

THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

THE MINOR PROPHETS:

THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA

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Prophecy of Hosea

Review

The Author of the Book of Hebrews wrote: ^{ESV} **Hebrews 1:1-2:** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, ***God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,*** ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

The study of the prophetic word to our fathers through *The Twelve*, ultimately prepares the Church to understand better the final Prophetic Word of the Son. The message is the same for both the prophets and the Son, but the Son is the culmination and eschatological realization of all the words of the prophets; **Christ is the Prophet, but he is also the message of the prophets (cf. Luke 24:24ff; 24:44ff).** *The Book of the Twelve prepares us for the final word of the Son, who is heir of all things, and Creator of the world (Heb. 1:2).*

In the first part of this sermon series, we defined a prophet as:

Simply put (1): ***A prophet is one who is called and who proclaims the Word of God by the empowerment of the Spirit to the priests, the kings and the people.*** A prophet speaks a message from God about God.

What is a “covenant lawsuit”? (2) The prophets acted as YHWH’s prosecuting attorneys to convict them of covenantal unfaithfulness. The prophet was sent by God to act as prosecuting attorney against covenantal disobedience and unfaithfulness to the covenant Israel had made with YHWH. It is important to understand the background of this in the ancient Near East.

In the ancient Near East when a Great King would conquer a people, he would make known a historical prologue stating his right to rule over his vassal people or subjects. He would establish a covenant with them giving them instructions on how they are to live their lives. What is a covenant? It is a bond in blood sovereignly administered by God (O. Palmer Robertson).

In this covenant ceremony of “cutting” or making a covenant, the Great King would state his stipulations that would govern their behavior and conduct, including rewards for obedience (or “blessings”) and consequences for disobedience (or “curses”).

The Book of Deuteronomy, the final words and last sermons of Moses to God's people is in this kind of Treaty-Covenant form. **How is the *Book of Deuteronomy* a covenant document?** (3)

In Deuteronomy chapters 1-4 (3-1), the historical prologue is stated as YHWH tells the people of the grace that he has shown to them, and how he is their Redeemer, King-Lord. In chapters 5-26 (3-2), the covenant law or stipulations of God's requirements of his people are made known. In chapters 27-28 (3-3) Moses declared the blessings of God to the people for obedience if the people kept the covenant faithfully, and the curses on the people that would result if they failed to keep the covenant.

In chapters 29-30 (3-4), Moses tells the people that they will break the covenant that they made with God and yet God in his Grace would restore them, teaching the people that it is only by grace that one is redeemed:

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 30:1-6:** "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, ² and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴ If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. ⁵ ***And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.*** ⁶ ***And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.***

It is important to note that in Deuteronomy 30:19-20, Moses called heaven and earth to witness the covenant made between God and His people:

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 30:19-20:** I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

Moses calls God's creation itself to serve as testimonial witnesses to their covenantal vows!

In Deuteronomy chapters 31-34 (3-5), Moses gives instruction concerning the covenant made with God for Israel's future and appoints a successor in Joshua who will serve as a mediator in the Promised Land.

It is very important to understand *The Twelve* (as well as all of the prophets of the Old Covenant up to John the Baptist) in light of the writings of Moses and particularly the covenant made between YHWH and His people revealed in the covenant document

Deuteronomy. There are other similarities that I will point out (D.V.) between *The Twelve* and the Book of Deuteronomy.

Redemptive-Historical Background: Covenant Lawsuit (2)

Israel was called to love the LORD their God with their whole being, and to worship and serve God alone! Israel was to be a “spiritually faithful bride” and live in a monogamous relationship spiritually with YHWH. A prophetic-covenantal lawsuit called Israel back to the covenantal marriage vows that they had made before God and creation as a witness!

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 6:5** You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 10:12** "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul...

The Israelites were sovereignly redeemed by God not because of their loveliness, or their love for God, ***but because of his covenant love for them.***

Deuteronomy 7:6-13: "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰ and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. ¹¹ You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today. ¹² "And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. ¹³ He will love you, bless you, and multiply you.

Date: 8th century B.C. /Historical Background to Hosea

Date of Hosea's Prophecy (4) : Hosea preached or prophesied from about 755 to 722 B.C. (roughly about 30 years of ministry) shortly after the ministry of the Prophet Amos and overlapping with Micah and Isaiah in Judah.

