

WAY OF LIFE
COMMENTARY
SERIES



MINOR PROPHETS
DAVID W. CLOUD

Minor Prophets
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The Design of the Way of Life Commentary Series

The *Way of Life Commentary Series* is designed in a unique format that can be used as commentaries (covering most verses) as well as teaching courses. We believe that preachers will find it easy to use the volumes for expository preaching. The commentaries are thorough, serious, broad, insightful, and practical, with an emphasis on application to the Christian life and ministry. Context is honored; words are defined; metaphors are explained; difficulties are tackled. The commentaries are packed with historical backgrounds and archaeological studies based on the author's personal research, which is reflected in books such as *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* and *Jews in Fighter Jets*.

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Most of these courses include review questions. A lot of time and effort has gone into the creation of these, which are designed to draw the student's attention to the most important points of the lessons and to help him remember these points after the course is finished.

If you take the courses by self-study, don't skip over the review questions. Find someone who will test you by presenting a selection of the questions to you. This is a very important part of the learning process.

For the classroom setting, the teacher can use our review questions (plus his own, of course) to create appropriate sectional and final tests at the appropriate learning level.

Introduction to the Minor Prophets

For an introduction to the prophets, see the following Way of Life *Advanced Bible Studies Series* course:

Understanding Bible Prophecy. This extensive and practical course enables the student to understand and enjoy Bible prophecy. It deals with the interpretation of prophecy, dispensationalism, the covenants, the kingdom of God, the nations in prophecy, and Messianic prophecy. The 2017 and 2018 editions of *Understanding Bible Prophecy* represent a major reconstruction of the course based on extensive new study and research over the past few years, including research in Israel itself. We have added memory verses for most of the sections. The section on “Interpretation of Prophecy” has been extensively reworked and enlarged. The section on the Covenants has been entirely reworked and greatly enlarged. The section on “Messianic Prophecies” has been greatly enlarged. The old sections on “The Kingdom of God” and “A Prophetic Overview of the Future” have been reworked and greatly expanded under the title of “Great Prophetic Events of the Future.” In this section we cover the Valley of Dry Bones, the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Antichrist, the Conversion of Israel, the Battle of Armageddon, the Resurrections and Judgments, Christ’s Kingdom, and the New Jerusalem. For 2018, there are the following new sections: The ministry of the prophets, the prophets from Adam to Malachi, the division of the writing prophets, the divine inspiration of the prophets, how God spoke to the prophets, the repetition of the prophets, the school of the prophets, the chronological order of the prophets, and the prophetic writings as legal documents. 200 pages.

Using This Book as a Training Course

This book on the Minor Prophets is intended as a commentary that covers nearly every verse, but it can be used as a training course, as well.

For a course, we suggest the following: First go through the “Introduction to the Minor Prophets,” then use the introduction to each prophet plus some of the highlights from the commentary. In the introductions, we have given suggestions for the highlights.

Miscellaneous

1. There are 12 Minor Prophets:

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

2. Why are they called Minor Prophets?

They are not called the “minor prophets” because they are of lesser importance than the “major prophets” of Isaiah Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. Each of the minor prophetic books is a powerful and important divine revelation.

They are called “minor” because they are generally shorter in length. (The exceptions are Hosea and Zechariah which have more chapters than Daniel.)

They are called “minor” because the prophecies encompass a smaller view than the major prophets. The major prophets give

the broad overview of prophetic events and themes, whereas each minor prophet focuses on one or more of these events and themes to enlarge and amplify it.

3. In the old Hebrew Bible, the Minor Prophets were grouped together as a single book under the title of “The Twelve” and were usually written on one scroll. The first extant mention of “The Twelve” is found in the writings of Jesus ben Sirach, dating to about 190 BC. The oldest extant portions are among the Dead Sea Scrolls and date to about 150-200 BC.

4. In the Greek Bible (the Septuagint), the Minor Prophets appear in the following order: Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The Chronological Order of the Minor Prophets

The Minor Prophets were written during the time dating from Israel’s divided kingdom to the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian Captivity.

