

SLOW FOOD

THE PROPHET HOSEA (17 studies)

Hosea is the prophet of love: Hosea's love for his wife Gomer, and God's love for Israel. His book may also speak of Christ's love for me, and my love for Christ. Thus these studies follow a rather different pattern from usual: each section is studied asking (A) what was the situation for Hosea's time? (B) what is the application for my time? Kidner's commentary in the BST series (*The Message of Hosea*, 1981) is recommended; his subdivisions are followed. A maximum of three cross-references are added in order to give greater breadth to each study (except the first and last).

1:1 *Introducing Hosea*

Where, when and for how long did Hosea prophesy? (use any standard Bible dictionary or Study Bible).

1:2-9 *An ominous beginning*

- (A) Hosea's family situation seems distinctly unpromising. Did his God have a warped sense of humour? *Isa 55:8-9; Jer 29:11; Jas 1:17.*
- (B) Is God's apparent rejection of his covenant promises (1:9) merely rhetorical? *Deut 29:3-15; Mt 23:37-38; Heb 6:4-6.*

1:10 – 2:1 *A rift in the clouds*

- (A) Is this a promise of the reuniting of Israel and Judah? If so, has it been fulfilled? *Jn 4:9; 1 Pet 2:10, cf Rom 9:26; Rev 7:9.*
- (B) How is Christ working to reconcile people where I am? *Jn 17:20-23; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Col 1:19-20.*

2:2-23 *The lovers and the Lover*

- (A) What made Israel go after Baal rather than the Lord? *1 Ki 18:21; 1 Tim 6:17; 1 Jn 2:15-16.*
- (B) How far have I gone from the Lord, and to what lengths has he gone to get me back? *Job 5:17-18; Isa 57:17-18; Lk 15:4.*

3:1-5 *Love as the Lord loves*

- (A) How has Hosea's experience with Gomer mirrored the Lord's dealings with his people Israel? *Isa 40:1-2; Lk 1:77-79; Rom 1:2-4.*
- (B) Can God and sin coexist? *Lk 15:20; Jn 8:11; Rom 5:20.*

4:1-19 *A people without understanding*

- (A) Identify the commandments being broken by Israel. What is the root cause of their sin? *Deut 5:6-21; Jer 22:15; Hos 6:6.*
- (B) Do our society and its educators encourage religious and moral indifference? *Deut 8:12; 1 Cor 15:32b-34; Col 2:8.*

5:1-14 *The prospect darkens*

- (A) This chapter speaks of religious, moral and political corruption. Give an example of each in the life of Israel or Judah. *Deut 19:14; Isa 1:2-4, 13; Ezek 23:5.*
- (B) What prevents the society or community that I know from 'returning to the Lord' (5:4)? *Jer 13:23; Jn 8:34; 2 Cor 4:4.*

5:15-7:2 *Let us press on to know the Lord*

- (A) Is Israel's repentance sincere? *Ps 78: 34, 36-37; Mic 6:6-8; Mal 3:7.*
- (B) Has my early love for Jesus Christ been gradually replaced by religious formalism and a superficial attitude to sin? *Mt 9:13 (quoting 6:6); 2 Cor 7:10; Phil 3:10, 14.*

7:3-16 *Decadence*

- (A) How had Israel's spiritual arrogance led to moral and political folly?
2 Ki 15:10, 14, 25, 30 (four royal assassinations); Isa 28:7; Amos 6:17.
- (B) How can wholehearted dependence on God bring enlightenment to my nation, community, church, workplace, home (select!)? *Prov 3:5-6; Isa 28:5-6; Jas 1:5-6.*

8:1-14 *Sowing the wind, reaping the whirlwind*

- (A) Illustrate the mix of complacency and self-reliance that was bringing Israel steadily closer to disaster. *1 Ki 12:28-30; Ps 127:1b; Jer 42:1-6; Jer 43:1-7.*
- (B) How is the law of 'reaping what we sow' (or more than we sow) applicable to the Christian life? *Ps 126:5-6; 2 Cor 9:6; Gal 6:6-7.*

9:1-17 *Wanderers among the nations*

- (A) Was sexual corruption the only thing that had caused Ephraim's glory to 'fly away like a bird'? *For Gibeah see Judges 19-21; 1 Sam 4:21; Rom 1:23.*
- (B) 'Madman' (v7) or 'watchman' (v8): in what sense, if any, do I have a prophetic role within my community (workplace/home)? *Ezek 33:7; Mt 13:57; 2 Cor 5:13.*

10:1-15 *Time to seek the Lord*

- (A) What were the signs that Israel had fundamentally turned her back on the Lord?
1 Ki 12:26-33; Isa 5:1-7; 2 Cor 3:14-15.
- (B) What would it mean for me to 'break up my unploughed ground'?
Josh 13:1; Mt 11:29; Rom 12:1-2; Phil 3:12.

11:1-11 *How can I give you up?*

- (A) What episodes in Israel's past history should have taught them to worship and fear God?
Exod 4:22-23; Deut 29:23; Deut 32:10-12.
- (B) Have I experienced Christ's unwillingness to give me up?
Num 23:19; Jn 10:28; Phil 1:6.

11:12 – 12:14 *Look back and learn!*

- (A) How did the 'wrestling Jacob' incident set the character of Israel's faith?
Gen 32:22-32; Exod 33:12-23; Jn 1:18.
- (B) In what sense might I be wrestling with God? *Col 4:12; Heb 5:7 (cf Lk 22:39-46); Jas 4:4a.*

13:1-16 *The unmaking of a kingdom*

- (A) Trace the connection between Israel's prosperity, her idolatry and God's wrath.
Deut 8:12-18; 1 Sam 15:23; Col 3:5-6.
- (B) Is God ultimately helpless in the face of sin and death?
Gen 3:15; Song 8:6; 1 Cor 15:55; Heb 2:14.

14:1-9 *The way home*

- (A) Did this final appeal fall on deaf ears? *2 Ki 17:1-23; Ezek 39:23-24.*
- (B) Have I been trying to find fruitfulness apart from Christ? *2 Ki 19:30; Ps 92:14; Jn 15:5.*

Revision *Hosea chapters 1 – 14*

- (A) Does the depiction of the Lord in Hosea alter our standard perception of the God of the Old Testament?
- (B) How does the book of Hosea strengthen and deepen my understanding of the gospel of God's grace in Christ?