



## UNIT 8 HOSEA LESSON ONE

### THE MAN AND HIS AGE

#### HOSEA:

Hosea was one of the four great prophets of the 8th century B.C. whose teaching has been left for us. Like his contemporary, Amos, his message was directed mainly to the 10 tribes who formed the northern kingdom, Israel, while Micah and Isaiah preached to the southern kingdom, Judah.

His book is one of "The Twelve" in the Hebrew Canon. It is also called one of the "Minor Prophets" - not because it is of lesser importance but because of its shorter length. The material in Hosea is unique among the Prophetic Books in its division into two distinct parts.

The first part (Chapters 1-3), which may be regarded as introductory to the remaining material, deals with the marriage of Hosea and its meaning for Israel's relations with Yahweh.

The second part (Chapters 4-14) is composed of a number of independent discourses.

Apart from his complex domestic relationships, little is told us of Hosea's personal life. The superscription of 1:1 tells us his father's name, Beeri, whom we cannot positively identify, and dates his prophecy in the second half of the 8th century. Many critics consider the reference to the kings of Judah as a later inaccurate editorial addition. However, treating it as a genuine part of the text, we can use it to date Hosea's ministry as commencing before the death of Jeroboam II in 746 B.C. and continuing at least until the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. and possibly extending after the accession of Hezekiah to the throne of Judah in 715 B.C.

#### ISRAEL'S BACKGROUND:

Hosea thus begins his ministry in some of the most prosperous days in the history of Israel and lives through to see the collapse of the kingdom and its final destruction at the hands of the Assyrians. Amos and Hosea reflect the problems attendant on the prosperity of the age.

Some of these are:

1. The disappearance of the small peasant farmer and the rise of a wealthy group of absentee landlords. Deprived of his land, the peasant often either starved or was sold into slavery to pay his debts. (Read Is. 5:8; Micah 2:1-2; Amos 2:6,7; 5:11). The contrasting luxurious extravagance of the wealthy is reflected in Amos 3:15; 4:1; 5:11; 6:4-6; Is. 3:14-24.
2. The pollution of religion by the incorporation into worship of many elements of Baal worship (see Hosea 2:13; 16-17; 4:13; 11:2) and the failure to give religion moral and ethical associations. Their love of worship only alienated God (Hosea 8:11,13). Hosea's great cry is that the people are ignorant of the true nature of God and His demands on them. (Hosea: 2:8; 4:6).



3. Social and moral evil abounded (Hosea 4:1-3). The law courts were corrupt (Amos 5:11; 6:12). Business malpractice was common (Amos 8:4-6), promiscuity was encouraged by religious practices (Amos 2:7; Hosea 4:14; 9:2).

Within the apparent prosperity, which was so much a mark of the first half of the 8th century in Israel, were the seeds of the collapse of the nation which followed so disastrously and rapidly in the second.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

Jeroboam's death in 746 was followed by the murder of his son Zechariah after only six months rule. His assassin Shallum was liquidated a month later by Menahem. Menahem held control till 737 by sheer brutality. The rising Assyrian menace under Tiglath-Pileser forced Menahem to pay a very heavy tribute to Assyria and he virtually surrendered his country's independence so that he might be assured of Assyrian support to keep him on the throne. His son Pekahiah succeeded him but within a short time was murdered by Pekah who became the fifth king of Israel in the ten years since Jeroboam's death, and the third to seize the throne by violence. Pekah joined Rezin, King of Syria, in an anti-Assyrian alliance but in 734 Tiglath-Pileser crushed the alliance. Before Samaria itself could be destroyed, Hoshea murdered Pekah and surrendered to Assyria. Hoshea ruled as an Assyrian vassal from 732 to 724 but on Tiglath-Pileser's death he revolted and tried to form an alliance with Egypt. Shalmanezer, the new Assyrian king, attacked and captured Hoshea. Sargon II succeeded Shalmanezer, who died before the campaign was completed, and captured and destroyed Samaria, deporting its inhabitants in 721. Israel thenceforth ceased to exist as a nation.

Hosea preached against the background of these turbulent days. The upheaval is reflected in such passages as 5:10-13; 7:7,11; 8:4; 9:15-16; 10:3-6; 12:1; 13:1-11: his preaching carried a strong note of judgement on the sins of the people but mingled with that (by contrast with the more rugged Amos) was the expression of the yearning love of Yahweh for his disobedient people. This doubtless owed its origins to Hosea's own tragic love for his wife, a subject which will be considered in our next study. It is important that from our study today we see the situation in which Hosea lived and preached and understand the prophetic insight which interpreted the disasters of the later years as God's punishment for the sins of the more prosperous but apostate days which preceded them.

### **QUESTION 1:**

Briefly summarize what is meant by an Old Testament prophet.

### **QUESTION 2:**

What do you know of Hosea? When and where did he minister?

### **QUESTION 3:**

What were the economic problems in Israel in the time of Hosea? (Isaiah 3:14-24; 5:8, Micah 2:1,2, Amos 2:6,7; 3:15; 4:1; 5:11; 6:4-6).

### **QUESTION 4:**



What was wrong with Israel's religion at the time of Hosea's? (Hosea 2:8,13,16-17; 4:6,13; 8:11,13; 11:2).

**QUESTION 5:**

What social and moral problems existed in Israel during Hosea's ministry? (Hosea 4:1-3,14 Amos 2:7; 5:11-12; 8:4-6).

**QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:**

Are there social, moral and religious evils in our affluent society today? What are they? Is the Australian nation in danger because in its prosperity are the seeds of later collapse?