

Living with Gomer

By Paul R. Blake

Introduction:

A. Tribute money from subject nations was pouring into the treasury at the capital city of Samaria, and the people of Israel were enjoying a period of unprecedented prosperity. As is often the case, with prosperity came moral and spiritual degeneration. Materialism captured the hearts of the people and sin ran rampant. The list reads like twentieth-century America: swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery, drunkenness, perversion, perjury, deceit, and oppression. But the thing that grieved the heart of God more than anything else was the sin of idolatry (Hos. 4:12, 13, 13:2). The golden calves set up by Jeroboam I about 150 years earlier had opened the floodgates to every evil expression of Canaanite idolatry, including drunkenness, religious prostitution and human sacrifice.

Since the Lord viewed Israel as His wife, He viewed her worship of other gods as spiritual adultery. The Old Testament speaks frequently of Israel whoring after or playing the harlot with other gods (Deut. 31:16; Judges 2:17). Jehovah had told Israel from the beginning that he would not share her with others. "You shall have no other gods before Me" was the first of his ten great commandments (Ex. 20:3). But she had persistently ignored His command, and by the days of Jeroboam II the situation was intolerable.

I. THE PROPHET HOSEA

- A. About the time that Amos was prophesying to the northern kingdom of Israel, another prophet came on to the scene, Hosea
 - 1. His name means "salvation" (Joshua and Jesus are derived from the same word)
 - 2. While the audience was the same, there were some differences...
 - a. Amos was from Judah (Tekoa); Hosea from Israel
 - 3. His father was named Beeri (Hosea 1:1), but nothing more is known of his ancestors
 - 4. Some think he may have been a priest, in view of his high regard for the duties and responsibilities of the priesthood
- B. The date
 - 1. Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; Jeroboam II also reigned during this time in Israel - Hosea 1:1
 - 2. Most place the time of his work at 750-725 B.C.
 - 3. Hosea was possibly a young man when Amos was almost through with his ministry; Hosea prophesied during the course of sixty-six years
 - 4. His work in relation to other prophets during this period of time:
 - a. Amos and Hosea prophesied to Israel
 - b. Isaiah and Micah were prophesying in Judah
- C. Background
 - 1. 2Kings 14-17; 2Chron. 26-29
 - 2. The northern kingdom of Israel was on its last legs
 - a. Sin was even more rampant than seen in the book of Amos

- b. Religious, moral, and political corruption was universal
- 3. One word sums the condition of the nation of Israel: harlotry (whoredom, KJV), used thirteen times throughout the book

D. Understanding the book

1. An analogy is made between Hosea's experience with Gomer, and the Lord's experience with Israel
2. Gomer seemed to relish using her beauty and charm to seduce other men. She bore a son, a daughter, then another son, and it is possible the second two may not have been Hosea's. His heart was heavy with the pain of rejection as his wife went in to other men. There was also the embarrassment that everyone knew that Gomer chose the affection of strangers over that of her husband. While Hosea had times of anger toward Gomer, through all the years he never stopped loving her.
3. As the years slipped away, so did Gomer's beauty. As fewer men came, she began selling her treasures to buy bread and wine. Finally none came to Gomer, and she borrowed money to buy food. Within the year, the lender prepared to sell Gomer as a slave to recover his loan.
4. Fifteen shekels was the price of Gomer, 6 oz. of silver at \$29 per oz. comes to \$174 or two months wages. A homer of barley about eight bushels, the homer and half Hosea paid was about twelve bushels. A pint of barley was a day's ration for a grown man. 75 pints in a bushel times 12 bushels would feed a man for 2 ½ years.

I. HOSEA'S FAMILY AS AN ANALOGY FOR ISRAEL (Hosea 1:1 - 3:5)

A. Israel's rejection symbolized by his family - Hosea 1:2-9

1. Hosea commanded to marry "a wife of harlotry" Gomer - Hosea 1:2-3
2. Gomer bears three children - Hosea 1:4-9
 - a. The first son is named "Jezreel" which means "God scatters"; his name prefigured God's judgment on the ruling house of Israel - Hosea 1:4-5
 - b. The daughter is named "Lo-Ruhamah" which means "no mercy"; her name describes God's attitude toward Israel - Hosea 1:6-7
 - 1) Some suggest that the daughter and son to follow were not Hosea's; note it does not say she bore "him" (Hosea) a daughter, as before
 - 2) Gomer had become a harlot by this time - Hosea 2:4
 - c. The second son is named "Lo-Ammi"; his name means "not my people"; thus God declares his rejection of Israel - Hosea 1:8-9

B. Israel's restoration foretold - Hosea 1:10 - 2:1

1. Though cast off, God promises a restoration
2. There might be a reference to the restoration from Assyrian and Babylonian captivity
3. However, both Paul and Peter apply this promise to believing Jews and Gentiles in the church - Rom. 9:25-26; 1Peter 2:10

C. Israel's unfaithfulness - Hosea 2:2-13

1. Condemnation for her sinful conduct - Hosea 2:2-5
2. God's rage for Israel's unfaithfulness in terms of an enraged husband who learns not only of wife's adultery, but that the children are not his

3. Punishment for her sinful conduct - Hosea 2:6-13
 - a. God will destroy what Israel has used to commit spiritual harlotry
4. Israel's sin was foremost her idolatry; God viewed such idolatry as a form of harlotry

II. GOD COMMANDS HOSEA TO LOVE GOMER AGAIN

- A. Hosea 3:1 - God directs Hosea to go back to his wife, even though she is committing adultery. It isn't in the past; it is in the present.
- B. Why did God command Hosea to go back to his still-unfaithful wife? Not only for the sake of Hosea and his wife Gomer, but also so that they would become a living lesson of the Lord's relationship with His people. They were still steeped in spiritual adultery, yet the Lord still loved them.
 1. This shows us that though Deuteronomy 24:1 and Matthew 19:7-8 permit divorce when adultery breaks the marriage union, it by no means commands divorce.
 2. Hosea actually paid for her, brought her home, and eventually restored her to her position as his wife.
- C. How many times should a husband or wife forgive? Some contend, "If I keep forgiving I simply affirm him in his pattern of sin." Or "If I keep forgiving, she'll think she can get away with anything she wants." Others say, "If I keep forgiving, it's like putting my seal of approval on his behavior."
 1. Matt. 18:21-22 - Christ was simply saying that there is no end to forgiveness.
 2. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean that we must suffer in silence. The need for open and honest communication would demand that we share what we think and how we feel, what the wrong has done to us, and how our mates can help us get over it.
 - a. God tells us how much our sin grieves Him.
 - b. Gomer certainly knew her affairs were tearing at Hosea's heart.
 3. Neither does forgiveness necessarily mean we cannot take positive steps to guard against the sin recurring. It might mean a change in our life-style or relocation.
 4. Forgiveness does mean, however, that we will pay for the other person's offenses. We will refuse to retaliate in any way to make the guilty person pay. We will absolve him of all guilt.
 - a. That is the lesson of Gomer, the lesson of forgiveness.
 - b. God's people kept going back to sin - Hosea 6:4, 11:1, 8; 14:1
- D. This also shows us an important principle about love: Hosea is directed to love, even when it must have been hard to love.
 1. We are filled with many romantic illusions about love, and one of these illusions is that love has very little to do with our will - we are just "captured" by love and follow whatever course it leads. But in principle, the Scriptures show us another way: That love is largely a matter of the will, and when we direct ourselves to love someone God tells us we must love, it can and will happen. When we think of the greatness of God's love and compassion towards us, it should make us much more loving, compassionate, and forgiving towards others.