

The Church of the Servant King

Prophecy Series

(Proph14O_Prophecy in the Prophets_Hosea and Summary to Date)

Eschatological Passages in Hosea

Introduction to Hosea

Hosea should be grouped with some of the other prophets we've studied to date who ministered to Israel and Judah in the 8th Century B.C., i.e. Amos – ca. 762 B.C. and Jonah – mid 8th Century B.C.¹ As we have seen in our previous studies, Jonah's efforts were focused upon the Assyrians of Nineveh during the period of Jereboam II's reign in Israel (793 to 753 B.C.). Jonah urged the Ninevites to repent and they did. Amos' efforts were focused towards the nation of Israel during the later stages of Jereboam II's reign (i.e. ca. 755 to 754 B.C.). Amos focused upon the spiritual condition of the nation that was demonstrated by the social injustice that was prevalent in the land and that was in violation of the Mosaic Law. Within two or three years after Amos ministered to Israel at Bethel, Jeroboam II died, and Israel began her rapid decline.

Hosea began his ministry around the middle of the 8th Century B.C. when the historical currents of change were just beginning to flow. The spiritual believer would have assessed the spiritual status of the nation and accurately interpreted these events for what they were – the impending cloud of judgment on the horizon. Spiritual believers are always in the minority and their interpretation of matters is always discounted by the masses. The masses, on the other hand, would have interpreted such historical changes as merely incidental and not related to their spiritual condition.

Just what were the currents of change in the works at the middle of the 8th Century B.C? As we have previously noted, when the Solomon monarchy fractured in 931 B.C. and the kingdom divided, both the Northern and Southern kingdoms were militarily weak and vulnerable. Jereboam II, the king of the Northern Kingdom who reigned from ca. 793 to 753 B.C., eventually rallied his nation and led Israel in campaigns that restored some of Israel's borders. Jereboam II formed an alliance with Uzziah, the king of Judah (792 to 740 B.C.), and together they controlled a span of territory that covered an area almost as large as the empire of David and Solomon.² Jereboam II's ability to extend Israel's borders was due to the fact that Israel's enemies had problems of their own that pre-occupied them. This gave the Northern Kingdom of Israel control over trade routes and the nation began to prosper. The Southern Kingdom of Judah under Uzziah's rule experienced prosperity also. They subdued the Philistines to the west, the Ammonites to the east, and the Arab states to the south.

Hosea, like Amos, accurately assessed the spiritual status of the nation and foresaw God's judgment to come via the ascendancy of Assyria. The false religion of the Northern Kingdom combined with the prevalent idol worship of Baal made for a system ripe for God's judgment of His own. After Jereboam II died (ca. 753 B.C.) and his son, Zechariah, was

¹ In an earlier lesson in this series (i.e. "Proph14A_Prophecy in the Prophets_The Virgin Birth_Isa7_14"), I listed several prophets who may have ministered during the 8th Century B.C. That particular list was obtained from a chronology contained in the appendix to Charles Ryrie's, *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, 1978), 1985. As we have progressed in this series and as I have examined the dating of these books more closely, I came to a conclusion that Joel and Obadiah probably ministered during the late 7th and early 6th Centuries B.C. This leaves only Jonah, Amos and Hosea as 8th Century B.C. prophets if my understanding of the dates of these prophets ministries is correct.

² Earl D. Radmacher, gen editor, *The Nelson Study Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 1473.

assassinated, political turmoil ensued. Assyria was re-emerging and beginning to set its sights to the west for expansion opportunities. Assyria first reduced Israel to a vassal state (required to pay tribute to Assyria), then to a puppet state (ruled by a king chosen by Assyria) and finally to a province (ruled by an Assyrian governor).

What was Hosea's purpose in writing? Hosea warned of impending judgment upon Israel primarily and Judah secondarily due to their unfaithfulness to their covenant with Yahweh. This judgment was in accord with the covenant curses found in such passages as Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28:15-68. By participating in the pagan fertility rites associated with Baal worship, Israel had been unfaithful to her Lord and figurative husband, Yahweh. However, Hosea also assured the nation that God's love and faithfulness would continue in spite of the judgment to come. God was bound to be faithful to His people because the blessings of the covenant relationship were also based upon the very character of Yahweh Himself (Deut 30:1-10). As we shall see, he expressed God's love using language that was eschatological in orientation.