The exact date of the prophets cannot be known with certainty in every case, but the following is according to James Ussher’s chronology:

1. Minor Prophets that ministered before the exile to Babylon

- Obadiah (887 BC) (ministered to the northern tribes)
- Jonah (862 BC) (preached to Nineveh)
- Joel (date unknown)
- Amos (787 BC) (ministered to the northern tribes)
- Hosea (785-725 BC) (ministered to the northern tribes)
- Micah (750-710 BC) (ministered to Judah)
- Nahum (713 BC) (prophesied about Nineveh)
- Zephaniah (630 BC) (ministered to Judah)
- Habakkuk (626 BC) (ministered to Judah)

2. Minor Prophets that ministered after the exile to Babylon

- Haggai (520 BC)
- Zechariah (520-518 BC)
- Malachi (397 BC)

The Historical Background of the Minor Prophets

As we have seen, most of the Minor Prophets ministered during the period of the divided kingdom. The first king of Israel was Saul, followed by David and Solomon. The kingdom was divided in the days of Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

Two tribes followed Rehoboam: Judah and Benjamin. This kingdom is called *Judah* or the *southern kingdom*.

The other 10 tribes followed Jeroboam and broke away from the Davidic throne. The northern ten tribes are usually called *Israel* after this.

The northern kingdom established an idolatrous system of worship centered in Bethel and Dan (1 Ki. 12:25-33). This is why the northern kingdom is often called *Ephraim* in prophecy, because Ephraim was at the heart of the rebellious northern tribes (Isa. 11:13; Hos. 4:17; 5:3). Samaria, which was in Ephraim, became the capital of the northern kingdom and was another center of idolatry (1 Ki. 16:24, 29, 32; Ho. 8:5).

The Bible student who is preparing to study the prophets should begin by reading 1 Kings - 2 Chronicles to refresh his memory about the historical background. The best way to get this essential historical information into one's mind and heart is to outline it personally by listing the kings and the highlights of each reign.

For a summary of Israel's kings, we recommend *Old Testament History and Geography*, which is available from Way of Life Literature. This study provides a quick reference for the background of the prophets. It has many relevant facts such as which prophets were ministering during the various periods of Israel's history. It focuses on the kings of Judah, but the major events of northern Israel are also included. Major facts from both Kings and Chronicles are included.

For background research, we also recommend *Bible Times & Ancient Kingdoms: Treasures from Archaeology* from Way of Life Literature. This is a package consisting of a book and a series of PowerPoint presentations which are a graphical edition

of the book. The PowerPoints are packed with high quality color photos, drawings, historic recreations, and video clips. *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* is a course on Bible geography, Bible culture, and Bible history and has a two-fold objective: to present apologetic evidence for the Bible and to give background material to help the student better understand the setting of Bible history. We cover this fascinating history from Genesis to the New Testament, dealing with the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10, the Tower of Babel, Ur of the Chaldees, Egypt, Baal worship, the Philistines, the Canaanites, David's palace, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Edom, the Nabateans, and the Spice Route, Ahab and Jezebel, the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Assyrian Empire, Hezekiah and his times, Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, Herod the Great and his temple, Rome and Her Rule over Israel, Christ's ministry on the Sea of Galilee, From Jericho to Jerusalem, Christ's Passion Week, and Rome's Destruction of Jerusalem. Many of the archaeological discoveries from the past 200 years, which we relate in the course, are so fascinating and improbable that they read like a novel. It is easy to see God's hand in this field, in spite of its prevailing skepticism. The course also deals with Bible culture, such as weights and measures, plant and animal life, Caesar's coin, the widow's mite, ancient scrolls and seals, phylacteries, synagogues, false messiahs, judgment in the gate, ancient shipping and commerce, cosmetics, fine linen, the widow's mite, the pomegranate, mustard seed, idolatry, divination, tombs, the operation of ancient lamps, ancient war methods, millstones, pottery wheels, and olive presses. The course begins with an overview of Israel's geography and a timeline of Bible history to give the student a framework for better understanding the material. Each section includes maps to help the student place the events in their proper location. The course is packed with important but little-known facts that illuminate Bible history and culture. The preparation for the book is extensive, the culmination of 40 years of Bible study, teaching, and research trips. In this context the author built a large personal library and collected information from major archaeological museums and locations in North America, England, Europe, Greece,