Historical Background of Hosea's Prophecy (5)

The Northern Kingdom of Israel had enjoyed a period of great economic success, prosperity and respectful political power under King Jeroboam II (ca. 786-746 B.C.). *In this time of prosperity there was great political corruption and religious decay* (5-1). The people became highminded and proud, and prosperity and peace became their curse.

The great Empire of Assyria had been troubled with internal problems for some years and had made possible the peace and prosperity in Israel. But with Assyria's new king and military commander **Tiglath-pileser III** (745-727 B.C.- "Pul" in 2 Kings 15:19; cf. 2 Chron. 28:20) there was a new interest in the western expansion of the Assyrian Empire and this involved Israel and Samaria again (5-2).

Tiglath-pileser III is known as the founder of the **Neo-Assyrian Empire**, and was one of the great military leaders in world history, rivaling Alexander the Great in his conquest of the world of his time (5-2).

King Menahem, who reigned over Israel and Samaria for 10 years, was forced to pay Assyria a heavy tribute of 1000 talents of silver to avoid invasion and captivity (This shows Tiglath-pileser's great power and how Israel was slowly becoming a vassal state to Assyrian, once again under foreign oppression and slavery like in Egypt):

2 Kings 15:19: Pul the king of Assyria came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that he might help him to confirm his hold on the royal power.

At the same time of this external military threat from Assyria, Israel with the northern monarchy was internally unraveling because they were in the throes of a bloody dissolution (factions), and becoming more unfaithful to God. Furthermore, they were not kings or rulers who ruled after God's own heart as they were supposed to do in Israel:

^{ESV} **Hosea 7:7** All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All **their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me.**

^{ESV} **Hosea 8:4** **[Israel] made kings, but not through me.** They set up princes, **but I knew it not.** With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.

With the political anarchy in Israel came a corruption of the people. Great social chaos and moral decay contaminated society in Israel:

^{ESV} Hosea 4:2 there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

^{ESV} Hosea 6:8 Gilead [Biblical name for Northern Kingdom of Israel] is a city of evildoers, tracked with blood.⁹ As robbers lie in wait for a man, so the priests band together; they murder on the way to Shechem; they commit villainy.¹⁰ In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim's whoredom is there; Israel is defiled.

The ruling classes or “Princes of Israel” condoned this wicked behavior and social chaos in Israel for the sake of greed, position and promotion to greater power:

^{ESV} **Hosea 7:3-7:** [The ruling classes or “princes” of Israel] **By their evil they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery. ⁴ They are all adulterers; they are like a heated oven whose baker ceases to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.**

⁵ On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with mockers. ⁶ For with hearts like an oven they approach their intrigue; all night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. ⁷ All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me.

In 733 B.C. the Assyrians overran and invaded Israelite territory, and deported large numbers of the population and divided the land into three provinces. Things became so bad that Israel “went back to Egypt” by seeking politically an alliance with Egypt against Assyria and attempting to curry favor with Assyria and bargaining with this great Empire in order to survive (5-3):

^{ESV} **Hosea 7:11** Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, **calling to Egypt, going to Assyria.**

^{ESV} **Hosea 12:1** Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; **they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt.**

In redemptive-history, there was always a temptation for Israel to return to Egypt in times of trouble and tribulation- -seeking shelter from this foreign oppressor rather than calling upon the Name of the LORD.

Israel was constantly tempted to find their Strong Tower and Strength in political alliances and making peace with the pagan, unbelieving nations; they sought to bring themselves power through Realpolitick rather than by the Spirit of the LORD (cf. Zech. 4:6- “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says YHWH”):

Realpolitik (German: *real* ("realistic", "practical" or "actual") and *politik* ("politics")) refers to *politics or diplomacy based primarily on practical considerations, rather than ideological (or theological) notions.*

^{ESV} **Exodus 13:17** When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. **For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt."**

The kings of Israel were NEVER to return to Egypt for strength and power:

Moses had written and warned the people before his death concerning anyone who is King in Israel:

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 17:16** Only he [the King] **must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses,** since the LORD has said to you, **'You shall never return that way again.'**

It is significant that throughout redemptive-history, Israel was tempted to “return that way [to Egypt] again”.

The City of Samaria fell finally to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. and the Northern Kingdom came to an end as part of God’s judgment upon unfaithful Israel (5-4).

The majority of Israel’s population (the ten northern tribes) was deported and scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire. Peoples from other parts under Assyria’s domination were brought into Israel’s former territories and thus this was the beginning of the “half-breed” “half-Jewish people known as the “Samaritans”.”

