

A Study of the Minor Prophets
Week 3 - Hosea

- I. Hosea 2:14-23 is a Salvation Oracle highlighting God's Restored Relationship with Israel. Here in language reminiscent of Isaiah 40, Yahweh is depicted as a lover courting his beloved once again, speaking tenderly to her—speaking words of comfort and restoration.
- II. Continuing the marriage analogy, Yahweh will take Israel to be his “wife forever,” his spouse in “righteousness, justice, love, and compassion” (v. 19). He will take his “wife in faithfulness,” that she may “know” the Lord (v. 20). This is a future, new covenant expectation, not the present reality of unfaithful, eighth-century Israel.
- III. In chapter 3 we move from oracle back to prophetic drama, the circumstances of Hosea's life are again put in focus. With frustrating brevity, the reader is given a first-person account of Hosea's reconciliation to Gomer.
- IV. The language of Hosea 3:5 is terse yet profound, providing prophetic confirmation of Davidic headship. Hosea, as a true prophet, affirms the same Davidic theology as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, a theology based in the covenant God made with David (2 Sam 7:12–16). Furthermore, the language of Israel's blessing “in the last days” is a thread that runs throughout the Old Testament.
- V. Chapter four marks a clear break in Hosea. Although there are allusions back to the prophetic drama of chapters 1–3, especially in reference to the motif of spiritual adultery, Hosea 4–14 never again references Hosea's biographical situation. Rather, the text demonstrates the depth of Israel's guilt, the consequential abandonment of Israel, and the Lord's restoration of his bride. Chapter four is introduced with a “charge” (riv) brought against the “inhabitants of the land” (4:1a, NKJV), laying out three distinct statements of indictment: “There is no truth, no faithful love, and no knowledge of God in the land!”
- VI. Chapters four and five evoke courtroom imagery as evidence for these charges is set forth. That there is no “truth” (‘emet) is evidenced by Israel's lack of spiritual integrity; not only do her citizens curse and lie to one another (4:2a), their leaders are “like those who move boundary markers” (5:10), who are “determined to follow what is worthless” (5:11).⁸⁷ That there is no “faithful love” (hesed) between individuals is clear, given the killing, stealing, and bloodshed typical in the land.
- VII. Throughout chapters four and five, Hosea merges the literal and metaphorical senses of what it meant to commit adultery. The people went after the idols of Baal, committing spiritual adultery against their God. In the worship of Baal, the people themselves committed literal prostitution, engaging in sexual promiscuity associated with Canaanite fertility rites and worship practices.⁸⁸ And thus Hosea describes the rites of cultic, physical promiscuity in conjunction with the act of spiritual adultery.