Turkey, Jordan, and Israel. We guarantee that the student who completes the course will read the Bible with new eyes and fresh enthusiasm. 572-page book + DVD containing 50 PowerPoint presentations packed with about 4,200 high quality color photos, drawings, historic recreations, and video clips.

Major Themes of the Minor Prophets

Some of the major themes of the Minor Prophets are as follows:

1. The revelation of God

The chief purpose of the Bible is to reveal God's heart and character. If we read the Bible without seeing God, we are missing the main thing.

In the Minor Prophets, we see God's holiness and righteousness and terrible justice. The day of the Lord is called "a destruction from the Almighty" (Joe. 1:15), "great and very terrible" (Joe. 2:11), "the LORD's sacrifice" (Zep. 1:8), "the LORD's anger" (Zep. 2:3).

In the Minor Prophets, we see His greatness as the Lord over all, the King of kings, the beginning and the end. For example, see Nahum 1:3-7.

In the Minor Prophets, we see His amazing love and kindness and longsuffering. G. Campbell Morgan observed, "When I decided to take up these minor prophets, I expected to study a very magnificent section of prophecy in which I should hear stern, hard, magnificent Hebrew prophets thundering against sin. I found this even more than I had expected, but the supreme thing in every one of their prophecies is that the God with whom these men were intimate was known by them to be a God of tender love, of infinite compassion, angry because He loves, dealing in wrath upon the basis of His love, and proceeding through judgment to the ultimate purpose of His heart. It is the heartbeat of God that throbs through these passages."

In the Minor Prophets, we see God's zeal and passion.

God is passionate in His love. We have Hosea's love for the harlot Gomer as a picture of God's great love for Israel (Ho. 1:2-3; 3:1-3). We have the very opening words of Malachi, "I have loved you, saith the LORD" (Mal. 1:2).

God is passionate in His judgment. God's fierce judgment is described in terms of a burning oven. This is a metaphor for all of the terrible judgments of the Tribulation and beyond to the eternal lake of fire, which is the destiny of every unsaved person.

God is passionate in His jealousy. He has "very great jealousy" for Jerusalem (Zec. 1:14-17).

God is passionate in His preaching. God beseeches, pleads, threatens. It's all done with great passion. For example, through the prophet Amos God says, "O children of Israel." God's preachers should emulate this. They are to "cry" out (Zec. 1:14, 17). There should be passion, enthusiasm, energy, zeal in preaching. It should not consist merely of talking. The subjects are too great, too consequential for that. The preacher must feel the power of the message and express it with pathos.

2. The call of Israel to repentance

The Minor Prophets contain great studies on repentance. See Ho. 10:12; 12:6; 14:1-3; Joe. 1:13-14; 2:12-17; Am. 4:6-13; 5:4-15; Jon. 3:5-9; Zep. 2:1-2; Hag. 1:3-11; Zechariah 1:2-6; 2:1-6; 12:9-14; Mal. 2:1-3; 3:7.

3. The day of the Lord

The day of the Lord's judgment is described in great detail. See Joel 1:15 - 2:11, 28-32; Amo. 5:16-20; Ob. 1:15-16; Hab. 3:3-15; Zep. 1:2-18; 2:4-15; 3:1-8; Hag. 2:6, 20-22; Zec. 5:1-4; 14:1-15; Mal. 4.

The Battle of Armageddon is described in Joe. 3:2-16; Zep. 3:8; Zec. 12:1-9; 14:1-7, 12-15.

4. Encouragement of believers

See Zep. 2:3; 3:8; Hag. 1:12 - 2:5; Zec. 4:10; 8:9-15; Mal. 3:16-18.

