

## Mid Week • Hosea 1-4

### INTRODUCTION

We will be covering most of the 12 minor prophets in one week each.

The last two, Zechariah and Malachi we'll take a few weeks to cover, but for the rest, we'll take only one week to cover each one.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, & Daniel are called the *Major* prophets, while the 12 who close out the OT are called the *Minor* prophets. The reason for the difference is not the *substance* but the *length* of their books; the minor prophets are much *shorter* than the major prophets.

Their prophecies also tend to focus on a more narrow subject field than the major prophets as well – their scope is more tightly defined.

Hosea, the one we're looking at this evening, is the longest of the minor prophets with 14 chapters.

We'll be summarizing some of what's here.

Let's get right in to it then we'll do a little background to understand the historical setting for the book.

### CHAPTER 1

**<sup>1</sup>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.**

Some 200 years before the time of Hosea, when King Solomon's son Rehoboam came to the throne of Israel, the northern 10 tribes sent a petition to the new king asking that he lighten the tax burden imposed by his father Solomon.

As you know, Solomon had engaged in extensive building of military fortifications and other public works.

These had put a tremendous strain on the economy of the nation.

With Solomon's death, those building programs came to an end and the people asked that the taxes be reduced lest the economy of the nation be irreparably harmed.

Rehoboam's experienced counselors, the ones he had inherited from his father's cabinet, told him it was indeed the right move to reduce the tax burden on the people.

But his young and in-experienced friends said that if he showed weakness at the beginning of his reign, he would have nothing but problems from then on.

Rehoboam foolishly listened to these inept counselors and told the leaders of the tribes that if they thought *Solomon's* taxes had been steep, they hadn't seen anything yet.

The reaction of the 10 northern tribes was immediate and decisive – they seceded from the southern 2 tribes and formed their own nation under the leadership of a guy named Jeroboam I.

This new nation retained the title *Israel* while the southern kingdom was renamed Judah because it was comprised mostly of the tribe and territory of Judah.

Jeroboam, the new king of the north – grew concerned that if the people of the north continued to travel to Jerusalem in the south to worship God at the temple, then they would eventually regret their decision to secede and would petition to be reunited with their southern brothers.

That of course, would mean an end to his dynasty.

So he devised a means of keeping the people of the north from traveling to Jerusalem.

He set up two idols, two golden calves, one in Bethel in the southern part of the nation and the other in the north at Dan.

He said that these idols were *ancient representatives of Yahweh* – and pointed out the story in Exodus of Aaron's fashioning the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai.

So, the people didn't need to travel all the way to Jerusalem, they could go to the more *convenient* locations of Dan and Bethel to worship God.

A new priesthood was developed to facilitate this new and improved worship of Yahweh.

This attempt to make religion easier and more convenient had the

effect of totally corrupting the people of the northern kingdom. It wasn't long before they turned away from God altogether and began worshiping Baal, the Canaanite god of war. God then brought the Assyrians against them and Israel became a vassal, a puppet state of Assyria. But then the Assyrians had an internal shake-up and for a short time, Israel managed to regain its independence. They laid claim to new territory and within a short time under the reign of Jeroboam II they entered a period of prosperity and peace. This is the period that Hosea lived and ministered in. The Assyrian threat has been temporarily removed, Israel is thriving and economically, everything looks rosy. But the peace and prosperity that marked the times only served as a façade to the terrible corruption that was eating away at the foundations of the northern kingdom. Hosea was sent to speak against this corruption and to foretell a resurgence of the Assyrian power that would spell ruin for Israel if she refused to repent.

In v. 1, we find the name of 4 kings that ruled in the southern kingdom of Judah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah. Only one northern king is named – Jeroboam II. The fact is, Jeroboam ruled for 41 years, but then was succeeded by 6 kings who all reigned shorter periods of time. They were either deposed or murdered in quick succession because this was a time of *moral chaos* and *political upheaval* in Israel.

