
LITERARY OVERVIEW

- **Title/Author:** Hosea (“God is salvation”), son of Beerī. We learn in the beginning of the book that the Lord calls him to take a woman of harlotry. She then has children. While some commentators see this as fiction, the plain reading indicates that God called Hosea to do something very difficult in order to be a living illustration of the love of God.
- **Time Covered:** Time of kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (of Southern kingdom of Judah) as well as Jeroboam (of the Northern kingdom of Israel). Covering essentially the latter half of the 8th Century B.C. under the domination of the Assyrian empire (though Israel is not yet in captivity and exile). There are several invasions of Assyria into Palestine during this time, bringing difficulty and suffering. This also brought about political uncertainty and the impending doom of being conquered and removed from their land. The backdrop formed is of chaos in Israel by a constant overturning of leadership (death, assassination, usurpation) for about 30 years.
- **Baal worship** – An important feature of the time was the worship of Baal to which Israel was giving into under the influence of the dominant socio-political pagan cultures.
- Baal was a god of fertility and prosperity connected to weather and agriculture as well as human fertility. Because Israel was an agricultural society, there was a great temptation to seek blessing from him when things didn’t seem to be going well under the worship of Jehovah. While the prophets were saying that their lack of fertility was due to God’s curse (as promised in Deuteronomy), rather than turning back to the Lord they turned to Baal, hoping that the taking on of a more powerful god would help them.
- There is also great attraction to the sinfulness of the human heart because of the differences between God’s “strictness” of human sexuality and Baal’s encouragement of promiscuity in sexuality. This would include satisfaction through drunken orgies, temple prostitution, bestiality, gluttonous feasts, incest as well as bodily mutilation and human sacrifice (think of certain of today’s subcultures).
- These acts were considered as “dramatic” and “imitative”, and the belief was that Baal and other gods would be stirred at watching these human acts to themselves be engaged in sexuality, and those produce in the creation.
- As the LORD’s bride, Israel is like a married woman who is constantly going out with other men. Idolatry, in this setting, is pictured as spiritual adultery.
- **Form/Genre:** The first part of the book is primarily autobiographical, but the decisions that Hosea is making regarding his wife and family are in direct response to the Lord’s command. The second half of the book is prophetic, and is dominated by satire (cutting irony and sarcasm used to reveal foolishness). It is also dominated by oracles of judgment, with a few examples of oracles of salvation. The book can be considered as a kind of legal brief presented before a judge or jury convicting Israel of her unfaithfulness. The expected response of the hearers is vindication of the Lord’s judgment of Israel’s unfaithfulness.
- There is, as in most prophecy, a rich use of symbols and metaphors familiar to the ancient/agricultural world.
- **Main Characters:** God as husband, Israel as Bride. Hosea and his family.
- **Original Audience:** Primarily the Northern kingdom of Israel, also called Ephraim.
- **Purpose:** To point out and show in symbols the nation of Israel’s unfaithfulness to their covenant God. It is a call to return to the Lord before it is too late, and remember the loving kindness and mercy of God towards them. Again and again God is wooing Israel.
- **Challenges:** The uncertainty of judgment, and to come away with hope of God’s love and mercy if His people will respond in repentance and faith.

OUTLINE

- I. **Hosea’s Family as a Living Parable (chs. 1-3)**
- II. **Hosea’s Prophetic Message to Unfaithful Israel (chs. 4-14)**

MAJOR THEMES IN DANIEL

- **Israel’s unfaithfulness** - Described metaphorically as a promiscuous wife, indifferent mother, illegitimate child, ungrateful son, stubborn heifer, silly dove, luxuriant vine, and grapes in the wilderness (ESVSB). This is connected with Baal worship, and most vile form of religion that the people had chased after under the influence of the surrounding pagan nations.
- **God’s faithfulness** – In response to this spiritual adultery, the LORD is not immediately divorcing his bride, but is continually wooing and calling her back to faithfulness to the covenant. Though God has a right to divorce her, that is not His heart. He shows an incredible grace and willingness to forgive if they will turn away from their paramours and “come home” again.