Against this historical background, Hosea is called to preach and married Gomer a prostitute to illustrate Israel’s unfaithfulness and practice of prostitution against her God (6).

Israel was betrothed to one Husband, Her Redeemer YHWH, but she unfaithfully would also love other gods and commit spiritual idolatry leading her to become a spiritual harlot. As a picture of this great spiritual crime against the living God, Hosea was to marry Gomer a prostitute to show what spiritual idolatry and harlotry looked like in God’s eyes- -in order to bring God’s elect in Israel to repentance.

The question may be asked:

How did the unfaithfulness and spiritual idolatry of Israel’s kings lead greater Israel to spiritual idolatry and harlotry for all the people? (7)

It is important to note the kings who are mentioned in Hosea 1:1 as a background for his prophetic judgment against all of Israel:

ESV **Hosea 1:1** 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.

Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah (Judah) and Jeroboam II (Israel) ruled ca. 790-725 B.C. Let’s go through this list of the Kings of Judah and Israel during Hosea’s time:

King Uzziah: *King Uzziah sinfully usurped the position of priest and received God’s displeasure:*

ESV **2 Chronicles 26:16-21:** ***But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.***¹⁷ But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor,¹⁸ and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the

priests the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God." ¹⁹ Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense. ²⁰ And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the LORD had struck him. ²¹ **And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death, and being a leper lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the LORD.** And Jotham his son was over the king's household, governing the people of the land.

King Uzziah did not permanently remove high places (גְּבוּחַיִם n.f. high place -- high place, mountain; places of worship.) that were in the land and this continued to draw idolatrous worshippers:

^{ESV} **2 Kings 15:4** Nevertheless, **the high places were not taken away. The people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places.**

How about King Jotham?

During the reign of Jotham (son of Uzziah), the high places (worship of idols) were still not removed from the midst of God's people and so the people gave themselves to gross idolatry:

^{ESV} **2 Kings 15:35** Nevertheless, the high places were not removed. The people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD.

^{ESV} **2 Chronicles 27:2** And he [Jotham] did what was right in the eyes of the LORD according to all that his father Uzziah had done, except he did not enter the temple of the LORD. But the people still followed corrupt practices.

How about Ahaz?

During Ahaz's rule, the king encouraged the people to idolatry:

^{ESV} **2 Chronicles 28:2-4:** **... But he [Ahaz] walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals,** ³ and he made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. ⁴ And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

And the reign of Jeroboam II was deplorably described in this way:

^{ESV} **2 Kings 14:24** And he [Jeroboam II] did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin.

Eventually, the LORD ordained that the powerful nation of Assyria would invade Israel and this powerful empire laid siege to Samaria the capital city for three years until Israel fell under this great power as result of God's judgment.

Hosea the Prophet lived and labored for YHWH during this time, seeing the defeat and end of the once great Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Hosea prophesied of the people's covenantal unfaithfulness to YHWH despite the love and favor that God had shown to them throughout redemptive-history.

The sad reality of Israel was that they had become outright and blatant idolaters over time because of their syncretism (8).

Syncretism in my dictionary is correctly defined as: The attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion. In the Bible, you cannot serve the true and living God and Baal; as the Prophet Elijah said to the people:

^{ESV} **1 Kings 18:21** And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "**How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.**" And the people did not answer him a word.

In other words, you cannot serve two masters God and Baal (or God and Mammon or another god as Jesus says): ^{ESV} **Matthew 6:24** "**No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.**"

In many ways, this text is a summary of Israel's history!

Israel's greatest sin during the prophecy and preaching of Hosea was syncretism leading to idolatry, and a turning away from the true and living God. Syncretism in Israel was practiced as YHWH and Baal were both worshipped together by the people. In fact, many thought that YHWH and Baal were just two names for the same God:

^{ESV} **Hosea 2:16** "And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.'"

The hope of True Israel by God's grace would no longer call God "My Baal" but "My husband". It's the mindset of saying: "Aren't we all worshipping the same god? Let's COEXIST" as the bumper sticker (on the back of their chariots) ignorantly and idolatrously preached "peace, peace" when there is no real peace!!

