

Spiritual Adultery



Pr. Carsten Lotz

Introduction

Hosea one is about reversing fortunes. This opening chapter powerfully illustrates how God's grace interrupts the trajectory of sin and brokenness and sets us on a new path. Hosea really did love Gomer and her children or else the illustration would not be a helpful analogy. Just as Hosea raises Gomer's children from other men, God will adopt us into his household. What is significant about Hosea's dealing with Gomer and her children is that he loved them as his own. He didn't divorce Gomer or publicly shame her but remained loyal. Just as Gomer illustrates our unfaithfulness, so also Hosea illustrates God's faithfulness. God gave Hosea a deep-abiding love for Gomer and her children.

The main idea

God takes in unwanted children and turns them into his own, precious, beloved children and He promises to lavish His love upon them.

Who was Gomer? "Gomer was a prostitute in Israel in the eighth century B.c. A "prostitute," "harlot," or "whore" is a woman who engages in sexual immorality in exchange for money or other material things. The Lord commanded the prophet Hosea to marry and have children with Gomer. Even after Gomer married Hosea, she continued her work of prostitution. But the Lord told Hosea to take her back. This was to show Israel that their worship of false gods was spiritual adultery and that like Hosea, the Lord would take back His unfaithful bride His people, and restore them when they returned to Him". - *The Reformation Study Bible Student Edition*

Sign-Acts

Why would the Lord ask Hosea to do such a thing?

- Part of the prophetic vocation was that often the prophets were called to live out their message.
- We see several of the prophets being called to do outrageous things like this in order to deliver the message.
- Scholars call this a "Sign-acts": "Sign acts are nonverbal actions and objects intentionally employed by the prophets so that message content was

communicated through them to the audience" - *Friebel, Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*. It was a way of acting out a parable, a visual aid before the times of multi-media. Of course, there was a shock value to these sign-acts in order to wake the people up from their slumber and apathy about sin.

Hosea is told to take a prostitute as a wife so that Hosea's experience mirrors the Lord's experience when his people are unfaithful to Him and commit spiritual adultery.

Spiritual Adultery

"Because Scripture frequently refers to the people of God metaphorically as His wife, spiritual adultery occurs when they leave their husband by worshiping idols."

The Reformation Study Bible Student Edition

Hosea and Gomer's Children

The names of Gomer's children are designed around a wordplay, which at the end of the chapter will be reversed. Jezreel was the only child which was Hosea's the other two children were from other men.

Jezreel (Hosea 1:3-5) had three layers of meaning:

- In Hebrew means "God will scatter."
- It's a place of historical slaughter and bloodshed.
- It is the place where Israel ultimately lost to the Assyrians and effectively ceased to exist forever.

No mercy: (Hosea 1:6-7)

Lo-ruhammah: Lo ("Not") + Ruhammah ("compassion/mercy") = No compassion/mercy.

Her name carried the prophecy that God would bring judgment upon Israel and he would not show them mercy or forgive their sins.

At the end of verse 7, we see where Israel had put their trust (in their own prowess) in the bow,



the sword, the horse, and the horseman. Because Israel has abandoned God and they put their trust in their own strength and power, they will be shown “no mercy” by God. And this is a root sin in Israel, which we’ll see later in the prophecy, they made military alliances with other nations and in so doing also accepted their gods in ancient times, military treaties meant also paying tribute to their gods. So, here is where a big part of Israel’s unfaithfulness showed itself, they didn’t trust in the Lord functionally, or practically. They still prayed to him and sacrificed and came to the synagogue on the Sabbath, but when it came to practically finding security they looked to other gods for security.

Not mine/not my people: (Hosea 1:8-9)

“Lo-ammi” = Lo (“not”) + Ammi (“mine”)

Lo-Ammi’s name came with it the prophecy of Israel’s destruction. They had abandoned God and now God has no choice but to abandon them according to the Mosaic covenant stipulations found in Deuteronomy and Exodus. Ref: Ex. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 26-17-19.

They will no longer be his people, and He will not be their God. And in 722, the ten tribes of the Northern kingdom were defeated and from that day until today ceased to exist. All that was left were a small minority who were left in the land and were known in the New Testament times as the Samaritans.

Covenants: How God deals with His People?

“A covenant is a formal arrangement between two or more parties in which each party promises to fulfill certain obligations to the other. Sometimes covenants are made between humans; for example, Jacob and Laban made a covenant in Genesis 31. At other times, covenants are made between God and His people. God made covenants with His people through Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Christ (in Gen. 9:1-17; 15; 17; Ex. 24; 2 Sam. 7:1-17; Luke 22:14-20). In these covenants, God promises to bless His people, and they promise to trust Him and to demonstrate that trust in a life of obedience. God graciously sets up these covenants and ensures that the promises He

makes in them will be fulfilled. While we must trust the Lord and show that trust by obedience, we do not merit or earn the covenant blessings. God works in His people to guarantee that they exercise the faith by which the blessings are received (see Eph. 2:8-10).” - *The Reformation Study Bible Student Edition*

God made “conditional” and “unconditional” covenants. Conditional covenants had certain stipulations attached to them, whereas unconditional covenants were guaranteed no matter what the human party did or didn’t do.

Unconditional covenants: These are one-sided; God would fulfill his promise no matter what Eve, Abraham, or David did or did not do.

