



RELENTLESS LOVE

Hosea

WHY WE NEED HOSEA

God loves *Ancient Israel*: the bible tells us so. But the book of Hosea shows us they're guilty of the ugliest spiritual adultery towards God. For this they'll face God's right judgement, as Assyria comes to wage war on them. But God's love for his wayward bride is relentless.

God loves *Us*: the bible tells us so. But the book of Hosea shows us how ugly and loveless we are, apart from God's work in us. For this Jesus faced God's right judgement. God's love for us is relentless.

SERIES GOALS

As a result of this series we want all of us at Salt Church to:

1. See and feel the ugliness and horror of human sin, so we're even more amazed at God's love for us in Christ.
2. Worship Jesus better, by seeing more of who he is, and by repenting and submitting to him.
3. Side with God in recognising how right he is to punish sin.
4. Grow in our ability to handle our bibles - by learning how to read this type of literature (before the exile, prophecy, poetry) and by getting a better sense of where Hosea fits in the bible's story.

SERIES BREAKUP

DATE	BIBLE	DATE	BIBLE
19-23 Apr	Hosea Overview	24-28 May	Hosea 6:1-8:14
26-30 Apr	Hosea 1:1	31 May – 4 Jun	Hosea 9:1-10:15
3-7 May	Hosea 1:2-2:1	7-11 Jun	Hosea 11:1-11
10-14 May	Hosea 2:2-23	14-18 Jun	Hosea 11:12-13:16
17-21 May	Hosea 4:1-5:15	21-25 Jun	Hosea 14:1-9

HOSEA INFO

Hosea's prophecies take place from approx. 750-715BC...

The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel (1:1)

200 years before Hosea, at the end of Solomon's life, Israel split into two kingdoms. The Southern Kingdom was called Judah, and was led by the rightful but domineering King of Israel, Rehoboam. The Northern Kingdom was called Israel (and sometimes called Ephraim). It was led by Jeroboam I (not the one mentioned in Hosea 1:1 – he's much later), who was a rebellious servant of Solomon (1 Kings 12).

During Hosea's lifetime the Northern Kingdom (Israel / Ephraim) enjoyed relative peace, after decades of on-and-off battles with their neighbours. That peace was also helped by the long reign of the Kings - 52 years for Uzziah in Judah and 41 years for Jeroboam II in Israel.

Yet there were catastrophic spiritual problems with God's people, and Hosea is probably written to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, calling them to repent before God brought the Assyrian army against them.

They failed to heed this warning, so during Hosea's lifetime the Northern Kingdom of Israel would be attacked by the Assyrians (in 722 BC).

MAIN THEMES

1. *Sin as Spiritual Adultery...*

The ways Israel sin in this book are many: worshipping Yahweh with false hearts; idolatrous worship of Baals and other fake gods; evil social practices that take advantage of other members of God's community; making treaties and covenants with foreign nations (especially Assyria and Egypt) so they'll protect them rather than depending on their own God; and the list goes on.

Many pictures in the OT and NT show sin affecting our relationship with God - He's our King yet we rebel against Him; He's our master yet we serve other masters. These are true and necessary. But no image goes so deep as the picture the book of Hosea gives us - of sin as spiritual adultery to our husband, God. Sin is personal betrayal, rejection and unfaithfulness to the God who makes, chooses, saves and loves us.

The ugliness of sin is powerfully captured by the sign-act / lived out sermon illustration for which the book is famous, when God tells Hosea:

"Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord" (1:2)

Even as Christians who know better, we're tempted to think sin is not so big a deal and is about doing bad things, saying wrong words, thinking evil thoughts that hurt us or others. Nothing could be further from the truth and Hosea shows us why. Nothing short of adultery - betraying the intimacy and lifelong commitment marriage ought to be - can really capture to Hosea,

Israel and us how horrifically evil it is to sin against our God, our faithful Husband. Hosea teaches us that we all, like Israel, are spiritual Gomers. So our great need isn't behaviour modification or an attitude adjustment, it's the bridegroom's transforming love.

2. ...And the Relentless Love of God, the Faithful Husband & Bridegroom

God continues to love His unfaithful people. Sometime after Hosea marries her, Gomer is again unfaithful, this time to her new husband Hosea. Yet God tells Hosea: *"Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."* (3:1)

God's love for His people doesn't cease. This is one of the clearest connections between Hosea's message and Jesus. Christ Jesus, the ultimate bridegroom, gathers unfaithful spiritual adulterers to himself:

'...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church' (Eph 5:25-30)

Hosea pursues his adulterous bride to another town, but Jesus does more, pursuing his bride to death. At the cross we see the height and depth of our sin. At the empty tomb we experience the bridegroom's transforming love. Through Jesus we experience the height and depth of God's love.

3. Righteous Judgement...

Hosea has some of the most intense pictures of judgement in the bible...

