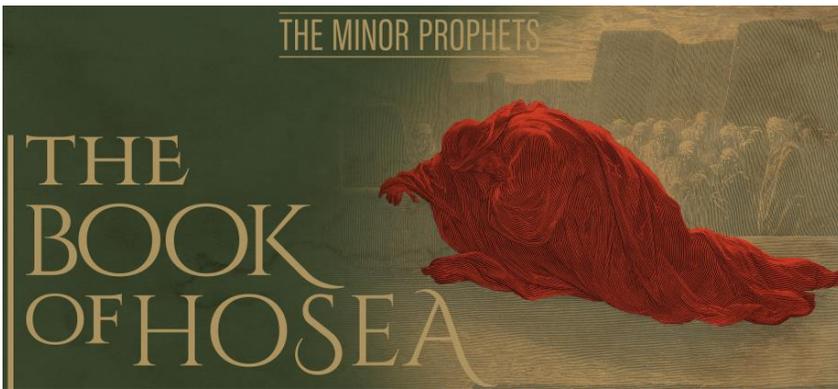


# HOSEA

## Faithful Love for the Unfaithful Lover

*A St. Paul's Lutheran Bible Study*



It is interesting to note that the name Hosea means, “salvation.” Furthermore, as previously stated, the story of Hosea parallels the bride-groom relationship of the Lord and unfaithful Israel. Remember that you – the reader – understand that Israel is unfaithful. At the time, though, it was not perceived that the nation of Israel was unfaithful. Both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah were enjoying a time of prosperity, while Assyria was in a position of weakness. Yes, there was economic and social prosperity but not theological.

And so, the Lord tells Hosea to use his very own body and life to visibly demonstrate His relationship to Israel, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom...” Furthermore, since the scripture says, “and children of whoredoms,” it is possible that some of the children of Gomer were from other men.

How could Hosea possibly marry such a woman – a woman may be immersed in cult prostitution? Can you imagine getting a wedding invitation for such a wedding? What would you and I conclude? Hosea must either be crazy, or he must really love her? Or, as previously mentioned, Hosea’s marriage is showing the *hesed* love of God for Israel within her Canaanite spiritual whoredom!

### HOSEA 1:1-10

Author:

Hosea the Prophet

Date:

740-715 BC

Place:

Israel

Purpose:

Israel was like an unfaithful wife. She was attracted away from her husband (the Lord) to other lovers (idols). In the book of Hosea, the Lord calls Israel back to Himself. It is a call for Israel to forsake her unfaithfulness and be restored in the Lord’s faithfulness.

Other:

Hosea is the most quoted book of the Minor Prophets in the New Testament.

At this point, it is important for us not to identify with Hosea but instead with Gomer. Too often we readers align ourselves with the protagonist (leading character; hero) rather than the antagonist. In other words, it is important for us to see ourselves aligned with Gomer – that we are prone to wander and leave the God that loves us. Secondly, as we identify ourselves with Gomer, we need to ponder the great love of God as it is seen in the actions of Hosea. As Hosea pursues Gomer, the Lord seeks you and me. Even though we wander to spiritually prostitute ourselves with the world's idols, ideologies, and vices, the Lord never stops calling us and seeking us.

As we move on, Hosea and Gomer conceive and have three children. All three children, though, are given very difficult names. They are symbolic names that point to Israel's unfaithfulness: Jezreel – God scatters (reinforcing the idea that God will judge and scatter the house of Israel); Lo-Ruhamah – not love (showing that God's love will be reversed towards unfaithful Israel); and Lo-Ammi – you are not my people (showing that Israel has walked away from God's promises). And so, through these names we see that God is not the One causing the problems in this covenant relationship, Israel is. Too often Christians will blame God for not acting the way they think He should act. Christians – and even well-intentioned pagans - treat God like He is a moving star. Alas, we are not a stationary planet, and God the moving star! Instead, we are the moving star and God is the stationary planet. Tragically, we function at times as if we are morally stationary and faithful when in reality, we often cannot stay put – we leave God for the other seductions of life. The pagan world will often decry, "where is God?" The answer, He is where you last left Him. In fact, like Hosea, He is chasing you, calling you, and seeking you. He is trying to bring you back into the marriage but you will not let Him.

To the point; both Hosea and Gomer/God and Israel stand as a warning sign for all believers of all time. We learn that as the church, our problem is not that we have not ascended high enough to God (as if He is a carrot on the stick) but instead that we often leave what we already have been given. Too often, when people leave the Word and Sacrament in the church, we put the blame on the church. While there are indeed times to leave a church due to the bad teaching of the pastor, often, instead of blaming departing members, people end up blaming the church or the pastor. That would be like blaming Hosea for Gomer's prostitution– it would be like blaming God for Israel's whoredom. Furthermore, when churches often see members leave the pews for other seductive lovers in the world, instead of pursuing these members (via the Gospel), the church tries to seduce them back into the pews not through the Gospel but through whorish means. As we will see, Hosea pursues Gomer; he does not pimp himself out and attract her back by becoming the very thing that seduced her away. No, He buys her back, just as the Lord snatches us again and again out of darkness unto Himself.