- To Eve, God promised her seed would crush the head of satan (Gen 3:13).
- To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, your children will be as many as stars in the sky and sand in a desert (Gen 12:1-3; 17:1-8; 26:2-6; 28:10-15)
- To David, he promised an heir from him would have an eternal throne (2 Sam 7)

Conditional covenants: These require the people to do something in order to receive something.

- The covenant of circumcision with Abraham and his offspring (Gen 17:14) or else “you will be cut off from my people”
- The covenant God made with Adam and Eve was a conditional covenant (Gen 2:15-17). If they obeyed God’s Word, they would remain in the land under god’s blessing, only if they obeyed his Word if not they are out and under God’s curse.
- The covenant God made with Moses and the people in Deuteronomy and Exodus is also a conditional covenant. (Deut 28). Israel would receive God’s blessing and land only if they remained faithful and loyal to God, if they did not they would be removed from the Land and experience God’s curses/judgments. This is what happened between 722-586 BC with the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and the exile of the Southern Kingdom.



Finding the Gospel in Hosea 1

In Hosea 1:10-2:1 we see how the severe prophecies of judgment represented in the names of the three children are now dramatically reversed.

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." 11 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel. 2:1 Say to your brothers, "You are my people," and to your sisters, "You have received mercy." - Hosea 1:10-2:1

Not everything is lost! There is a reversal of fortunes, thank God!!! Here in Hosea's prophecy, we begin to see the seeds of the New Testament hope fulfilled in Christ.

Here in these 2 verses, God makes some promises:

- vs 10a: He will remember His covenant promises.
- vs 10b: He will make a new covenant.
- vs 11a: He will unite Israel under one King.
- vs 11b: He will lead them to a new Exodus.

In verse 10a, God reminds them of His covenant promises. The language in vs 10 should remind you of something: *"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered."*, God remembers His unconditional covenant promises to Abraham. Ref: Gen. 22:17; 32:12; 13:16; 15:5.

In verse 10b says, *"You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."* These are the covenant words in Deuteronomy, so this means God will make a new covenant with Israel. This begins to point us to Jesus, who came to make a new covenant and to call a people who are not his people to himself, to unite Israel and bring in the nations. Paul will cite Hosea 1:10 in Romans 9:25-26 when he speaks of a new covenant where even Gentiles would be called "God's People" in a New Covenant.

In verse 11a: *"And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head."* here God foresees a coming together of the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom under one king (God). This refers to the unconditional covenant promise made to David: that there will be a king from David's line who will rule for eternity. Ref: Matt. 1:23; 2:6,15).

In verse 11b, *"And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel."* Hosea predicts a new exodus, here we see a language loaded from the first Exodus, and *"they will go up from the land of Egypt"* (Exodus 13:17-22). So, God will bring a New Exodus, bringing them out of slavery and calling them his children, there will be another day of Jezreel (bloodshed, slaughter), but this one will bring freedom for the People of God. Another Pascal lamb would be slain, in the place of the firstborn; Jesus would be the lamb that would take away the sins of the world and lead God's people on a new Exodus.

The main lesson of Hosea is the intensely personal nature of sin. Through the study of this book, we may be more aware of the relational effect our sin has on our relationship with God.

The application of the Gospel:

Hosea and all the prophets will develop these above themes further but we already can see some very significant signs pointing us to Jesus.

The great message of Hosea Chapter 1 is this reversal of fortunes tied to the names of Hosea's children:

- Jezreel "I will scatter" becomes "I will gather together".
- Lo-ruhamah "unloved" becomes Ruhamah "Loved".
- Lo-Ammi "not mine" becomes Ammi "mine"



The message for us is that in Jesus Christ, through his life, death, and resurrection you who were not wanted are now wanted, beloved, and cherished in God's House. We were not his children but now we are called his children by his grace.

The beautiful and remarkable thing about the new covenant in Christ is that it is an unconditional covenant. God will do it all. We can do nothing to earn this love, to work for this love, to attain this love, or lose it. It is a free gift. Jesus comes to us who were not His own and says you are mine (1 John 3:1). He comes to those who feel unloved and says you are loved (Psalm 63:3; Isaiah 54:10; 1 John 4:7-21). He comes to those who are defined by their past, like Jezreel, and gives us a new name and new future (2 Corinthians 5:17; Genesis 17:5; 1 Peter 1:3). God takes in unwanted children and turns them into his own, precious, beloved children and He will lavish His love upon them (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Questions for application:

1. The prophet's "sign-acts" are often very jolting to disturb apathy. Consider areas in your life where you need to be jolted.
2. Describe some of the feelings Hosea would experience in such a family to such a wife.
3. Consider how God feels the same about us except without sin or evil, just pure heartache, pure jealousy, and pure anger.
4. Hosea chooses to love Gomer and her children and remain faithful and loyal to her, taking her children as his own. What does that tell us about God?
5. God's mercy reverses our trajectory. Discuss all the ways this can happen in our lives as Christians (marriages, jobs, relationships, addictions, past wounds, etc)
6. Meditate and reflect on being a child of the living God, who has made an unconditional covenant with us. How

does this security change how we fight sin in our life?

7. Do you know and feel loved by your Heavenly Father?

Other resources

Sign-acts:

<http://bit.ly/3Ni0WgY>

<https://shorturl.at/hS039>

Covenants:

<https://rb.gy/kqlvf>

Hosea:

<https://rb.gy/hpzq7>

<https://rb.gy/vscwg>

