

Lesson 98

God Loves Israel

Hosea and Gomer illustrate God's relationship with Israel.

Overview

Lesson Focus

The book of Hosea is a unique account of the prophet Hosea, his wife Gomer, and her unfaithfulness. Hosea's love for Gomer is a picture of God's faithful love for Israel. In spite of Israel's rebellion and turning to false gods, God loved them and was willing to forgive them.

Key Passages

Hosea 4:1–3, 11:7–11

Objectives

Students will be able to:

Understand how Hosea's love for his wife is a picture of God's love for Israel.

Describe God's love for Israel despite their unfaithfulness.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 3:11–12 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Hosea described one of the most shocking portrayals of God's relationship with his children. God compared his relationship with his people to a marriage with a prostitute who would not remain faithful. These are strong and bitter words through the mouth and actions of a prophet. They must have rung sharply in the ears of the people of Israel. And as the people witnessed Hosea take Gomer as his wife, they observed Gomer leave Hosea for other men, and then watched as Hosea tenderly took Gomer back in love and forgiveness, the message that God meant to convey to his people became even clearer. Just as Gomer had abandoned her husband for other lovers, so had Israel turned from the one true God to false gods and idols (Hosea 2:2–13). And just as Gomer's husband bought her back from slavery, so God brings his people back in mercy and love.

The mercy and love of God is put on display in the book of Hosea. It is easy to love the lovable or to offer gifts to those who will return the favor, but it can be difficult to offer forgiveness to those who have stolen from you or violated your trust. That is the very thing God called Hosea to do when he was told to buy Gomer back (probably from a slave market) and to love

her (Hosea 3:1–3). In this act, God portrayed his relationship with the adulterous Israelites. God was willing to show mercy; God was willing to take them back again.

Israel surely deserved God's wrath for their constant violations of his commands. God would have been just in wiping out the nation for their sins, but he had made promises to Abraham and David to bring the Messiah from the nation of Israel. His mercy was shown in withholding punishment—he didn't give them what they deserved (though later he would). In fact, his love was demonstrated as he restored them in spite of their sin and their rejection of his authority.

God spoke of Israel as a child he had raised (Hosea 11:1), lovingly guiding Israel from their bondage in Egypt into the promised land. As a loving father, God would administer discipline to his child as Assyria brought destruction and captivity, but it grieved God to have to do it (Hosea 11:5–8). However, God would not utterly destroy Israel forever, and he promised his people the hope of restoration in the future. If they would again walk after the Lord, the Lord would take them back and let them dwell again in their houses (Hosea 11:9–11).

God offered a call of repentance from seeking after idols and trusting in the gods and kings of other nations. However, Israel did not respond to his call. He promised to heal their backsliding

and love them freely. He wanted them to turn from their gods and trust in his mercy (Hosea 14:1–4). In the end, if his children would return, they would be revived and grow in the Lord (Hosea 14:8). The wise would recognize that he is a merciful God and the only God worthy of their worship. The future restoration of Israel would demonstrate God’s love for those who are truly his children.

The parallels between the book of Hosea and the lives of Christians today are not difficult to see. We are born in sin, and God is dishonored by our disobedience, rebellion, and idolatry. Yet God has purchased us with the price of his Son from the slave market of sin to make us the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 2:1–10). We have been brought from pursuing our own selfish interests to pursuing the righteousness of Christ. And when we backslide, God uses discipline to bring us back to himself (Hebrews 12:5–14). This book demonstrates God’s unconditional mercy and love to his children as Hosea reunites with his wife and reconciliation occurs.

Historical/Apologetics Background

Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos, Jonah, and Micah. He prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel through the reigns of four kings of Judah (Hosea 1:1). Though he prophesied for more than 60 years, Hosea is still considered one of the minor prophets for his relatively short book. In his writing, Hosea refers

to Israel as Ephraim and Jacob interchangeably. Ephraim was one of the larger tribes that had settled in the north after the conquest. When the northern tribes had wholly abandoned the worship of the true God, they fell under the control of the Assyrians. This was what God warned his people of through Hosea (Hosea 11:5). And it was only about 75 years after Hosea began prophesying that Samaria (the capital of Israel) fell to the Assyrian king and God's chastening began for the northern kingdom.

Within Hosea's prophecies are clear references to the future restoration of Israel. Exactly when that restoration will occur is a point of debate among sincere believers. Some see the promises made to Israel as unfulfilled and pointing to a period when the nation will be restored to the promised land. Particularly, this is often connected to the millennial reign depicted in Revelation as a period of peace (Hosea 2:16–20). In general, those who hold a premillennial view of Christ's second coming would understand these passages as looking to the future restoration of Israel as a nation. Those who take an amillennial view typically see these passages as prophetic imagery and not as actual events that will take place with a geopolitical Israel reinstated. Amillennialists believe the events will be fulfilled as Christ returns to initiate the eternal state, but not in a distinct 1,000-year period. Postmillennialists generally hold that the church has replaced ethnic Israel and that the

judgment passages were fulfilled in AD 70 with the destruction of the temple. While these are important ideas to seek answers to, we must be charitable to those who come to different conclusions than ours, providing those conclusions are based on Scripture alone. Regardless of our view on this particular subject, we know that God is faithful to his promises, and we can trust that the warnings present in Hosea's writings are still relevant today. We are to worship God alone, trust in him alone, and put our faith in Christ alone.

Limited License to Reproduce

A limited, non-exclusive, non-transferable, nonsublicensable license is hereby granted to a single local church or organization to print copies of the PDF materials in the Teacher Digital Resources if 1) you are the original purchaser; 2) you are using the copies for noncommercial purposes (such as for teaching in class) exclusively within your single local church or organization (multi-campus churches, and national/regional denominations are not covered under this license); and 3) you follow the instructions provided in the curriculum pertaining to the printable materials.

This license is for the specific purchaser of the product and does not include affiliated groups or organizations, or other churches or groups in the same denomination as the purchaser, not identified as the actual purchaser. There is no limit to the number of printed copies for use within the single local church or organization which is the actual purchaser. None of the material in this curriculum may be reproduced for any commercial promotion, advertising, or sale of a product or service, or to share with any other persons, churches, groups, or organizations.

The media (audio/video) portions are copyrighted and duplication is prohibited. This license is for materials in the Teacher Digital

Resources only and does NOT include reproduction rights for pre-printed teacher books, student guides, student take home sheets, or posters, except on an emergency basis when purchased quantities are not sufficient for a given week.

Bible Version

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.