5. The Messiah

In the Minor Prophets we learn many things about the Messiah, who is *the* major theme of Hebrew prophecy. The major purpose of the Bible is to reveal God to the creation, and Christ is the greatest revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-3).

- He is the Branch (Zec. 3:8).
- His birthplace is lowly Bethlehem, but He has eternal pre-existence (Mic. 5:2).
- He will come as a lowly one, riding upon an ass (Zec. 9:9).
- He will be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zec. 11:12-13).
- He will be smitten (Zec. 13:7).
- He is the messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1-5).
- He will arrive on the Mount of Olives to save Israel (Zec. 14:3-5).
- He will rule Israel as a king and priest (Mic. 5:2; Zec. 6:13).
- He will feed Israel in the strength and majesty of the Lord (Mic. 5:4).
- He will rule to the ends of the earth (Mic. 5:4; Zec. 9:10); by comparing this with Zec. 14:9, we see that the Messiah is the LORD Jehovah.
- He will deliver Israel from her enemies (Mic. 5:5-6); “the Assyrian” refers to the Antichrist.
- He will build the temple and it will be glorious (Hag. 2:7-9; Zec. 6:12-13).
- He will speak peace to the nations (Zec. 9:10).
- He is the desire of nations (Hag. 2:6-7).
- He is the Sun of righteousness who will come with healing (Mal. 4:2).

6. The judgment of Israel

God’s judgment on Israel for her rebellion is described in great detail in the Minor Prophets.

- Israel would be destroyed by Assyria (Ho. 5:14; Mic. 7:13).
- Israel would go into captivity beyond Damascus (Am. 5:27).
- Samaria would be desolate (Ho. 13:16).
- The land of Israel would be desolate (Mic. 7:13).
- Judah would be destroyed by Babylon (Mic. 4:10; Hab. 1:5-11).
- The land will be dried up (Ho. 13:15).

- Jerusalem would be plowed as a field (Mic. 3:12).
- Israel will be wanderers among the nations (Ho. 8:8; 9:17).
- Israel will be sifted but not destroyed (Am. 9:8-10).
- The people of Israel would be a byword and hissing (Mic. 6:16).
- Israel will abide many days without a king and a sacrifice (Ho. 3:4).
- Many nations will be gathered against Jerusalem (Mic. 4:11).

7. The restoration of Israel

The Minor Prophets are emphatic about the fact that God is not finished with Israel. She will be judged severely for her sin and rebellion, but she will be converted and restored and glorified.

This is described in a nutshell in Hosea 3:4-5 - "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without* teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days."

See also Ho. 2:14-17; Amo. 9:11-15; Ob. 1:17-21; Zep. 3:10.

8. The Messianic kingdom

The Messianic kingdom is described in great detail in the Minor Prophets. It is obvious that God wants His people to meditate on these things. Consider some of these:

- Israel will be regathered and restored to her land and will build the waste cities (Am. 9:14-15; Mic. 4:6-8; Zep. 3:19-20).
- Israel will repent of her rejection of Christ (Zec. 12:10-14).
- Israel's sins will be forgiven (Zec. 13:1; Mic. 7:19-20).
- The rebels will be cut off (Zep. 3:11-12).
- Israel will defeat her enemies (Ob. 1:17-21; Mic. 7:15-17).
- God will rejoice over Israel (Zep. 3:17).
- Israel will be the chief nation on earth and will be the teacher of the nations (Mic. 4:1-2; Zep. 3:19-20; Zec. 8:22-23; 9:10; 14:16).
- There will be a pure global language (Zep. 3:9).