'...the LORD is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins... "I will send fire on their cities that will consume their fortresses"' (8:11-14)

"Even if they escape from destruction, Egypt will gather them, and Memphis will bury them. Their treasures of silver will be taken over by briars, and thorns will overrun their tents" (9:6-7)

"Even if they rear children, I will bereave them of every one. Woe to them when I turn away from them! ... Ephraim will bring out their children to the slayer." Give them, LORD - what will you give them? Give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that are dry.' (9:12-14)

"Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, I hated them there. Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house. I will no longer love them..." (9:15)

This is intense, and we're tempted to believe our society's lie that God is wrong to judge like this, and to listen to the self-deceit of our hearts that tell us we don't deserve it. We need to feel the white-hot anger of God at the evils humanity commits. In our culture that accuses God of doing evil when he judges, we need to remember God never does evil. He can't.

Worth seeing too that God's judgement on Israel is also loving discipline. Proverbs tells us *'The Lord disciplines the one he loves'* (Prov 3:12), so as God points out their flaws and describes the judgment to come, it is because He's merciful enough to call them to change before it's too late.

4. ... *And Salvation on the Other Side of Judgement*

God names Gomer's children to show His attitude to His people...

"Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means "not loved"), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them

After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. Then the Lord said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God (1:6, 9).

But even this is followed immediately by astounding promises...

"Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them... I, the Lord their God, will save them."

"Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'children of the living God.' (1:7, 10)

God will bring the Assyrian army against His people as punishment for their sin. This judgement is inevitable, but it's not the final word. The salvation of God's people lies on the other side of judgement...

"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them" (14:4)

5. *Repentance and Transformation*

God's judgement is a central theme but it's meant to move Israel (and us) to repent and obey. There's no doubt how we should respond to God...

'Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount warhorses.

We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion.'" (14:1-3)

Our bridegroom has given himself for us so that we would repent, be cleansed and joyfully submit to him...

'Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.... the church submits to Christ... Christ gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless' (Eph 5:24-27)

And one day that magnificent transforming work will be complete...

'I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband' (Rev 21:1-2)

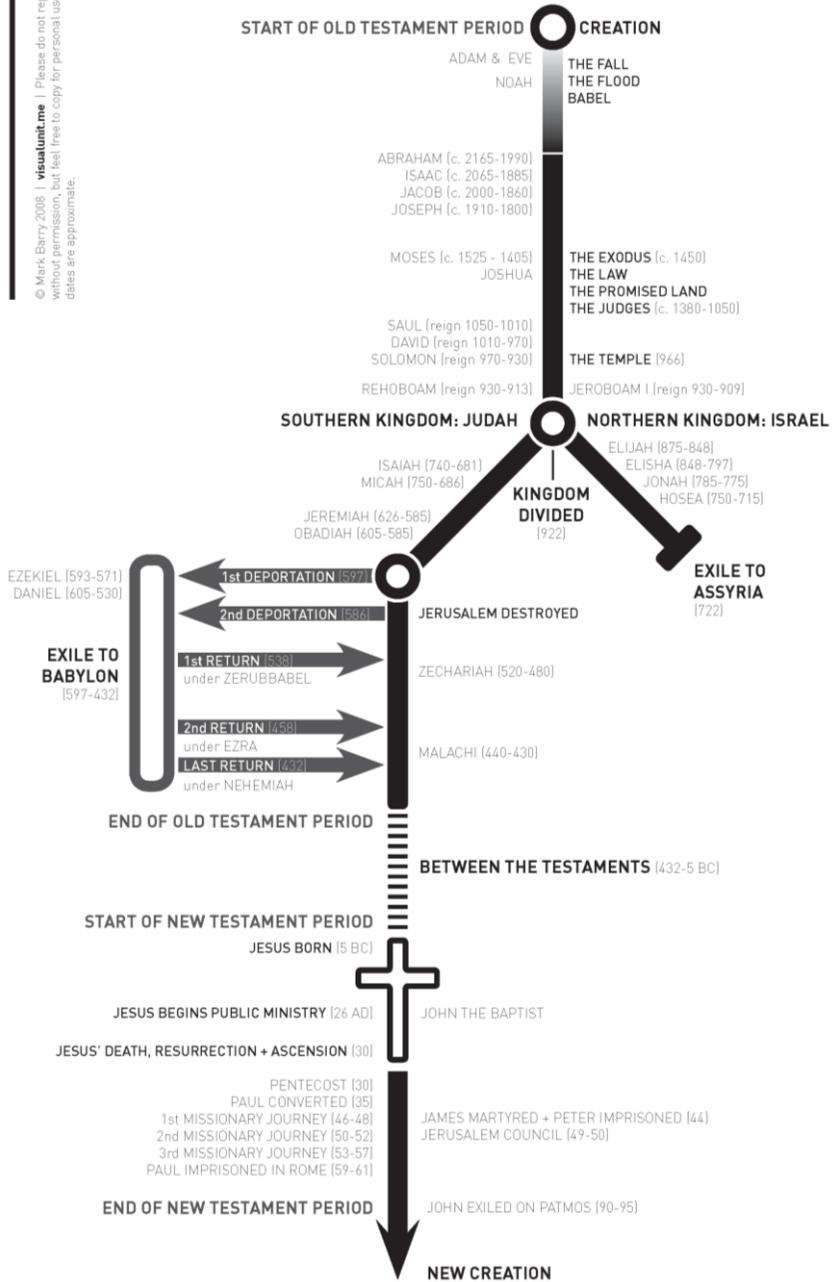
HOSEA AS A BOOK OF POEMS

Some people hate poetry. That presents a challenge for us reading Hosea, as God decided to communicate through Hosea using mostly poetry. So, if you're one of the haters, here's a quick overview to help you appreciate it.

