4 To 14 - God’s Word Of Judgement And Hope Over Israel

After the practical demonstration of God’s word through Hosea’s marriage to Gomer, Hosea brought God’s word to Israel.

God sets out His case against Israel

Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel! The Lord has brought charges against you, saying: “There is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of God in your land. You make vows and break them, you kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence everywhere one murder after another. That is why your land is in mourning, and everyone is wasting away. Even the wild animals, the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea are disappearing. Don’t point your finger at someone else and try to pass the blame! My complaint, you priests, is with you. So you will stumble in broad daylight, and your false prophets will fall with you in the night. And I will destroy Israel, your mother. My people are being destroyed because they don’t know me. Since you priests refuse to know me, I refuse to recognize you as my priests. Since you have forgotten the laws of your God, I will forget to bless your children. (Hosea 4:1-6, NLT)

They ask a piece of wood for advice! They think a stick can tell them the future! Longing after idols has made them foolish. They have played the prostitute, serving other gods and deserting their God. They offer sacrifices to idols on the mountaintops. They go up into the hills to burn incense in the pleasant shade of oaks, poplars, and terebinth trees. “That is why your daughters turn to prostitution, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. But why should I punish them for their prostitution and adultery?

For your men are doing the same thing, sinning with whores and shrine prostitutes. O foolish people! You refuse to understand, so you will be destroyed. (Hosea 4:12-14, NLT)

- Infidelity v1
- Divisive v2
- Independence v6
- Ignorance by choice v6
- Idolatry v12
- Immorality v13

Reminded them of the consequences of continuing this way

The time of Israel’s punishment has come; the day of payment is here. Soon Israel will know this all too well. Because of your great sin and hostility, you say, “The prophets are crazy and the inspired men are fools!” (Hosea 9:7, NLT)

Called them to repent

Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces, now he will heal us. He has injured us, now he will bandage our wounds. (Hosea 6:1, NLT)

Promised restoration

I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. Israel will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. Its branches will spread out like beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedars of Lebanon. My people will again live under my shade. They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines. They will be as fragrant as the wines of Lebanon. (Hosea 14:5-7, NLT)

What Can We Learn From This?

- There are consequences for our behaviour.

“They have planted the wind and will harvest the whirlwind. The stalks of grain wither and produce nothing to eat. And even if there is any grain, foreigners will eat it. (Hosea 8:7, NLT)

- God laments (a passionate expression of grief or loss) over the lost.

What sorrow awaits those who have deserted me! Let them die, for they have rebelled against me. I wanted to redeem them, but they have told lies about me. (Hosea 7:13, NLT)

- God goes above and beyond to reach out to us and to bring restoration.

The Lord says, “Then I will heal you of your faithlessness, my love will know no bounds, for my anger will be gone forever. I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. Israel will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. Its branches will spread out like beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedars of Lebanon. My people will again live under my shade. They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines. They will be as fragrant as the wines of Lebanon. (Hosea 14:4-7, NLT)

- The mark of a believer is that they demonstrate God’s character like Hosea did by showing sacrificial love! (it wasn’t easy for Hosea to do what he did)

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt. But the more I called to him, the farther he moved from me, offering sacrifices to the images of Baal and burning incense to idols. I myself taught Israel how to walk, leading him along by the hand. But he doesn’t know or even care that it was I who took care of him. I led Israel along with my ropes of kindness and love. I lifted the yoke from his neck, and I myself stooped to feed him. (Hosea 11:1-4, NLT)

There is hope!!