There were two golden calves set up in the Israelite temples at Dan and Bethel and these calves represented YHWH and Baal, but it should be remembered that Baal was pictured in the ancient Near East as a bull (see 2 Kings 11-12):

^{ESV} **Hosea 8:5-6:** I have spurned your calf, O Samaria. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence? ⁶ For it is from Israel; a craftsman made it; **it is not God. The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces.**

Syncretism is a greater more subtle threat for God's people. Syncretism occurs gradually. The people worship God in their own way, or the people worship and love God plus something or someone else- -but it is nevertheless spiritual idolatry and harlotry!

All of God's people must learn from this reality revealed throughout redemptive-history and we should all remember that we are perpetual idol factories and be aware of potential idols of our hearts.

As Ezekiel the Prophet had told the people on behalf of the LORD:

^{ESV} ***Ezekiel 14:1-6: Then certain of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. ² And the word of the LORD came to me: ³ "Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them? ⁴ Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols, ⁵ that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols. ⁶ "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.***

But how are God's people potentially idolaters and spiritual harlots in our day and time? (9) Surely, we do not bow (literally!) to Baal- -or other gods?!

As Keyes, Calvin and Gaffin have written, we are all potential idolaters (9):

“An idol is something within creation that is inflated to function as God. All sorts of things are potential idols, depending only on our attitudes and actions toward them...Idolatry may not involve explicit denials of God's existence or character. It may well come in the form of an over-attachment to something that is, in itself, perfectly good...An idol can be a physical object, a property, a person, an activity, a role, an institution, a hope, an image, an idea, a pleasure, a hero - anything that can substitute for God.” *Richard Keyes*

“The evil in our desire typically does not lie in what we want, but that we want it too much.” *John Calvin*

Dr. Richard Gaffin wrote:

“Because we are, each of us, the image of God, we will worship, in fact we must worship, someone or something, either our original, as we should, or, with the illusion that we are the original or our own ultimate point of reference, ourselves. If the latter, we will give ourselves over, with the full, still efficient resources of our imaging capacities, to some figment, some distorted image, focused on ourselves or on some aspect of the world, ultimately seen as an extension of ourselves. What Calvin observed long ago is no less true today: the human heart, our image-bearing and image-fashioning nature, is an idol factory.”

We may not literally bend the knee in worship to another god, but we daily struggle with loving God plus something, or someone else, and eventually this something or

someone else gets all of our affections and love and devotedness and service (and we become enslaved).

Functional Idols can include: security, success, position, power, people approval, etc. If you have ever been ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ, or of your being a Christian you have been ruled by a functional idol. The functional idol here would be whatever caused you to be embarrassed about the Lord and you wanted the other thing such as one's approval more; you didn't want to be rejected for your faith, but you did want to be warmly received, and so you functionally served an idol.

Repentance is God's solution for idolatry; as God's people we must constantly be aware of these potential idols of the heart that we all can have.

Israel failed to live up to the covenant responsibilities that covenant privileges implied. Remember: "Covenant privileges imply covenant responsibilities." (10) To worship God only in the way that he has revealed- -never with an image, but through his revealed character found in His Word.

The people of God did not worship and serve God alone as they were called to do as his people, but rather they took part in pagan festivals along with the worship of the True and Living God; they worshipped God in the way that they wanted to worship God:

^{ESV} **Hosea 2:13** And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, ***and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD.***

Although Israel sought and ran after false gods (and images of God of their own making), they were never to be satisfied with these carnal calves and idolatrous ideas supposedly aimed at making the worship of YHWH more relevant to the people! As Hosea said:

^{ESV} **Hosea 4:10-14:** They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the whore, but not multiply, because they have forsaken the LORD to cherish ¹¹ whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding. ¹² My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles. ***For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the whore.*** ¹³ They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore, and your brides commit adultery. ***I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with prostitutes and sacrifice with cult prostitutes, and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.***

God says alarmingly to Israel (and to us today):

^{ESV} **Hosea 11:2** ***The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.***

Hosea proclaimed that God's people were unfaithful adulterers engaged in idolatrous fornication with other gods who were no gods at all! Israel's breaking the first commandment caused them to break all other commandments (11).

Israel's unfaithful relationship with God led to image worship, taking God's name in vain, profaning God's Sabbath, insincere talk and hypocritical living, lying, stealing, adultery and all kinds of sins against their brothers and other nations.

It is true that breaking the first commandment causes us to break all of the others!

Hosea prophesied to both the kings and peoples of the northern and southern kingdoms. His strongest words were aimed against the continued unfaithfulness of the northern kingdom. Hosea's father was named Beeri (Hos. 1:1), but we do not know much of this man (or Hosea the man for that matter). But we can learn from his prophetic office as well as from his name quite a bit about him.