God's unusual command to Hosea – To illustrate the unfaithfulness of His people, God commanded Hosea to take a wife who would be unfaithful to him and he was to have children by her. They were called "children of unfaithfulness" because they would be conceived and born in the context of an unfaithful relationship. They were named "Lo-Ruhamah" (meaning "not loved") and "Lo-Ammi" (meaning "not My people"). This is an incredible command and must have been incredibly painful for Hosea to endure. It was made all the more poignant of an illustration of Israel's unfaithfulness in contrast to God's loving-kindness and faithfulness when God commanded Hosea to go and purchase his wife who had become the property of another man. In faithfully adhering to God's command and doing something totally contrary to what would have otherwise been the accepted course of action (to divorce Gomer, his wife, and leave her to her own path of destruction), Hosea illustrated the spiritual husband who treats his wife in a manner similar to the manner in which the Lord has dealt with His own, i.e. in grace and mercy.

Eschatology in Hosea

The eschatological overtones in selected passages in Hosea are unmistakable. Of course, at the time that Hosea penned these prophetic utterances, Israel had no idea that it would be centuries or even millennia before they would be fulfilled. No doubt Hosea's hearers would have hoped for the fulfillment of these prophecies of blessing within their lifetimes. Also, the words of Hosea would not have sounded quite as beautiful when first penned as they did during and after the destruction and judgment executed against them via the Assyrians in 722-721 B.C. How beautiful the hope provided by such passages as the following in Hosea.

Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and it will come about that, in the place where it is said to them, "You are not My people," it will be said to them, "*You are* the sons of the living God." And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader, and they will go up from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel. (Hos 1:10-11)

Afterward, the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days. (Hos 3:5)

How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboim? [*References to sister cities of Sodom and Gomorrah*]. My heart is turned over within Me, all My compassions are kindled. I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim [*Israel – the Northern Kingdom*] again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. They will walk after the

LORD, He will roar like a lion; indeed He will roar, and *His* sons will come trembling from the west. They will come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria; and I will settle them in their houses, declares the LORD. (Hos 11:8-11)

I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; He will blossom like the lily, and he will take root like *the cedars of Lebanon*. His shoots will sprout, And his beauty will be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like *the cedars of Lebanon*. Those who live in his shadow will again raise grain, and they will blossom like the vine. His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon. O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; from Me comes your fruit. Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; *Whoever* is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them. (Hos 14:4-9)

What do we learn from these eschatological passages in Hosea? We see the following points emerge from our study of these passages in Hosea:

- God will be faithful to the covenant He made with Abraham in spite of Israel's unfaithfulness (see 1:10 cf. Ge 22:17; 32:12). This would be illustrated by making the people as numerous as the sand of the sea.
- This prophecy and promise has yet to be fulfilled and indicates that there will be a population explosion during the Millennial kingdom.
- Israel and Judah will no longer be separate nations, but they will have "one leader" (1:11). This is a reference to the one king Who is the Messiah to rule over them.
- Israel will have a new heart or attitude toward their Lord for they are said to "seek" Him in the "last days" (3:5).
- Hosea refers to the Lord and David in a connective way through the conjunction "and." This could be interpreted in one of two ways: 1) David is a reference to the ancestral lineage through whom the Messiah would come as promised (2 Sam 7:12), therefore they are just two ways of saying the same thing or 2) David, in resurrected body, will rule from the Jerusalem on earth and the Messiah would rule from the heavenly Jerusalem during the Messianic kingdom.
- While in the historical judgment to come, God would tear Israel apart like a lion that roared; in the future, God's roar will summon His own to return from exile and they will return with speed like a bird to dwell in the Land (11:10-11 cf. Ezek 28:25; 34:25-27; 36:22-36).
- When Israel returns to the Land with a changed heart, there will be abundant prosperity bestowed upon them (14:4-9).

