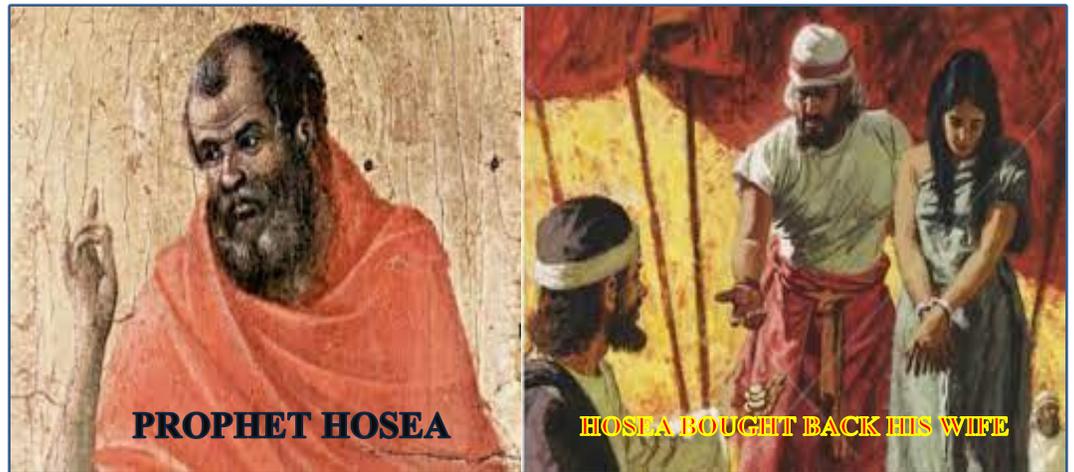


CLASS: SS2
SUBJECT: CRS
TOPIC: DIVINE LOVE
WEEK: 8
TERM: THIRD



GOD ASKS HOSEA TO MARRY GOMER, A HARLOT, AND RAISE CHILDREN BY HER TO DEMONSTRATE ISRAEL'S HARLOTRY (HOSEA 1)

Hosea is referred to as the “**prophet of love**” because his messages centred on God’s love for the children of Israel in spite of their unfaithfulness. His marital experience served as a practical example to his message of love. His message was against immorality, political and religious corruption. He encouraged the people to repent and turn back to God. His period of prophecy spread through the reigns of king Uzziah, Jothan and Ahaz in the southern kingdom and Jeroboam in the northern kingdom.

Unlike Amos, he was a native of Israel (i.e. Northern kingdom), and he delivered his message there. At the time of his prophetic ministry, northern kingdom was witnessing a period of political instability and religious syncretism. At this point, God instructed Hosea the son of Beerai to marry a harlot, Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and have children of harlotry through her.

Hosea obeyed God’s order and eventually had three children with Gomer – two sons and one daughter. These children were given symbolic names that expressed God’s anger at the people of Israel who had forsaken their God to play harlotry with other gods.

- First son was **Jezreel** which meant that God would punish the house of Jehu for the “blood of Jezreel”. This refers to the innocent blood which the wicked Jehu shed at the valley of Jezreel during his revolution.
- The second child – the daughter’s name was **Lo-ruhamah** or ‘**Not pitied**’ or ‘**No mercy**’. This signified that God would no longer have pity upon the house of Israel.
- The third child – the son’s name was **Lo-anmi** or “**Not my people**” this means that God would no longer regard Israel as his people as they had forsaken him.

God later promised His love to Israel by saying that He would multiply them greatly like the sea sand that could not be numbered. Also He would forgive and restore the whole nation of Israel- the Northern kingdom and Judah (southern kingdom) after the corrective punishment. Both kingdoms would be united under one leader.

The Unfaithfulness of Israel to God and His Continuous Love for Her (Hosea 2-3)

Hosea had provided and cared for his Wife Gomer. Yet, after giving birth to her three children, she left Hosea and ran after her worthless lover she had hoped to benefit more from. Gomer became unfaithful; due to Hosea's persistent love for her, he continued to plead with her to come back because he knew that she was not going to benefit from those other men but to suffer. Gomer refused to come back. He sent her children to plead with her but she ignored them as well. In spite of Gomer's unfaithfulness, Hosea still persisted in his love for her. At last, not knowing what else to do, Hosea divorced her. Nevertheless, he reclaimed her back to himself eventually.

The marital experience of Hosea was synonymous with God's relationship with the Israelites. God, as the husband, had demonstrated a lot of love to the Israelites right from the time he set them free from Egypt with a lot of signs and wonders to the period of Hosea's ministry; God had also established covenant with them, but Israel had never been faithful in keeping the Lord's commandments. They indulged in sin of idolatry- running after other gods like Hosea's wife Gomer who ran to other men.

As Hosea divorced Gomer for refusing to come back to him after many pleadings, so God had sent many prophets to appeal to the Israelites to turn from their evil ways and return to God but all appeals were in vain. God had no option but to divorce Israel. Nevertheless, God's love for Israel still persisted in spite of their unfaithfulness. God still hoped and expected they would repent and come back to him. He pleaded with them severally to forsake Baal and worship Him. Hosea pointed out that the priests and prophets who refused to rebuke Israel for their unfaithfulness would equally be punished.

The bottom line in Hosea messages is the willingness and readiness of God to accept his people back if they genuinely repented.

Israel's Superficial Response to God's Love (Hosea 6:1-11)

Israel's response to God's love was a typical example of man's negative response to God's love and call. The people of Israel's immediate response were not genuine. They

worshipped God with their lips but their hearts were far from him. They thought that to affect a superficial return to God would be enough to alleviate their suffering. They came with much sacrifice and burnt offerings in order to please God but their hearts were far away from him.

They did not return with a repentant heart, rather, they returned because they were suffering. Their concern was just to be free from God's chastisement. They did not care to know where and how they offended God so as to repent and forsake that very sin. The cause of their broken relationship with God was lack of love and knowledge of God hence Hosea declared that God desired steadfast love and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

ASSIGNMENT

1. How does the story of Hosea and Gomer portray the nature of God?
2. What lessons can we learn from the story of Hosea and Gomer?