Hosea writes poetry the usual Hebrew way, which is different to English poems: rather than rhyming words it rhymes *ideas*. The point of doing this is to link one idea with the next, so they explain each other.

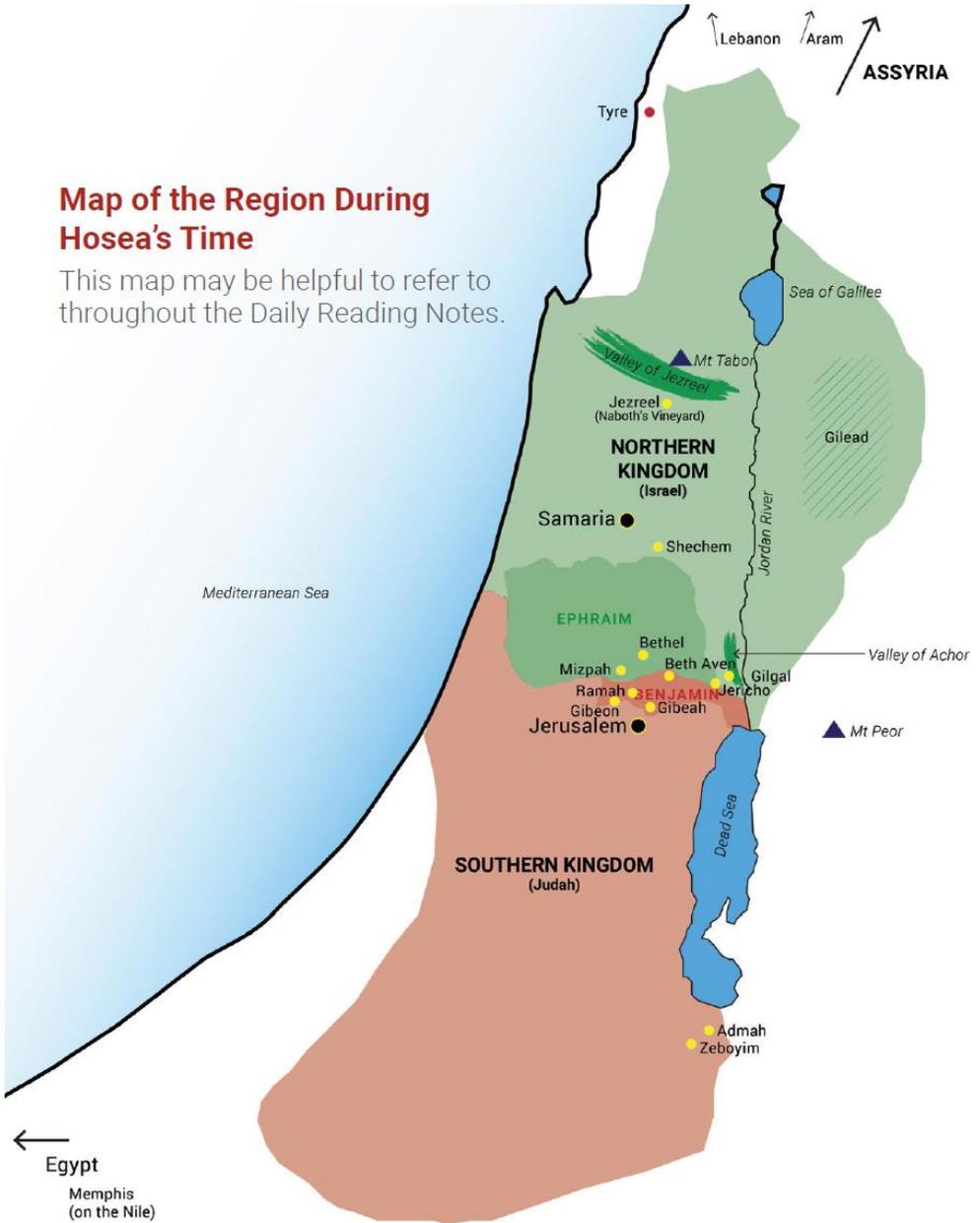
BIBLE TIMELINE

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Map of the Region During Hosea's Time

This map may be helpful to refer to throughout the Daily Reading Notes.





saltchurch.

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboyim?

My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused.
I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again.

For I am God, and not a man...

Hosea 11:8-9