

## Hosea

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at [www.openarms-communityofchrist.org](http://www.openarms-communityofchrist.org).*

Hosea is the first of the books called the Minor Prophets. That's because these books are considerably shorter than the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. However, they pack a lot in a short number of chapters!

Hosea is speaking to the people of the northern kingdom (Israel) who were suffering significantly. Four kings had been assassinated within fourteen years, and Israel was in a battle with Assyria, a battle which they would lose. The country was in a state of anarchy.

The book can be divided into two sections, chapters 1-3 and then chapters 4-14. We can gain some insight into Hosea's life through the first three chapters—and it's not a pretty life. He follows what he understands to be God's direction and marries a prostitute (Gomer). She has three children—probably all of them fathered by someone other than Hosea. She leaves him, but he publicly takes her back.

The second section of the book is a series of sermons and prophetic messages to the people of Israel. Its basic theme is that Israel has forgotten God, has been in constant rebellion, and so the judgment of the Lord will be upon the land. Hosea rejects the religious leaders whom he believes have led the people into apostasy. He calls out their worship of idols and warns of the punishments that will be coming upon them.

However, even though these sermons and messages are depressing and full of chastisement, there are also places where Hosea speaks the message of God's divine love for God's people: "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel?...My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender."

The final chapter pleads with the people to return to God, because God is merciful and will heal them and bring them back to a fruitful life.

Although there **are** two divisions of this book, they are unified by a theme of divine compassion and a love that will not let Israel go, just as Hosea loved Gomer and would not let her go. The ultimate message of the book is a message of redeeming love.