- Israel will prophesy to the nations (Joe. 2:28-29).
- There will be great joy (Zep. 3:14).
- The throne of David will be re-established (Am. 9:11).
- God will dwell in Jerusalem and it will be holy (Joe. 3:17; Zec. 14:20-21).
- The Lord will be the God and king over the whole earth (Zec. 14:9; Mal. 1:11).
- The topography of Israel will be changed (Zec. 14:10-11).
- The Millennial Temple will be built (Hag. 2:7-9).
- Israel will judge the nations (Mic. 4:3).
- Those who do not obey God will be punished (Zec. 14:17-19).
- Jerusalem will dwell in safety (Zec. 14:11).
- The nations will dwell in peace (Mic. 4:3).
- Israel will be united and will have one head (Ho. 1:11).
- The children of Israel will be multiplied like the sand of the sea (Ho. 1:10).
- Israel will be betrothed to God in righteousness and judgment and lovingkindness and mercy (Ho. 2:16-20).
- God will dwell in the midst of Israel (Zec. 2:10).
- God will glorify Jerusalem with His presence and it will be called a city of truth (Zec. 8:3-5).
- Israel will dwell in safety and peace (Ho. 2:18).
- Israel will be blessed with the latter and former rains (Ho. 6:3).
- Israel will be beautified (Ho. 14:5-7).
- Israel will prosper (Joe. 2:22-27; 3:18; Am. 9:13; Zec. 8:11-15; 9:17).

Prophecy as Evidence

Prophecy is sure evidence that the Bible is God's Word, and God Himself uses it as such. Through the prophet Isaiah, God addresses the nations and challenges them to show the future to prove that their gods are true (Isa. 41:22-23; 44:6-7; 45:21-22; 46:9-10). Bible prophecy is intended to be an apologetic to prove the divine inspiration of Scripture.

Fulfilled prophecy proves the divine origin of the Bible to unbelievers and increases the faith of believers.

We observe that to be effective as evidence, prophecy must be fulfilled and interpreted by a “normal-literal” method.

SAMPLE

Hosea

Introduction

Hosea is a prophecy of God's judgment upon the northern tribes of Israel (Ho. 1-13) and the ultimate restoration of Israel (Ho. 14).

The prophecy was given to Hosea in the days of the Judean kings Uzziah (767-740), Jotham (740-732), Ahaz (732-716), and Hezekiah (716-687), and in the days of Jeroboam II of Israel (782-753).

Since Jeroboam II is mentioned as the king of Israel and Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea are *not* mentioned, it appears that the bulk of Hosea's prophecies were given during Jeroboam's reign. Jeroboam died 32 years before the destruction of Samaria by Assyria in 721.

Hosea's ministry ended during the reign of Hezekiah, for it was in the sixth year of Hezekiah that Samaria was destroyed by the Assyrians and the northern kingdom of Israel was taken captive (2 Ki. 18:9-12).

The fact that Hosea's prophecies were given over a long period means that the prophecy as we have it in the book of Hosea was actually a series of shorter prophecies that were combined into one prophecy for the sake of the Scripture canon.

Isaiah also prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1:1), but Isaiah's messages were directed to Judah.

When Hosea prophesied, Israel was at the peak of her prosperity and power. Her silver and gold were multiplied and her crops were abundant (Ho. 2:8). Her army was mighty (Ho. 10:13). Jeroboam had recovered territory extending from the entering of Hamath in Syria, about 150 miles north of the Sea of Galilee and 45 miles north of Damascus, to the sea of the plain (Hebrew "arabah"), meaning the lower Jordan Valley north of

the Dead Sea (2 Ki. 14:25-27). Israel's cities were strongly fortified and filled with splendid palaces (Ho. 8:14). Her temples were adorned with silver and gold and rare wood and expensive cut stones. Assyria was not yet a mighty power, though Assyria was named by Hosea as the conqueror of Israel (Ho. 7:11; 9:3). From a human standpoint, Hosea's prophecies would have seemed highly unlikely if not impossible. It was a simple thing for the false prophets to renounce his warnings and comfort the people with words of continuing prosperity.