The name Hosea (חֹשֶׁה n.pr.m. (salvation) means "salvation" (i.e. help, deliverance, redemption) and he preached salvation for about 30 years in his prophetic office.

It is significant that Hosea's name was "salvation". In Hosea's message we too find salvation and repentance. As God cried out to Israel through Hosea, there is salvation revealed by faith; God called out to Israel who had ears to hear:

^{ESV} ***Hosea 14:1-7: Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. ² Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, "Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. ³ Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy." ⁴ I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. ⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; ⁶ his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. ⁷ They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.***

Main Message of Hosea's Prophetic Ministry: Although God had chosen the people and made a formal covenant with them, the Israelites had always struggled with unfaithfulness and idolatry which is ***spiritual adultery***.

We should remember and keep in mind when reading our Bibles that ultimately the entire Old Testament is a testimony witness to God's covenant faithfulness, and Israel's constant unfaithfulness as God's people.

Israel failed the terms of the bilateral (or two-sided) Mosaic covenant to "Do this and live" (or "Do these commands and live" recorded in the covenant renewal in Exodus

24:1-8). Israel was constantly to be focused on the unilateral (or one-sided) covenant God had made with Abraham that was to be received by faith (that came long before the Mosaic, bilateral, or two-sided covenant).

The covenant that God made with Abraham was that Abraham's seed who is Christ was to come and be faithful as a True Israelite. Christ was to come and live faithfully betrothed to God and to love God with all his heart, soul, mind strength, and his neighbor as himself.

Although Israel was preserved by God as a people throughout redemptive-history (there were still those who clung to God's promises of a redeemer who would come), it was Christ himself who would never commit idolatry against God or break His Divine heart by playing the spiritual harlot.

As Hosea was called by God to love Gomer in spite of the fact that she was a whore, so in Christ God loved and continues to love His elect people made up of both Jew and Gentile in Christ, even though by nature we are idolatrous whores! This is the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ; although he was rejected by many, he is the hope of the world!

The Mosaic covenant where Israel was under law was simply to reveal the people's sinful inability to accomplish their own righteousness or salvation, and thus find their hope in God's promises of grace alone (cf. Gal. 3:19ff; I mean, how long did it take after ratifying the Mosaic Covenant before the people bowed their knee to the golden calf?). Israel was to realize through the Law that they were idolatrous adulterers and whores in God's presence and find their hope not in even their best religious devotions (Isa. 1:18ff), but through grace alone in God's Promised Redeemer!

Hosea and Jesus Christ

In the New Covenant we have a much clearer picture of God's relationship with his people in Jesus Christ. In Jesus "Hosea" Christ we have a union with him by His Spirit that is represented by the marriage union. As the Apostle Paul teaches to us in Ephesians 5, we are those who are betrothed to Jesus Christ and marriage here on earth is a temporal picture of Christ and His Church. As the Apostle Paul writes (Eph. 5:29-32):

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,³⁰ because we are members of his body.³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

As those betrothed to Jesus Christ, we are to live as those who understand themselves as his beautiful and pure bride; we are the Bride of Christ through faith in Jesus Christ, and thus the true and faithful Bride of YHWH revealed in typological fashion in shadows through a faithful remnant in Israel.

In this fuller revelation of God's love found in Christ in the New Covenant, both Jew and Gentile have a Savior to forgive them from gross idolatry against God, and gross harlotry that all of mankind commits against God their Creator.

In Jesus, as we all repent from our idolatry and spiritual harlotry daily as we understand our condition before God's Holy Law, we find the purity of a marriage relationship with Christ that is all of grace and through faith.

We who believe in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentiles are released from the slavery to our idolatry, our sinful tendency toward syncretism and unbelief, and are freed to live as servants of the Living God as the True Israel.

Therefore, let us worship God only as he has revealed himself in His Word in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). It is a testimony to God's faithfulness and grace that even while his people continued as idolatrous enemies (cf. Rom. 5:6-11), God promised that in Jesus Christ there would be true children of the living God rather than children of idolatry and whoredom:

^{ESV} **Hosea 1:10** Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, **"You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."**

...And as the Apostle Paul affirms from the New Covenant, post-resurrection perspective:

^{ESV} **Galatians 3:26-29:** for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Praise be to God for "Hosea" Christ!

CRB

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