Hosea's task was an inordinately difficult one because he was called to be a prophet announcing judgment on the Northern Kingdom at a time of apparent prosperity. When things are going well by appearances, people generally aren't too open to listen to the forecasts of doom. Such was the case with Hosea. What made things even harder for him was that the Lord called him to *live out* his prophecy through his marriage!

You may remember how several of the prophets were called to *preach* their messages through *action sermons* – living out the content of their prophecy by doing some strange things.

For three years, Isaiah walked the streets dressed like a prisoner of war.

For several months, Jeremiah carried a yoke on his shoulders.

The Prophet Ezekiel acted like a little boy and “played war,” and once used a haircut as an object lesson.

All of these were meant to wake the people from their complacency and shock them into listening to the message of the prophets.

But no action sermon was as *painful* as Hosea’s.

Israel’s relationship with God was like a marriage.

The terms of the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai was like a marriage agreement.

Faithfulness to God was like fidelity in marriage – while the worship of idols was akin to *spiritual adultery*.

Hosea was called to marry a harlot and his life with her was to be an object lesson to the people of their waywardness of heart as they turned their backs on God and went whoring after the idols of Baal.

**2When 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.”**

God told him to marry a prostitute named Gomer.

She bore him three children, and each of their names were prophetic of what was to happen to Israel.

Gomer then left him for another man, and Hosea had the humiliating task of buying her back from the slave market where she ended up.

**3So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4Then 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.**

**5 It shall come to pass in that day That I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”**

The first son was named *Jezreel*, which means “God sows” or “God scatters.”

The City of Jezreel was the scene of a massacre that King Jehu had executed on the family of wicked king Ahab. [\[1\]](#)

But Jehu had gone way overboard and killed many innocent people besides the guilty of Ahab’s household.

For this, Jehu’s house would also be judged.

Through the birth of Hosea’s son, God announced that He would avenge the innocent blood shed by Jehu and put an end to Jehu’s dynasty in Israel.

**6 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.**

**7 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, By horses or horsemen.”**

The second child was a daughter named *Lo-ruhamah*, which means “unpitied” or “not loved.”

The days of mercy and tender love between God and the people of the Northern Kingdom are at an end.

Their unchecked idolatry has grown too great and now there is nothing left but judgment.

God’s love is unconditional, but our *enjoyment* of that love is conditional and depends on our faith and obedience. [\[2\]](#)

Since the Jews of Israel had sinned without remorse or let up, in spite of the prophets warnings, there was nothing left now but judgment through the Assyrians who were once again on the rise.

The Northern Kingdom was doomed, but God promised to protect the Southern Kingdom of Judah from the invaders.

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

*Lo-ammi* was the third child, a son, and his name means “Not My people.”

Not only would God remove His mercy from His people, but He would also renounce the covenant He had made with them. It was like a man divorcing his wife and turning his back on her, or like a father rejecting his own son. [\[3\]](#)

Understand the incredible severity of this statement – the Jews are known as the Chosen people.

Here God is saying He is unchoosing them!  
This is a divorce!

These first 9 verses are the first half of Hosea’s whole message.

God is divorcing His wife, Israel.

As a result of that divorce, she will be sent out of His house – the land of Canaan.

The last 2 verses of chapter 1 present the last half of Hosea’s message

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**10** “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*.’”

**11** 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!

Though Israel has passed the point of no return as far as judgment is concerned, the day will come when she will be restored and the breach between the northern and southern kingdoms will be healed.

They will be restored not only to the land as one nation, but they

will be restored to their covenant with God.

## CHAPTER 2

### **1 Say to your brethren, ‘My people,’ And to your sisters, ‘Mercy is shown.’**

This looks forward to the day when the northern and southern kingdoms are reunited.

When the nations split, they ended up becoming enemies and had frequent wars between them.

The future restoration would heal the rift and they would become one family.

