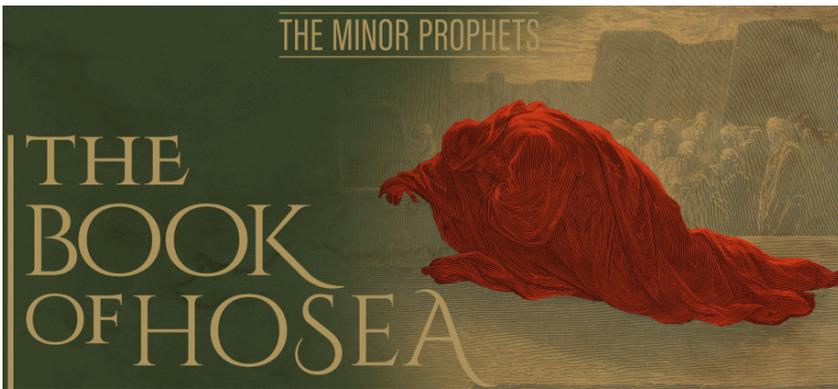


HOSEA

Faithful Love for the Unfaithful Lover

A St. Paul's Lutheran Bible Study



“It all began with a marriage. But the marriage of Hosea and Gomer was no ordinary nuptial. Initiated by the word of God, it was permeated with the purposes of revelation. A divine call was heard by Hosea that turned his life into a sanctuary where God’s holy love was to be known. The tone of the book is set by God’s mandate to take a wife who would become a harlot (i.e., prostitute), have children who turned from God, and then know God’s passion for his covenant people.” (D.A. Hubbard) In other words, Hosea’s life and marriage were shaped and directed by the Lord to mimic or parallel Israel’s marriage to God. What Hosea experienced with his unfaithful wife, Gomer, the Lord God, experienced with unfaithful Israel.

Now, it is important to address a multitude of things with the Book of Hosea before studying. For the sake of simplicity, the various points of concern will be listed below in numbered points.

1) Hosea, Gomer, and his family are ‘not’ a parable. They are real people who lived in a real-time and place. Their lives, though, show the drama, despair,

INTRODUCTION

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.

problems, etc. of real time Israel. Think of them as parallel accounts – different people/groups but the same struggles.

2) The problems of Israel were that it was influenced by the cult of Baal, had instability of leadership, and had naïve foreign policies. As a result, the high-living rich exploited the poor, merchants took dishonest profits, money controlled the courts, and crowds filled religious shrines.

3) Theologically speaking, the problem of Israel was that large portions of its citizens worshipped Baal. Baal was connected to a fertility cult. Specifically stated, Baal was a pagan god the produced new rains and new crops. And so, high places (altars) for Baal were established in the land. At these high places, though, there would be temple prostitutes. By having intercourse with these prostitutes, it was believed that devotion was being shown to Baal, which would result in good rain/crops/livestock/etc. Ritual prostitution was the sort of worship that became mingled with the faith of the people of Israel. It is now not hard to see why the Lord chose ‘marriage’ as the metaphor to reveal Israel’s unfaithfulness.

4) It is interesting to note that the Lord does not hold the Canaanites responsible for their corruption. Instead, he hold His own people responsible. The blame is not put on the foreign enticement, but the blame is put on unfaithful Israel.

5) Regarding marriage, Hosea and Gomer’s marriage is not to be thought of in the realm of ‘partnership.’ There is a much more patriarchal feature to marriage in the book of Hosea than complementarian. Furthermore, Gomer does not represent ‘women’ instead Gomer represents Israel as a whole nation. Finally, the prostitution of Gomer was not subtle but blatant. Some scholars even believe that Gomer was no ordinary harlot but a temple prostitute. Finally, we must keep in mind that Hosea is not the hero; however, he mimics the ultimate Hero – the faithful Lord. Lastly, while we can indeed learn a lot about the 6th Commandment and Marriage from the Book of Hosea, it is more important for us to understand that the Book of Hosea intends to teach us about the ‘hesed’ love of God – how the Lord’s faithful love deals with an unfaithful lover.

6) Finally, the marriage metaphor can most certainly be carried forward to the New Testament view of Christ and His Bride – the church. Hosea opens the doors for us to understand love and sacrifice as mutual subjections required for a healthy marriage.

