

21 January 24
(Week 21)

Hosea

Hosea Preaches God's Accusation Against Israel

Focal Verses: Hosea 4:1-4; 7:1-2; 12:8-9

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **ANALYZE** the need to confess and be forgiven, **SENSE** that although God is displeased when we sin, He forgives and restores us when we truly repent; and **ASK** God to forgive us for any known sin of acting callously or selfishly.

In Focus

Aaron and Regina were high school sweethearts who attended the same church. When they went to different colleges, they committed to stay faithful to their relationship.

In college, Regina remained faithful to God and to Aaron. She attended weekly campus Bible study and did not date anyone else. Back then, she called Aaron a couple of times a week and wrote to him when she had time.

Aaron, however, was at college on a basketball scholarship and did not have much time between studying and practicing to attend church, talk to, or write Regina. He loved Regina, but he had many female admirers and did not remain faithful to her.

One Christmas, the year before they were to graduate, Aaron proposed to Regina, and she accepted. Soon after they married, the couple decided they wanted to start a family. When they did not become pregnant immediately, Regina became concerned. After many years of trying, she made an appointment with her physician for a thorough exam. One week later, the doctor called her back for a follow-up appointment and requested that both Aaron and Regina come in. Once seated, the doctor said the reason Regina could not conceive was because she had a sexually transmitted disease that has caused some scarring. The doctor wanted to treat Regina immediately and check Aaron as well.

Regina was speechless, 'how is this possible,' she thought? Aaron was shocked and at a loss for words, realizing that it was his past behavior that had caused this dilemma. How could he tell Regina the truth about his past unfaithfulness?

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Keep In Mind

“Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God in the land.” (Hosea 4:1 NKJV)

Lesson Text

Hosea 4:1-4; 7:1-2; 12:8-9

1 Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God in the land.

2 “By swearing and lying, and killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and everyone that dwelleth therein shall languish with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

4 Yet let no man strive with, nor reprove another; for this people are as they that strive with the priest.

7th Chapter

1 “When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers despoiled without.

2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness. Now their own doings have beset them about; they are before My face.

12th Chapter

8 And Ephraim said, “Yet I am become rich, I have found myself substance; in all my labors they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin.”

9 “And I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

The Lesson

The People, Places and Times

Hosea: The name Hosea means “salvation.” Hosea served from 753 to 715 B.C. as a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. He came to be called a “minor” prophet due to the relatively short length of his prophetic book. Hosea was obedient to God’s directive to marry a whore, Gomer, who was unfaithful to him and would cause him many headaches and heartaches. Hosea’s marriage to Gomer is a picture of the relationship between a faithful God and an unfaithful Israel. It illustrates the love of a merciful but jealous God for His sinful people.

Gomer: Gomer was Hosea’s unfaithful wife, the daughter of Diblaim. According to the Wycliffe Bible Dictionary, the name Gomer comes from a Hebrew term signifying “lump or double cakes of figs and raisins.” Some theologians believe the name is figurative, i.e., “Gomer, the daughter of raisin cakes,” meaning that she was wholly given up to her harlotry since raisin cakes were used in certain fertility cult rites (457). She was also the mother of Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi (the second and third children may not have been Hosea’s). As Gomer violated her sacred vows of marriage to Hosea, so did Israel act toward God.

Background

The prophet Hosea wrote the book of Hosea around 715 B.C. and recorded events took place between 753 and 715 B.C. Hosea’s prophetic years spanned the reigns of Uzziah through Hezekiah as kings of Judah. Jeroboam II was the first of seven kings of Israel during this time, all of whom were wicked and promoted oppression of the poor, increased taxation, and idolatry with no regard for God. Because of political turmoil, the kings turned to foreign alliances. They had illicit relationships with Assyria and Egypt to bolster their military might. Israel became subject to Assyria and was required to pay tribute, and the Assyrians robbed Israel of her resources. After Samaria fell in 722 B.C., Israel went into captivity.

When Hosea prophesied, the people were greedy. The Children of Israel accepted and were practicing the idolatry and immoral behavior of the Canaanites who surrounded them. They were unfaithful to God. God sustained Israel through agriculture, but there was an economic crisis due to Israel’s sinfulness. Thanks to God’s covenant agreement, Israel had provisions of grain, oil, clothing, and wool. Although God provided, Israel stepped outside the covenant relationship and worshiped other gods, including Baal, giving these other gods credit for providing them with gold and silver. The Israelites ignored the fact these other gods were false. Instead, they attempted to combine God and Baal to receive all the benefits of a good harvest. God, through Hosea, let His people know they needed to turn from their wicked ways and turn back to Him.

In Depth

1. God's Disobedient People: God Charges Israel (Hosea 4:1–4) Hosea charged Israel with disobedience. The nation of Israel was suffering from moral and spiritual decay. God was not pleased that the religious leaders of Israel had not turned the people from idolatry. The people did not have faith in God. Instead, they turned to Baal, a false god.

God does not accept behavior that does not recognize His lordship. Murder occurred in Israel without much concern over its existence. The behavior of the Israelites resulted in ecological crisis and violence.

Leaders are held accountable because they provide instruction. God held the religious leaders accountable for the events that had occurred in Israel. The religious leaders led the Israelites into idolatry and immorality. The priests exhibited faithlessness. The leaders lacked good judgment due to sexual indulgence and insobriety. God blamed the religious leaders and held them accountable for their failure to lead.