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God now speaks through Hosea to the people about their need to rebuke the nation for its idolatry . . .

### **2 “Bring charges against your mother, [meaning the nation] bring charges; For she *is* not My wife, nor *am* I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, And her adulteries from between her breasts;**

### **3 Lest I strip her naked And expose her, as in the day she was born, And make her like a wilderness, And set her like a dry land, And slay her with thirst.**

God had found the nation of Israel as a destitute and weak little family of people struggling to eek out an existence in the wilderness.

His love had adopted them and turned them into a mighty nation.

The picture being painted here is like this . . .

Imagine a rich and powerful king.

His wealth and power are simply beyond comprehension.

He is attended by a long retinue of powerful and majestic servant.

One day as he is traveling through an arid and dry wilderness, he looks out of his car and sees a dirty little, emaciated maid tending some pitiful, flea-bitten sheep.

Her garment is a ragged mess of stains. Her hair is straggly and caked with dried mud.

She is dark brown from the brutal sun that beats down on her all day, and flies buzz round the corner of her mouth.

He sees her, and orders the train to stop.

Leaving his car, he walks over to her, takes her face in his hand,  
and calls for water.

She takes a long drink at the jug, then he pours the rest over her  
head and washes away the filth.

He invites her to ride with him in his car and assigns several of his  
servants to take charge of her sheep.

When they arrive at his palace, he gives orders that she is to be  
bathed, perfumed, given new royal clothes, decorated with the  
finest of his jewels, and feasted at his table.

After a week of the royal fare and more baths in herbs and spices,  
she takes on some flesh and becomes a real babe.

The callouses are made soft, and her skin takes on a healthy glow.  
Her hair becomes luxurious and soft.

Her training in the palace teaches her the manner and bearing of  
royalty.

And when the transformation is complete – the king takes her as  
his wife.

But then one day, as she is traveling through the fields of her  
husband's kingdom in her own car, she looks out and sees a rough  
shepherd boy who looks very much like she did when she was a  
humble shepherdess.

In a sudden and unreasoned passion of lust, she longs to lie with  
this dirty shepherd boy and orders the car to stop.

She takes him by the hand and runs with him to a secret room  
where she violates her marriage covenant with the King.

But that is not the end of her treachery.

She makes it a habit to go riding every day and looks for more  
such illicit affairs with dirty shepherd boys.

This is the story of Israel and what is being described here.

God is saying he knows all about her treachery and will now turn  
her back to her wretched beginnings.

#### **4 “I will not have mercy on her children, For they are the children of harlotry.**

Gomer's first child was Hosea's, but it appears the second and third  
children weren't his!



**5 For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give *me* my bread and my water, My wool and my linen, My oil and my drink.'**

Gomer had committed adultery, not for the love her illicit lovers had promised, but purely as a form of income – simply stated- she was a whore and used sex as a means of making money.

It wasn't that Hosea her husband hadn't provided for her, it's just that she wanted more and she had a wicked heart that was unreasoning in it's sin.

And so it was with Israel.

God had done nothing but blessed Israel.

But Israel wasn't content with God's blessing – she wanted more! So she prostituted herself with the pursuit of more by worshiping Baal.

It is easy for us to look with disgust at what Israel did – but don't we do the same?

God has promised to take care of us, and in fact He does.

But we aren't satisfied, we aren't content.

We want more or other than what God gives and in our desire, we stray from God.

**6 "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, And wall her in, So that she cannot find her paths.**

**7 She will chase her lovers, But not overtake them; Yes, she will seek them, but not find *them*. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, For then *it was better for me than now.*'**

**8 For she did not know That I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, And multiplied her silver and gold— *Which* they prepared for Baal.**

**9 "Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time And My new wine in its season, And will take back My wool and My linen, *Given* to cover her nakedness.**

- 10** Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, And no one shall deliver her from My hand.
- 11** I will also cause all her mirth to cease, Her feast days, Her New Moons, Her Sabbaths— All her appointed feasts.
- 12** “And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, Of which she has said, ‘These *are* my wages that my lovers have given me.’ So I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field shall eat them.
- 13** I will punish her For the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, And went after her lovers; But Me she forgot,” says the LORD.

