

An Agonizing Allegory

Chapter 1

Audio Lesson: Old Testament number 74



Objective: To understand the message of the prophet Hosea and how he is an example of God's love for Israel.



Come, let us return to the LORD; ... He will set us on our feet again, to live in His kindness. Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know Him, and He will respond to us as surely as the coming of dawn or the rain of early spring.

—Hosea 6:1-3

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

—Psalm 9:9-10

We now begin studying the twelve minor prophets of the Old Testament, called minor because their books are shorter. It is helpful to understand when each prophet lived and preached. Biblical Hebrew history can be divided into seven major periods: 1) Kingdom, 2) Divided Kingdom, 3) Assyrian conquest of Northern Kingdom, 4) Extinction of Northern Kingdom, 5) Babylonian captivity of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, 6) Persian conquest of Babylon and 7) Judah returns from captivity.

Hosea was commissioned by God to be the prophet of the love of God to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel during the divided kingdom. The people of Israel had turned away from God and were worshipping idols, and God considers this to be spiritual adultery. God called Hosea to marry a prostitute who, after bearing children, would return to her life of adultery. Hosea was led to love her unconditionally as a living illustration of God's love and acceptance for his people.

As a consequence of their spiritual unfaithfulness, worshipping other gods and idols, Israel would be taken into captivity. Though these ten tribes would never become a nation again, Hosea prophesied their spiritual return to God one day. As a faithful husband who loves his wife, God would respond to them with mercy and forgive their sins, just as he does with us when we repent of our sins.



1. True or false? The last 12 prophetic books of the Old Testament are called “minor prophets” because they are not as important as other books.
2. True or false? Hosea understood exactly why God told him to marry a prostitute.
3. True or false? Unlike most prophets, Hosea ministered to the northern kingdom of Israel.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. What was Hosea’s primary message about?
 - a. The destruction of Assyria
 - b. The coming judgment of God
 - c. The love of God
 - d. The future Messiah
5. When did Hosea preach?
 - a. Before Israel’s captivity by Assyria
 - b. After Israel’s captivity by Assyria
 - c. After Judah’s captivity by Babylon
 - d. During the reign of David
6. In what way were Israel’s people like an adulterous wife?
 - a. They did not believe in marriage.
 - b. They were unfaithful to God by worshiping idols.
 - c. They were unfaithful to their king by serving other countries.
 - d. They were unloved by God.
7. How many other prophets preached of God’s unfailing love?
 - a. None. Hosea was the only one.
 - b. One—only Jeremiah.
 - c. Two or three.
 - d. Most of them.

8. How does the Bible describe Hosea's love for Gomer?
- a. He loved her unfailingly, like God loves his people.
 - b. He only loved her when she was faithful to him.
 - c. He never really loved her because he knew she would betray him.
 - d. He only loved her after she came back to him.
9. Who did Hosea blame for Israel's spiritual problems?
- a. God
 - b. Himself
 - c. The king
 - d. The priests
10. What did Hosea say about Israel's future?
- a. They would never want to return to the Lord again.
 - b. God would never accept them again.
 - c. They would one day be spiritually restored.
 - d. They would be restored immediately.
11. What did God want from Israel's people?
- a. Their sacrifices
 - b. Their offerings
 - c. Their work
 - d. Their love



Have you ever felt that you are not good enough for God's love? How does Hosea's message encourage you? In what ways has God shown you his love?



Thank God for his unfailing love. Ask him to help you love Him faithfully and to love other people with the love He has shown you.



Going Deeper

1. An allegory is a story that may be true or fiction, in which the people, places and things have a deeper meaning. Describe how God has allowed you to experience a personal agonizing allegory so that you, like Hosea, could speak in the first-person a message God has given you to bless and edify His people. _____

2. How many books do you have in your library about the love of God? Since the book of Hosea is a book about the love of God, what would be a profile of the love of God as preached by Hosea? _____

3. In what ways are the first three verses of the sixth chapter of the book of Hosea an eloquent expression of the love of God? _____

4. What are several ways that Hosea demonstrated the spiritual adultery of the people? _____

5. Try reading the book of Hosea in the Living Bible. When you read the hard-hitting sermons of this great prophet in a translation you can more easily understand, which is your favorite of all his sermons? _____

6. Each prophet addresses an obstacle that is blocking the work of God, until that obstacle is removed and the work of God is on track again. What obstacle that was blocking the work of God was addressed by the Prophet Hosea? _____

7. What did the book of Hosea mean to you personally? _____