Israel broke her covenant with God, just as Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea. Israel did not have “truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God” (Hosea 4:1). There was no loyalty, devotion, or intellectual understanding of God’s authority and covenant relationship with Israel. When Hosea charged Israel with sin, he listed five of the Ten Commandments. The punishment for their sins was a drought that would have a direct impact on the people. The religious leaders, including the priests, did not teach God’s law. As a result, God would end the line of priests. The priests did not teach the people the knowledge of God, and He held the priests accountable. Although God loved Israel faithfully, she did not respond to His love. Like Gomer, Israel was unfaithful to God and was spiritually adulterous toward Him. Later, God warned Israel, through Hosea, of a final judgment.

Even as believers, we make mistakes. We must turn to God and ask to be forgiven to restore our fellowship with Him. Although we can blame others for our sinfulness, we must take responsibility for our actions and seek God. When we blame others, we do not feel a need to seek forgiveness. We do not think we have committed sin. We can easily see the sins of someone else, but God’s focus is on us. We must look within ourselves and see our lack of faith and our own sinfulness. We must seek the forgiveness of God, who is merciful. He will restore us if we repent and turn to Him.

2. God's Disobedient People: God Knows (7:1–2) God desired the love of Israel, just as Hosea desired the love of Gomer. God allowed Hosea to feel what He felt many times with Israel. Israel’s faith wavered. Although other prophets warned the people, they continued to sin. Israel’s relationship with God deteriorated through spiritual adultery, even as Gomer’s relationship with

Hosea deteriorated through physical adultery. Both types of adultery lead to alienation, disappointment, estrangement, and hurt.

God knows everything. He is omniscient. God also sees everything. He is present everywhere (omnipresent). We dare not believe that we can go through life with no accountability. Israel persisted in her sinfulness and had contempt for divine justice. Several kings were murdered in coups. God's gracious dealings with Israel exposed the "sins of Ephraim . . . and the crimes of Samaria" (Hosea 7:1, NIV). Israel seemed to be useless to God.

Like Israel, we may be full of sin and even seem useless, yet we can have a relationship with God that makes us worthwhile in this world. God is holy and detests sin, but God is also love; therefore, He seeks the best for the sinner. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, justice met grace and mercy. They are gifts from God, and we could never merit them on our own. There is nothing the world can offer that is more worthwhile than a life lived for God and with God. We must turn and commit ourselves to living a life committed to God. God calls us to love and obey Him.

3. God's Disobedient People: God's Invitation (12:8–9) Hosea teaches a lesson to Israel that is based on the story of Jacob, who wrestled with God. Jacob recognized his spiritual dependence on God. Hosea wanted Israel to recognize that she needed to return to God. The Children of Israel needed to reestablish a relationship with God based on justice and trust in Him completely. Likewise, we must submit to God in all areas of life.

Israel thought they were self-sufficient and ignored their history. They failed to realize God had always provided for them. Israel continued to reject the messages from the prophets. God would send Israel into exile, away from their land and homes. God compared the exile to the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorated His protection of the Israelites as they wandered through the wilderness for 40 years. Israel was condemned because she was materialistic and dishonest in her transactions. This condemnation would come in the form of bondage.

As believers, we expose ourselves to the judgment of God when we are disobedient to Him. God does not want to destroy or condemn us; He loves us, but He also desires that we as His children are loyal and just. We should never be arrogant about our accomplishments. God provides all opportunities, resources, and blessings.

Liberating Lesson

In today's lesson, the prophet Hosea personally experiences the relationship God had with Israel. As Christians, we must turn from the temptations of the world and turn to God. God desires a loving, faithful relationship with each one of us. Although all blessings come from God, we cannot hold them in higher esteem than we do God. When we sin, we must repent, make a definite change in our behavior, and return to a faithful relationship with God.

Although we sin, God loves us and desires to have an intimate relationship with us. When we sin, we create a barrier to our relationship with God. Our commitment to God has been affected because we have been disloyal to Him. When we live in total disregard for God and become self-sufficient, we no longer focus on Him. The safety and security of a relationship with God is gone. We must repent and ask Him for forgiveness. We must never let personal gain, material possessions, or achievement make us forget God.

As believers, we must not compromise with the standards of society. We are accountable to God. The world may be selfish, but we stand on the foundation of our Heavenly Father, who is able to sustain us. We base our standards on the Word of God, our "instruction book" for life.

Application for Activation

Reach out to someone who has been victimized. Tell him or her about the love of God and the strength that God gives. Encourage youth to seek a standard that transcends the idols of name brands, materialism, and wealth. Each of us as believers can make a difference when we pray to God for direction and act. God does not want us to sit on our hands. We must set our standards according to God's Word. Seek God's guidance in starting a discussion of trends and standards of the world. Give God's response to the many things that keep us from being faithful to Him.

Take Aways

Closing Prayer

Week of 21 January 24
Daily Bible Readings



Monday – Ezra 1-3

Tuesday – Ezra 4-7

Wednesday – Ezra 8-10

Thursday – Nehemiah 1-3

Friday – Nehemiah 4-6

Saturday – Nehemiah 7

Sunday – Nehemiah 8-9