

# Bible Challenge 2018

## Week 33: August 12-18

Hosea 1: An Introduction to the Marriage of Hosea and Gomer

Hosea 2: Back to the Wilderness

Hosea 3: Gomer is Redeemed Again

Hosea 4-8: Israel and Judah are Adulterous before God

Hosea 9-10: Judgment on Israel

Hosea 11-13: A Promise of Redemption in the midst of Judgment

Hosea 14: Redemption and Healing

It is common for God to call his prophets to do things that on the surface seem rather strange and out of place for the man of God. As far as examples of this practice, Hosea is amongst the clearest. God calls on Hosea to go down to the red-light district and find a prostitute named Gomer. He is then called upon to marry her and bring her home as his wife and as the mother of his children. At some point after having her third child, she apparently goes back to her old ways of prostitution and once again, Hosea is called upon to go down to the red light district, but this time he has to purchase her back out of her slavery.

Friends, if you want a picture of grace, here you have it. And friends, how many of you would be inclined to do what God had called Hosea to do. I reckon that many of you would not. Yet, which sin is worse in the grand scheme of things: immorality or disobedience to God. Though sin is sin and all sin is punishable by death and Hell, I think you would be hard pressed to make a case for saying that immorality is worse than plain disobedience before God. It is something that should make all of us humble.

The point of the book is that the people of God have been engaged in idolatry and idolatry is the spiritual equivalent of adultery. God has made Israel (the Church) his bride, and we, like Gomer, often play the spiritual whore. Some have suggested that since this is the case that we ought to abandon the church for individual spirituality, yet the one is as sinful as the other. Christ died for the church that she might be his bride and the representation of his body on earth — we cannot have genuine spirituality apart from her. As St. Augustine wrote: "The church may be a whore, but she is my mother."

Historically, Hosea is a contemporary of Isaiah and thus, this is written before the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, placing this book in the late 8th Century B.C. (the northern kingdom fell about 722 B.C.).

### **An Introduction to the Marriage of Hosea and Gomer**

As mentioned above, Hosea is called on to go and fetch Gomer, a prostitute and to make her the first lady of the synagogue parsonage. From that marriage, they are given three children who are given names that represent the state of Israel (imagine growing up with these names in Sabbath School!): Jezreel (A Place of Judgment); Lo-Ruhama (No Mercy), and Lo-Ammi (Not My People). This was the message of God to his people through the prophet.

### **Back to the Wilderness**

Chapter two establishes the connection between Gomer and Israel. In addition to that, there is a theme that runs through the chapter of God removing the people from the land and returning them into the wilderness. Not only does this foreshadow what God was going to do, but it also

tells us why, for when the people were in the wilderness they relied on God to provide everything. In the land they had grown comfortable and started seeking their goods elsewhere. The chapter ends with a wonderful promise of redemption: Jezreel will be returned to the land, No Mercy will be given mercy, and Not My People will become the people of God.

### **Gomer is Redeemed Again**

So, how often has God forgiven us the same sin over and over again? Enough said...

### **Israel and Judah are Adulterous before God**

Much of the rest of the book takes the form of a lawsuit by God against his people for being unfaithful. He points out that even though they are making sacrifices, their hearts are far from God. He points out that the church leadership has failed them. He points out that they have had numerous warnings, yet have failed to respond. In the end, Israel stands guilty before the righteous God of the universe. God plainly says that he will not again return the people to this place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek his face (Hosea 5:15)

### **Judgment on Israel**

And so God enters into judgment. One of the things, though, that we must remember about the judgment of God is that he is always calling his people to repent and to turn away from their sin that he might deliver them and pour out his rain upon their soil. Yet, the people will not turn away from the fallow ground of their hearts.

### **A Promise of Redemption in the midst of Judgment**

Hosea 11 begins with language that looks both backwards and forwards. First, it looks back and gives the people a reminder that just as God delivered their forefathers from their bondage in Egypt, so too will he deliver them from their Assyrian captors. Yet, it looks forward to the ultimate redeemer, Jesus, who, like the ancient Israelites, fled to Egypt for safety (Matthew 2:15).