Kings of Judah	Kings of Israel
1050 Saul	-
1010 David	-
970 Solomon	-
931 Rehoboam	Jeroboam (931-910)
913 Abijah	Nadab (910-909) Baasha (909-886)
911 Asa	-
870 Jehoshaphat	Zimri (885) Omri (885-874)
848 Jehoram	Ahab (874-853) Ahaziah (853-852) Jehoram (852-841)
841 Ahaziah	Jehu (841-814)
841 Athaliah	-
835 Joash	-
796 Amaziah	Jehoahaz (814-798), Jehoash (798-782)
767 Azariah (Uzziah)	Jeroboam II (782-753) Zechariah (753-752)
740 Jotham	Shallum (752) Menahem (752-742), Pekahiah (742-740) Pekah (740-732)
732 Ahaz	Hoshea (732-721)
716 Hezekiah	Samaria destroyed by Assyria (721)
687 Manasseh	-
642 Amon	-
640 Josiah	-
609 Jehoiakim	-
608 Jehoahaz	-
597 Johoiachin (Jeconiah)	-
597 Zedekiah	-
586 Destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon (9th Av)	

The Theme of Hosea

There are four great themes, as follows:

1. God's love for Israel

God's love is particularly seen in the harlot Gomer (Ho. 1:2-3; 3:1-3). Hosea signifies God, and Gomer signifies Israel. "Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine" (Ho. 3:1). This is one of the most powerful revelations of God's love in Scripture. It signifies God's love for apostate Israel. It signifies God's love for fallen mankind in general. It signifies God's love for the Gentiles who are saved in this age. It explains what happened on Calvary when the Son of God suffered for man's sins. It was an act of amazing love. See John 3:16. It was an act of united love on the part of the Triune God (1 Jo. 4:14).

Throughout the prophecy of Hosea, Israel's sin is characterized as adultery. Israel has "committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD" (Ho. 1:2). The words "adultery" and "whoredom" appear 19 times. This instructs us about the heart of God. He made man to love Him, not merely to obey and serve Him. This is repeated five times in Scripture, beginning in Deuteronomy 6:5, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." See also De. 11:1; Mt. 22:37; Mr. 12:30; Lu. 10:27. Christ taught that "this is the first and great commandment" (Mt. 22:38). For man to turn from God and to love the creation instead of the Creator, to love anything above the Creator, to worship anything other than one true and living God, is spiritual adultery, and it hurts the heart of God as a wife's adultery hurts a husband or a husband's adultery hurts a wife.

Throughout Hosea we see God's pain in the most dramatic way.

- They have not known the Lord (Ho. 5:4).
- They have dealt treacherously against the Lord (Ho. 5:7; 6:7).
- There is none among them that calleth unto me (Ho. 7:7).
- They do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him (Ho. 7:10).

- They have fled from me (Ho. 7:13).
- They have transgressed against me (Ho. 7:13).
- Though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me (Ho. 7:13).
- They have not cried unto me with their heart (Ho. 7:14).
- They rebel against me (Ho. 7:14).
- They imagine mischief against me (Ho. 7:15).
- Israel hath forgotten his Maker (Ho. 8:14).
- My people are bent to backsliding from me (Ho. 11:7).
- They have forgotten me (Ho. 13:6).

2. God's call of repentance

Throughout the prophets there is the theme of repentance. "Therefore turn thou to thy God..." (Ho. 12:6). "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God..." (Ho. 14:1-2).

Israel could have repented at God's reproof, but she did not.

For studies on repentance, see Ho. 5:4; 7:10.

3. God's judgment

Though God loves Israel greatly and calls her to repentance, He will not hesitate to judge her for her sin and impenitence. This is seen in the names of Gomer's children: Jezreel, Loruhamah, and Loammi (Ho. 1:3-9).

Jezreel means "God will sow" and it signified the overthrow of the northern kingdom (Ho. 1:4).

Loruhamah means "not pitied" and signified the removal of God's mercy upon Israel (Ho. 1:6). For God to say, "I will no more have mercy," is a frightful thing. This is the judgment upon all who reject God's call to repentance and faith in Christ. There is no other way of salvation, and there is no second chance of salvation after death. The words, "I will no more have mercy," can be written over the gate of hell.