God has had enough of Israel’s spiritual adultery in worshiping Baal – the time for judgment has come.

But after judgment, when they have learned their lesson, God will restore them . . .

- 14** “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her.
- 15** I will give her her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.
- 16** “And it shall be, in that day,” Says the LORD, “*That* you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ And no longer call Me ‘My Master,’
- 17** For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more.
- 18** In that day I will make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, With the birds of the air, And *with* the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely.

- 19** “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy;
- 20** I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD.
- 21** “It shall come to pass in that day *That* I will answer,” says the LORD; “I will answer the heavens, And they shall answer the earth.
- 22** The earth shall answer With grain, With new wine, And with oil; They shall answer Jezreel.
- 23** Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on *her who had not obtained mercy*; Then I will say to *those who were not My people*, ‘You are My people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’”

This looks forward to the future when Israel is regathered in her land and living at peace.

Idolatry will forever be a thing of the past and the nation will be pledged to continual faithfulness to God.

### CHAPTER 3

- 1**Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman *who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.*”
- 2**So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. **3**And I said to her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man—so, too, *will I be toward you.*”
- 4**For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. **5**Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David

**their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.**

Gomer had left Hosea and was living with a lover, but really, it was even worse than that.

God tells Hosea to go and reclaim her from her place and restore her as his wife.

Why would Hosea have to *buy* her with 15 pieces of silver and about 10 bushels of grain?

When Gomer first left Hosea to go practice the life of a prostitute, she had lived off the proceeds of having sex.

But as her value as a harlot declined because of the nasty effects of sin, men were willing to pay less and less for her services.

Things got so bad, she ended up having to sell herself into slavery in order to survive.

She ended up being sold to some guy as nothing more than a sex-slave.

This was as low as a human could go – and it reminds us that sin is progressive.

It always takes us lower and lower – trying to erase the image of God in which we've been created.

Gomer ended up being worth even less than the value of a slave, which was 30 pieces of silver!

She was worth only 15, and some baskets of cheap grain!

But God told Hosea to go redeem her!

He reclaimed her, and told her her days of slavery to sin were over.

Though she did not deserve it, she would be his wife once again and enjoy His love and affection.

All of this was prophetic of Israel.

Though her history has been one long story of God's love and blessing and her waywardness, the day would finally come when waywardness was a thing of the past and she would settle down to be his faithful wife.

No matter how far a person sinks in sin – they are not past the power of God to reclaim and restore and turn into something of incredible value.

*The Old Violin*<sup>[4]</sup>

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer  
Thought it was scarcely worth his while  
To waste much time on the old violin  
But held it up with a smile.  
"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,  
"Who'll start the bidding for me?  
"A dollar, a dollar," then, two! Only two?  
"Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"  
"Three dollars, once, three dollars, twice;  
Going for three..." But no,  
From the room, far back, a grey-haired man  
Came forward and picked up the bow;  
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,  
And tightening the loose strings,  
He played a melody pure and sweet  
As a caroling angel sings.  
The music ceased, and the auctioneer,  
With a voice that was quiet and low,  
Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"  
And he held it up with the bow.  
"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?  
"Two thousand! And who'll make it three?"  
Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice;  
And going and gone," said he.  
The people cheered, but some of them cried,  
"We do not quite understand  
What changes its worth?" Swift came the reply:  
"The touch of the master's hand."  
And many a man with life out of tune,  
And battered and scarred with sin,  
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,  
Much like the old violin.  
A "mess of potage," a glass of wine;  
A game--and he travels on.  
He is "going" once, and "going" twice,  
He's "going" and almost "gone."  
But the Master comes and the foolish crowd

Never can quite understand  
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought  
By the touch of the Master's hand.