The Unfolding Eschatological Picture in the Old Testament

So far in our survey of Old Testament passages and books with a focus upon those passages that have prophetic and eschatological significance, we have seen how very necessary it is to understand that Scripture implies that a more detailed oral tradition paralleled written revelation. A summary of the progressive unfolding of eschatological understanding in the Old Testament is helpful at this point.

- (4000+ B.C.) Garden of Eden – Genesis 3:15 provides the first promise of a redeemer to come as a man.
- (2200 B.C.) Promises to Abraham – Genesis 12:1-3 (confirmed and enlarged in 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 22: 15-18; 26:2-4; 28:13-14; 35:11-12). This covenant promised several things that have eschatological significance:
 - The nation Israel and the physical seed of Abraham must be perpetuated.
 - If Israel is to possess the land forever, they must exist forever.

- In spite of Israel's disobedience, they will one day inherit the Land and reside there as a blessed nation.
- Israel will be the channel of blessing for all the nations of the earth
- Abraham, Issac, Jacob, and Jacob's sons who shared their fathers' faith and covenant eligibility will be resurrected and placed in everlasting possession of the land (Matt 22:23-32; Acts 26:6-8; Heb 11:13)
- In general, the Abrahamic covenant added more specificity regarding the lineage through which the promised "seed" would come, yet the timing of His coming and the connection between how He would pay for man's sins, how He would be a blessing to all nations, and how Abraham's descendants would possess the promised land were still not totally clearly detailed in Scripture.
- (1900 – 1850 B.C.) Jacob's blessing of Judah – Genesis 49:8-12 – Judah is prophesied to be the specific tribe from which the promised one would come.
- (2100 to 1900 B.C.) Job's prophecy - In Job 19:25-27, we see one of the great prophecies of the Old Testament that testifies to the hope held by these early believers. In the end God would stand upon the earth and Job would be vindicated among the righteous. Not only would people read of his righteousness, but they would hear it from God Himself. It is indeed remarkable that Job, living in a time prior to written Scripture, had a firm belief consistent with later revelation regarding the fact that the Redeemer (Ge 3:15) would stand upon the earth. See also Job 23:10-11. Job also manifests an early belief in the resurrection
- (1406 B.C.) Balaam's prophecy - Balaam's prophecy primarily revolved around a "star" and a "scepter" that would arise out of Israel in the future.
- (1446-1406 B.C.) Palestinian covenant – promises a future repentance, coming of the Messiah, and possession of the Land
- (1000 B.C.) Davidic Covenant and Davidic Psalms – more specificity regarding the lineage of the Messiah and more specificity regarding His suffering and death.
- 8th Century Prophets Studied to date – Amos, Jonah and Hosea (700's B.C.) – announcements of judgment for covenant violations and promises of restoration to the Land and blessing according to the covenant.

Thus, we see in OT Scripture a distinct focus upon Israel's connection to the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, their responsibilities under the Mosaic covenant and the hope of a future Messiah/King. There were also strong implications that this future Redeemer/Messiah would suffer on behalf of His own (e.g. Ge 3:15 cf. Psa 22:6-8, 14-18). However, as we have seen, the preponderance of OT Scripture focuses upon a national and physical redeemer of Israel, each generation of which had jeopardized the possibility that they would experience that deliverance because of spiritual infidelity. The prophets are unique for they saw the connection between the spiritual life of the nation and people and the physical and national deliverance that was promised Israel. For Israel to receive the promised blessings which included her exaltation among all nations, she would need to fulfill her spiritual responsibility toward the Gentiles and humbly draw them to Yahweh. In a sense, Israel needed to become a spiritual servant to the other nations, yet Israel instead became arrogant simply because God had established her and promised to bless her. What an amazing analogy for the Christian who has been promised so much! Christians too, can become arrogant in the knowledge of their blessed status and never be the source of blessing to others in the here and now that God intends.