Loammi means "not my people," signifying God's temporary rejection of Israel as His people (Ho. 1:9).

The judgment is summarized in Hosea 9:17. "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations."

4. God's restoration of Israel

This theme is scattered throughout the prophecy, beginning in the first chapter (Ho. 1:10-11). See also Ho. 2:14-23; 3:5; 5:15; 6:1-3; 14:1-9.

The prophecies of restoration appear here and there as flashes of lightning in the midst of a dark storm so that we can momentarily see the blessing that lies in the future even in the midst of the trouble of this present time.

The foundation of God's restoration of Israel is Christ's atonement on Calvary (Ho. 13:14). Israel broke God's holy law and must be punished with everlasting punishment, but God Himself took the punishment.

Hosea is a message for our day. The call to repentance is being preached across the world (Ac. 17:30), and men are being warned of judgment to come, but as in Hosea's day, most men are following their own counsels instead of heeding God's Word (Ho. 11:6).

Outline

Hosea consists of a series of prophecies, each of which ends with the restoration of Israel to the place of God's favor.

Hosea 1:1-11 (restoration 1:10-11)

Hosea 2:1-23 (restoration 2:14-23)

Hosea 3:1-5 (restoration 3:5)

Hosea 4:1 - 6:3 (restoration 5:15 - 6:3)

Hosea 6:4-11 (restoration 6:11)

Hosea 7:1 -10:12 (restoration 10:12)

Hosea 10:13 - 11:12 (restoration 11:8-12)

Hosea 12:1-9 (restoration 12:9)

Hosea 12:10- 14:9 (restoration 14:1-9)

Hosea 1

Hosea 1:2

Gomer was a “wife of whoredoms” (Ho. 1:2). This means she was given to adultery. That was her chief characteristic. “Just as ‘a man of sorrows’ (Isa. 53:3) reveals that the Lord’s whole life and ministry were overshadowed by sorrow, so ‘a wife of whoredoms’ refers to a woman who is repeatedly guilty of sexual immorality” (Phillips).

Hosea 1:4

Jezreel is where Jehu killed Ahab and his offspring (2 Ki. 10:11). But Jehu did not depart from the calf worship in Bethel and Dan, and God told Him that his sons would rule only to the fourth generation (2 Ki. 10:29-31). The last son of Jehu was Jeroboam II’s son Zechariah, who reigned only six months before being killed by Shallum (2 Ki. 15:10-12). Within 20 years of that, much of northern Israel was conquered by Assyria (2 Ki. 15:29), and within another 10 years, the kingdom of Israel perished (2 Ki. 17:6-23).

Hosea 1:7

Though Israel would be destroyed by Assyria, Judah would be saved “not by bow, nor by sword.” This occurred when the angel of the Lord destroyed the army of Assyria in answer to the prayers of Isaiah and Hezekiah (2 Ki. 19:35-37).

Hosea 1:10-11

Some of the lessons from this great prophecy are as follows:

The children of Israel will be restored. This cannot possibly refer to the church, since the church is not the children of Judah. Church-age saints are the children of Abraham, as their father in the faith (Ro. 4:11), but they are not children of Jacob or any of his tribes.

Israel will be multiplied. This will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (Ge. 22:17; 32:12). Israel will increase forever.

Israel will be restored to her place, which is the land of Israel. That land belongs to Israel by perpetual covenant through Abraham's son Jacob. The Israel that was rejected is the Israel that will return to the land.

God will again call Israel "my people." This will be accomplished by her repentance and conversion (Zec. 12:9 - 13:1).

The tribes of Israel will be united ("appoint themselves one head"). Compare Jer. 3:18; 31:27; Eze. 37:15-22.

They will have one head, which of course is Christ. In that day, Israel will "appoint themselves one head" in the sense that they will acknowledge Jesus as the Christ and submit to Him.

They will come up out of the land. This probably refers to the fact that Israel will thrive and increase in her land.

