

Hosea: Introduction

“Love So Amazing, So Divine”

Hosea is an 8th century prophet whose ministry paralleled somewhat that of Isaiah, Micah, Amos, and Jeremiah. His ministry focused mainly upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel though there is mention of Judea.

God often gave illustration to his prophecies. A prophet not only spoke the word of warning, but also acted it out. Such messages are known as enacted prophecies. Of all such prophecies Hosea stands out for the act commanded was not a short illustration, but a life changing act of entangled love.

The first three chapters of Hosea describe God’s call and Hosea’s obedience to marry and love a prostitute. The scenes of choosing, marriage, infidelity, and redemption work as a picture of God’s relationship with Israel. This marriage becomes the backdrop for the messages found in chapters 4-14.

Hosea’s marriage is not a sham. He deeply loves his wife. His tears are real. His desire for her redemption and restoration is real. He has provided her with all that she needed to be happy and successful, but she fails to appreciate her blessing and her husband’s benevolence. In the face of his love, she turns to others. She shames him and herself playing the fool to harlotry. Still Hosea loves her and again redeems her to himself.

Such is the picture of God’s love for Israel and for us. He redeems us from our fallen nature and weeps bitterly when we in foolishness choose to walk away from His loving protection and benefits. The strong indictment of Hosea is that you and I are just as blind and foolish as Hosea’s wife when we fail to recognize the source of our blessings and turn instead to the emptiness of the world.

People believe they can play God as a fool, giving Him half-hearted allegiance. Israel did not cease to worship God and carry out the sacrifices or services of the temple, they just added the worship of other gods along side of YHWH. They did not divorce God, they simply took other lovers. But the motions of worship do not constitute real worship if a person is not sincere and committed.

God brings indictments against His beloved. He sets in motion a divorce because Israel flagrantly broke covenant with Him. Yet as a loving husband, He wept and sought redemption for His beloved.

Israel took God’s love and grace for granted. God calls them ‘half-baked’ (7:8), and announces that they will reap what they have sown (8:7). He calls for a genuine turning from sin and returning to God. They are to ‘sow righteousness and seek the Lord’ (10:12 & 12:6). The prophet reminds them that there is no source or Savior but the Lord (13:4).

Throughout, God holds out hope for Israel’s return to His unfailing love. Still because Israel persists in adultery, God persists in judgment. He was not looking for false festivals but genuine piety. There is much here for believers today. As the Prophecy states: “Whoever is wise, let him understand these things.” (14:9)

Next Week: Zephaniah

Monday

Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Love hurts (at least sometimes)! That is certainly part of the story of Hosea and his marriage. Real love weathers storms and is sometimes called upon to love ‘in spite of’, instead of or ‘because of.’ Have you borne such a burden – to love ‘in spite of’ another’s actions? Your spouse, perhaps, or your children, or maybe a brother in Christ? Have you been loved like that – loved ‘in spite of’ your actions or attitudes? Sure you have. God has and does love you like that. Such is the message of Hosea. A message of God’s love for us when we least deserve it. A message of love and grace bound together.

Tuesday

Eph. 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.

Hosea was told to take a wife of prostitution, a woman whose sin he fully knew, and to love her. He did just that as a picture of God’s choice of you. God chose you, died for you, and saved you knowing fully your life’s story. He knew before you were saved the sins you had and would commit – still He freely chose you. Understand then that having known your story before He selected and saved you, He has no reason now to reject you. Though our present sins grieve and hurt our Lord, they do not cause Him to reject us. Such is a silly thought, for He knew you fully before you were born. You are secured in His love.

Wednesday

Col. 2:6-7 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, ... overflowing with gratitude.”

Salvation was not a one time event meant to save you from hell. Instead, if genuine, it was God’s call and your acceptance of a long term relationship. Israel’s history serves as an example of the pain and trouble of rejecting that relationship and looking to other sources for hope, help, or satisfaction. Your faith is not a Sunday thing or a religious thing separated from the other aspects of life. ***Your faith is your life***, if your faith is real. Anything less breaks God’s heart and leads you to heartache. Determine to live your life for Jesus. Make it real!

Thursday

Deut. 18:12 For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you.

Horoscopes or horror scopes? Superstitions or super sins? Ask Hosea! The land was overrun with God’s people who had mixed the true faith with the superstitious practices of the Canaanite peoples. They acted out rituals hoping to bring good fortune or to ward off misfortune. They sought to know the future by divining the signs. They led their children into pagan practices while calling themselves and believing themselves to be good and godly people. God is sickened by our pagan ways. Do not dabble there. Reject the thoughts and practices of pagan religions. God will not share His honor with the false idols of man.

Friday

1John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

If there is any implication of Hosea’s love to be made upon our life, it is surely that we are to love one another: to love one another more deeply and surely than is humanly possible. For if God so loved us, we His children must love one another. We must love in spite of sin or failure. We must love because Christ loves us. We must love in truth and sometimes in confrontation of sin. We must love to restore and freely pardon. Such love is not of our making, but is the work of Jesus in us.