



Hosea

Transcript

Introduction

00:00-00:45

The book of the prophet Hosea. Hosea lived in the northern kingdom of Israel, which he sometimes calls “Ephraim” or “Jacob,” about 200 years after they had broken off from southern Judah. (Remember the story from 1 Kings.) Hosea was called to speak on God’s behalf during the reign of one of Israel’s worst kings, Jeroboam II. The nation was descending into chaos, and in the year 722, the big, bad Assyrian empire swooped in and decimated Israel. (Again, see the story in 2 Kings.) And Hosea had seen all of this coming.

The book is a collection of some 25 years of his preaching and writing. It is almost all poetry, and this whole collection has been designed to have three main sections. Let’s just dive in, and you will see how it works.

Chapters 1-3

00:46-02:40

The opening part tells the story of Hosea’s broken marriage to a woman named Gomer who commits adultery. Now, it’s not totally clear whether Gomer slept around with other men before or only after they got married, but they did have three children together, and things fell apart. The important point is that God tells Hosea that, despite Gomer’s unfaithfulness, he is to go find her, to pay off her debts to her lovers, and to commit his love and faithfulness to her once again. And then God says that all of this—the broken and repaired marriage, the children—it’s all a prophetic symbol telling the story of God’s relationship to Israel.

So God has been like a faithful husband to Israel. He rescued them out of slavery. He brought them to Mount Sinai, where he entered into a covenant with them. He asked them to be faithful to him alone. But then he brought Israel into the promised land, and they took all the abundance that he gave them and they dedicated it to the

worship of the Canaanite god Baal. And so God has a legitimate reason; he could end the covenant and divorce Israel. And he thinks about doing so, but instead, he says that he's going to pursue Israel again and renew his covenant with them. And he says why. It's purely because of his own love, compassion, and faithfulness.

Hosea then spells out what all this means. He says the consequences for Israel's rebellion will be imminent defeat by other nations and exile—but there's hope for future restoration. One day, Israel will once again repent and come back to worship their God, and, Hosea says, he will place over them a new messianic king from the line of David, who will bring God's blessing.

And so this opening section introduces all the main ideas of the book. Israel has rebelled, and God's going to bring severe consequences, but God's own covenant love and mercy are more powerful than Israel's sin. And so, in the remaining sections of the book, Hosea's poetry explores these themes in more depth.

Chapters 4-10

02:40-04:22

So there are two collections of his accusations and warnings for Israel, and then each of these is concluded by a very hopeful poem about God's mercy and hope for the future. So chapters 4-10, Hosea explores the causes and effects of Israel's unfaithfulness. He says numerous times that Israel lacks all knowledge or understanding of God. The Hebrew word "to know," which is *yada*, it's more than just intellectual activity; it described personal relational knowledge. It's the difference between just knowing about someone and then actually knowing that someone. And God wants Israel to know him like that, in a relationship. He wants them to experience his love for them and become the kind of knowledge that transforms their hearts and lives, so that they love him in return.

And so this is why Hosea is constantly exposing the hypocrisy of Israel's worship. He constantly shows how they're breaking the Ten Commandments, how they're allowing grave injustice in their communities, and then they go to their sacred temples and they offer sacrifices to God like everything is just fine! But it's not fine. And not only because of their hypocrisy, but because they are worshipping all of these other gods too! He mentions many times their altars to Baal at the cities of Bethel and Gilgal.

And not only have they given their allegiance to other gods, Hosea repeatedly accuses Israel for trusting in their political alliances with Egypt and Assyria. So instead of trusting God to protect them, they want to become like these nations and rely solely on military power. And God says it's all going to come crashing down on their heads. Because in not too long, Assyria will turn on them and come to ravage their lands.

Chapters 12-13

04:23-05:05

In this other section of warning, Hosea gives an ancient Israelite history lesson to show how this family's been unfaithful from the beginning. So he alludes to the patriarch Jacob's lying and treachery (remember Genesis 27 and 28). He alludes to Israel's rebellion in the wilderness (remember the book of Numbers). He alludes to their appointment of the corrupt King Saul who led the people into sin and disaster (remember the stories in 1 Samuel). This is all Hosea's way of saying some things in this family never change.

So what hope does Hosea have? Well, we know from chapter 3 that God's going to do something to save and restore his people, and that is what these two concluding chapters explore.

Chapter 11

05:05-05:52

Chapter 11 is beautiful. The poem depicts God as a loving Father who raised his son Israel and then shared everything with him. But the son grew up and rebelled and turned on the Father, taking advantage of his generosity.

And so in this poem, God is emotionally torn apart. One moment he's angry. And, naturally, he says he's going to bring severe consequences. But the next moment, he's heartbroken. And then he says that he's moved by his mercy and compassion, and he's going to forgive the son that he loves. He says, "How can I give you up, Ephraim? My heart churns inside of me. All my compassion is aroused." And so while God did allow Israel to be conquered by Assyria, face the consequences, that's not God's final word. There's still hope.

Chapter 14

05:53-07:09

And that's what the last chapter is about. Hosea calls Israel to repent and turn back to their God, but he knows that it won't last because it never has before. And God says that one day, he will heal their waywardness and love them freely. God goes on to describe this new healed Israel as a lush tree that will grow deep roots and broad branches and offer shade and fruit to all of the nations. It's an image of God's promise to Abraham, how Israel was to become a blessing to the nations. And God's saying, if that's ever going to happen, it's going to require an act of God's grace and healing power to repair the deep brokenness and sinful selfishness of the human heart, so that God's people can receive his love and love him in return. This is what God promises to do.

Now, after this poem concludes, we find the very last words of the book. They're like an appended note. They're likely from the author who collected Hosea's poetry

and now wants to speak to you, the reader, for a second. And he says, “Who is wise and discerning to understand all of this?” In other words, Hosea’s poems. “The ways of the Lord are right. The righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.”

Conclusion

07:09-07:35

So the author wants you to know that Hosea’s ancient poetry to northern Israel is not locked in the past. It reveals deep truths about God’s character and purposes and human nature. And while God should, and does, bring his justice on human evil, his ultimate purpose, his heart, is to heal and to save his people. And that’s what the book of Hosea is all about.