

Old Testament Survey

Hosea

The Meaning of Hosea

Hosea means “salvation” and in fact is the same name as that of the last king of Israel, Hoshea. The theme of the book is an indictment of the Northern Kingdom for apostasy.

General Outline of Hosea

- I. Training of the Prophet - Hosea 1:1-3:5
 - A. His homelife symbolic of the nation's captivity and restoration - Hosea 1:1-2:1
 - 1. The marriage with Gomer, a potential adulteress - Hosea 1:2
 - 2. The children: Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi - Hosea 1:3-9
 - 3. The final triumph of grace - Hosea 1:10-2:1
 - B. His domestic tragedy, a type of God's redeeming love - Hosea 2:2-23
 - C. His dealing with Gomer, a command and revelation - Hosea 3:1-5
- II. The Teaching of the Prophet - Hosea 4:1-14:9
 - A. National pollution and its cause - Hosea 4:1-6:3
 - 1. The findings of the Judge and the pronouncement of the sentence - Hosea 4:1-19
 - 2. Warning to priest, people, and king: the snare of idolatrous shrines - Hosea 5:1-15
 - 3. Exhortation to repent - Hosea 6:1-3
 - B. National pollution and punishment - Hosea 6:4-10:15
 - 1. Statement of God's case against Israel - Hosea 6:4-7:16
 - a). Fickleness, bloodguiltiness - Hosea 6:4-11
 - b). Mercy prevented by persistent rebellion, adultery, and drunkenness - Hosea 7:1-16
 - 2. Judgment pronounced - Hosea 8:1-9:17
 - a). Reaping the whirlwind - Hosea 8:1-14
 - b). Bondage in exile - Hosea 9:1-17
 - 3. Recapitulation and appeal - Hosea 10:1-15
 - C. The love of Jehovah - Hosea 11:1-14:9
 - 1. His inalienable love in dealing with wayward Israel - Hosea 11:1-11
 - 2. Exile: God's only alternative - Hosea 11:12-12:14
 - 3. Guiding principles and the eventual outcome of the exile - Hosea 13:1-16
 - 4. Final appeal to repent; promise of ultimate blessing - Hosea 14:1-9

Authorship and Integrity of the Text

- 1. Hosea was a citizen of the Northern Kingdom as his dialect is distinctively northern. He was from a somewhat prominent family as his father is mentioned. Other than this we know little of Hosea.
- 2. Critics assign the book of Hosea to the historical Hosea for the most part. The only exceptions are a few verses which predict future blessing.

Time of Composition

1. Not all prophecies in Hosea were given at the same time. Some were given before the death of Jeroboam II (753 B.C.), and some were directed at contemporary kings, e.g. Hosea 5 against Menahem. The prophecy in chapter 7 was apparently given nearly a decade later than chapter 5 as it denounces the government's policy of dealing with Egypt.
2. The final form of the book was probably written sometime in 725 B.C.

The Problem of Gomer

There is much discussion as to the identity and reality of Gomer. Some say that Gomer is merely a fictitious character who serves as an illustration of God's dealings with Israel while others see her as a real woman. Another issue which has caused some debate is the apparent fact that she was an adulterer.

As to the identity of Gomer:

1. There is no indication that she was anything other than a real woman.
2. The passages dealing with Hosea's marriage to Gomer are given as historical narrative. There is no textual evidence to suggest that this was a parable.

As to the problem of Gomer being a prostitute:

1. The Hebrew does not say that she was a prostitute when Hosea married her, but that she had the character of a prostitute.
2. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that after Gomer's marriage to Hosea she became a prostitute. This served as an illustration of how Israel originally wedded Jehovah and then later fell into idolatry.