V. 4 foretells the current age of Israel's national existence . . .

**4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.**

Having rejected Jesus as their Messiah and King, they have now gone without one for the last 2000 years.

The destruction of the temple in 70 AD has resulted in the loss of the sacrifices and the ruin of the family records has meant and end to the priesthood.

But v. 5 foretells a future day of restoration . . .

**5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.**

## CHAPTER 4

**1 Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD *brings* a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land.**

Hosea's action sermon with Goner is now over.

The rest of the book contains prophetic messages Hosea delivered at different times.

Chapter 4 comes as a list of charges God makes as the Heavenly Judge.

Because the people have rejected God, even though things are going well *economically, morally* the nation is falling apart.

It's just a matter of time before the economic health of the nation shows the same ruin as the moral arena.

It all begins with this . . .

**"There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land."**

Morality can only have one of two foundations – either it rests on the unchanging revelation of a Holy God, or it lies on the preferences of fallen man.

When a culture rejects God, then it will come to define right and wrong by personal preferences – and people will do what’s right for themselves, regardless of how it affects others.

Man cannot be good without God!

Israel had rejected God, and as a result, they fell apart -

**2 By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed.**

**3 Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away With the beasts of the field And the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away.**

Mankind’s rejection of God eventuates in the destruction of the physical creation!

Pollution, and ecological ruin come about as the result of sin and selfishness.

Any environmental movement that rejects God is doomed to failure.

**4 “Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; For your people are like those who contend with the priest.**

**5 Therefore you shall stumble in the day; The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; And I will destroy your mother.**

When God’s holy standard is rejected and morality is determined by personal preference, then there’s no basis for rebuking or correcting another – it’s a moral free-for all and no one can judge another!

In ancient Israel, people used to go to the priest to discover what God said. That settled all disputes.

But when the people rejected God, His word no longer carried authority and priests were considered to have no more insight than a used chariot salesman.

The result? Social chaos!

This is the problem with our laws and courts today!

As we've rejected God from the public square, law has lost its transcendent base.

One of the common things you heard during the impeachment last year and during the recent Florida recount debacle is that this is a nation of laws!

Quite frankly, recent events ought to prove to us that that is no longer the case.

Current law is decided by the whim of some judge, based on something like community standards or majority rule.

The whole situation in Florida with the recount is proof that government by law is quickly becoming a thing of the past.

It was the legislature of Florida which is entrusted with *making* laws – but they were bypassed by the Florida Supreme Court who made law, not based on the work of the legislature, but on the basis of their own machinations.

Florida out to serve as a warning that the basis for our laws – the unchanging Word of God, has been cashed in for something else.

**6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.**

**7 “The more they increased, The more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.**

God had chosen Israel to be the agent of His revelation to the nations. But they had turned from that revelation and so God would turn from them.

**8 They eat up the sin of My people; They set their heart on their iniquity.**

**9 And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, And reward them for their deeds.**

**10 For they shall eat, but not have enough; They shall commit harlotry, but not increase; Because they have**



ceased obeying the LORD.

- 11** “Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.
- 12** My people ask counsel from their wooden *idols*, And their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused *them* to stray, And they have played the harlot against their God.
- 13** They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, And burn incense on the hills, Under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, Because their shade *is* good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, And your brides commit adultery.
- 14** “I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, Nor your brides when they commit adultery; For *the men* themselves go apart with harlots, And offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot. Therefore people *who* do not understand will be trampled.

Things just went from bad to worse as the people rejected God and turned to worship Baal.

In vs. 15-19, God turns Israel loose into the fullness of her sin since she is determined to have it.

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[1] 2 Kings 9-10; and see 1 Kings 21:21-24 and 2 Kings 9:6-10

[2] See Deut 7:1-7 and 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1.

[3] Above comments from Wiersbe.

[4] Myra B. Welch