What is perhaps worth noting is God's approach to calling his people back to faithfulness (see Hosea 12:4-6) — he is basically saying that the people should return to him from their false gods on the basis of his faithfulness to the covenant and to them. As we have often insisted in worship, it is all about God and not about us. We are more often than not unfaithful, yet God remains faithful to his own.

Chapter 13 closes with language that would be later picked up by the Apostle Paul in Corinthians 15:54-55: "O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?"

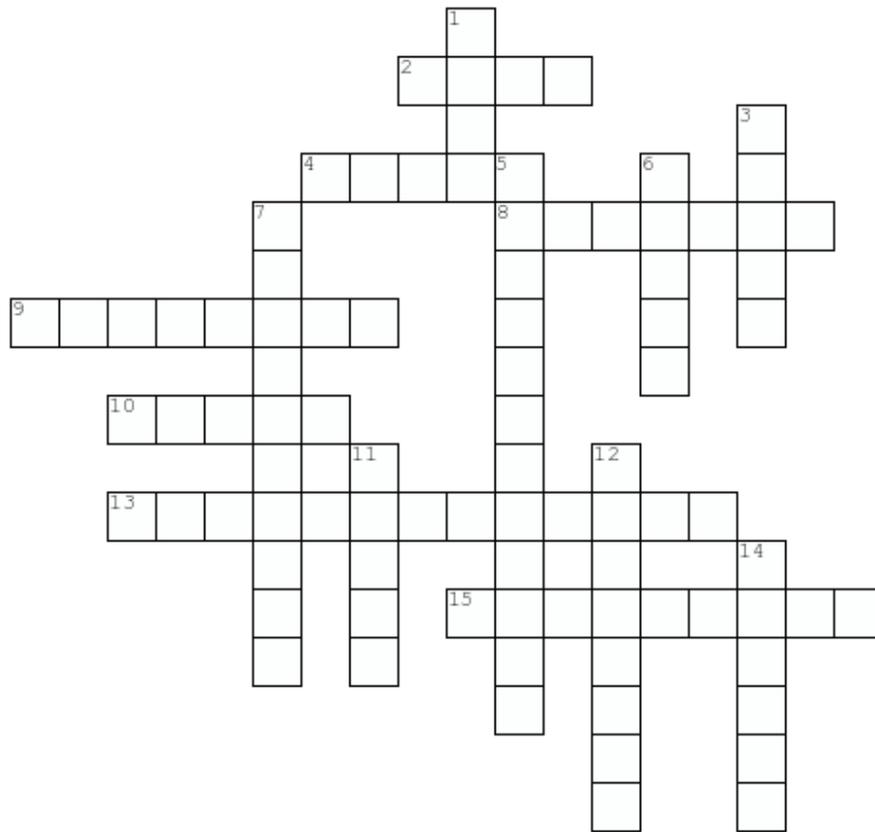
### **Redemption and Healing**

Hosea closes with words of hope to remind the people that he will heal their apostasy and will set them free from the bondage of their sin.

"For the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them."

(Hosea 14:9b)

## Week 33: Hosea



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### **Across**

2. The people of Hosea's day say that they have no king and they do not fear the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. God tells Israel that his judgment goes out like this.
8. God says it was him who taught \_\_\_\_\_ to walk.
9. Hosea writes that the prophets speak in this kind of language (hint: Isaiah and Jesus are especially known for these).
10. The name of Hosea's wife.
13. These people stumble in the ways of the Lord.
15. If you plow iniquity you will reap this.

### **Down**

1. God says that he will be like this insect to Ephraim.
3. 'O Sheol, where is your \_\_\_\_\_?'
5. Were God to write laws by the \_\_\_\_\_, they would still be considered strange to the people. (2 words)
6. This sin of Israel testifies to Israel's face.
7. God laments that he wants to take the people back here where they relied on him.
11. 'Out of \_\_\_\_\_ I called my son.'
12. The name of Hosea's daughter.
14. Gomer has to buy his wife back from slavery with 15 shekels of this and some barley.