In that day, Jezreel will be a place of blessing instead of a place of idolatry and warfare. The final battle against Israel's enemies will occur in Jezreel, otherwise known as the valley of Megiddo. Armageddon means "hill of Megiddo." In Jezreel, Israel was conquered by the Assyrians (Ho. 1:5) and Josiah, Judah's last good king, was killed (2 Ch. 35:20-25), and in Jezreel Israel will overcome her enemies.

Paul quotes from Ho. 1:10 in Romans 9:26 and applies it to the salvation of the Gentiles. The interpretation of Hosea 1:10 in its context refers to the restoration of Israel, but the Spirit of God by Paul gives an *application* of it. Paul explains that the temporary blindness of Israel has resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles (Ro. 11:11-12; 25-27).

Hosea 2

Hosea 2:1-2

God again uses Hosea's wife and children to illustrate His message to Israel. God pleads with Israel to repent and put away her filthy idolatry. His pleading is likened to the way that the children of an adulteress would pitifully plead with their mother to return to their father.

Hosea 2:3-13

1. God warns Israel of the judgment that is coming.

She will become a wilderness (Ho. 2:3). This is exactly what happened to the land over the past 2,000 years.

She will be hedged in with a wall made with thorns (Ho. 2:6). She will not find her paths, meaning she will be lost and confused (Ho. 2:6). This is a perfect description of apostate Israel over the past 2,500 years. She rejected the path of truth and righteousness, so God has given her a path of thorns and confusion. Her way has been difficult as if walking among thorns, and she has not been able to find the truth.

Ultimately the hedge of thorns will produce repentance and she will return to her "first husband" which is God (Ho. 2:7). God has always used hedges of thorns to discipline His people, and He continues to do so. The Psalmist said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Ps. 119:71). See also Ps. 119:67; 94:12-13; 1 Co. 11:32; Heb. 12:10-11.

2. Israel worshipped Baal--the storm god who was supposed to grant agricultural prosperity, the fertility god who was supposed to grant prosperity--and gave him credit for the blessings of Jehovah God (Ho. 2:5, 12).

3. Israel took the blessings of God and bestowed them on Baal (Ho. 2:8, 13). Therefore, God would judge Israel and take away her blessings (Ho. 2:9-13). The term "Baalim" is the plural of Baal and refers to the fact that Baal worship took many forms

and had many names. What was true of Israel is true of every unregenerate sinner. He lives in God's world and enjoys God's blessings, but He cares nothing for God. He is a spiritual adulterer. Even born again Christians can be adulterers if they love the world that is God's enemy (Jas. 4:4), and this is true of multitudes of professing Christians today.

Hosea 2:14-23

God looks beyond the judgment to Israel's conversion and restoration.

Israel will be converted in a wilderness (Ho. 2:14-17). The exact place is not identified, but the event is likened to that of the Exodus when God brought Israel out of Egypt and dealt them her in a wilderness. In this future Exodus, God will bring the Jews out from among the nations and will purge out the rebels and bring the repentant into the New Covenant. See Eze. 20:33-38.

The terms "allure" and "speak comfortably" (Ho. 2:14) describe God's tender dealing with Israel when she repents and returns to Him. "Allure" is the Hebrew "pathah," which means to persuade, to entice, to draw. "Allure refers here to tender, even seductive, speech. Elsewhere the term describes a man's seduction of a virgin (Ex. 22:16) and a lover's attempt to entice a man (Samson) into divulging confidential information (Jg. 14:15; 16:5)" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*). The word "comfortably" is the Hebrew "leb" which is usually translated "heart." In Hosea 2:14, "speak comfortably" literally means "speak to the heart." "This Hebrew idiom refers to gentle, encouraging words, such as a man speaks to his desired bride (cf. Ge. 34:3; Ru. 2:13). As Mays states, the boldly anthropomorphic language 'is astonishing' especially in light of the Bible's 'studied aversion for speaking of God in any sexual terms.' He adds, 'it is in this daring kind of portrayal that the passion of God becomes visible--a passion that does not hesitate at any condescension or hold back from any act for the sake of the beloved elect'" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*).