

## DECEMBER 5

By the way, in some countries St. Nick comes tonight to fill shoes with good things.

### Hosea 1-3

Hosea is one of the "minor" prophets, meaning that his recorded message was short. There were actually many prophets whom God used, whom we don't know, who never wrote. So then, it is significant that God chose to have the message of Hosea recorded and circulated around Israel and included in the Word.

Hosea is one of the better known minor prophets because of the unusual thing God asked him to do. If you look at the chart, "Kings of Judah and Israel and the Preexilic Prophets," (located at the end of this document) you'll see that Hosea continued the prophetic ministry against Israel after Elisha was gone. Although Amos and Jonah were there for a short time after Elisha, Hosea continued. Since God had already pronounced judgment against the northern kingdom during the ministry of Elijah, you wonder what Hosea's impact was meant to have. He couldn't have saved his country. Maybe there were individuals who could still turn to God. That was definitely the case during the time of King Hezekiah when many from the north finally left and moved south to Judah. Also, I think that Hosea had an influence on Hezekiah, who was a godly king and would have paid attention to what the Lord was saying. In fact, if you compare the dates on the chart, Hosea was pretty much finished with his ministry when Hezekiah was just beginning to come to power.

Here are some guiding thoughts about this message of Hosea. First, the message God gave him was to emphasize and expose the spiritual adultery of Israel, and thereby, to warn Judah. Second, though we only have 14 chapters, you can see by the chart that Hosea's ministry spanned a couple of decades. Third, although the message is very hard, there is mercy and hope mixed in; in fact, there is a very clear structure of judgment being declared followed by a message of salvation and hope. This cycle will happen about five times. Just like the promise of God's restoration of His people, I'd like to think that the relationship with Hosea and Gomer ended well, like a little miracle on earth.

### Hosea 1

Vs. 1-3 Some of the names of these kings should be familiar to you. It was during this period that the northern kingdom was captured and taken into exile by Assyria and when the Assyrians tried to take Jerusalem.

Vs. 2-3 Lots of people object to God commanding Hosea to do this. We have seen that the life God gave His prophets was not glamorous or easy. Isaiah had to walk around naked for a year. Jeremiah endured persecution and incredible sadness. Ezekiel acted out several disaster scenarios over a couple of years and then lost his wife. Daniel & Co. lost everything.

It is very probable that Hosea already knew Gomer, had a crush on her, and married her knowing she had an unsteady heart, but before she was fully unfaithful. If Hosea's relationship with her mirrored God's relationship to Israel, that would be a fair description. God didn't make a covenant with a whore, but showed His love to an unsteady nation. Could Hosea win Gomer back and would she change? If God's work with Israel is the model for the human drama and sadness Hosea is about to endure, then there would be a happy ending for Hosea.

The son is clearly Hosea's son.

Vs. 4-5 Jezreel becomes a name for judgment. This was the deciding battle where Assyria took Israel.

Vs. 6-7 This is another of Hosea's own children with Gomer, a girl called *No Mercy*. The nation of Israel was removed and God showed them no mercy from the Assyrians.

But notice in v. 7 that God did show mercy to Judah. God says that He will save Judah; notice that He says *how* He will *not* save them. Do you remember what God did to the Assyrian army when they threatened Jerusalem? This was during the reign of King Hezekiah. I think Hezekiah read Hosea.

Vs. 8-9 A third child for Hosea with a very harsh name, *Not My People*.

Vs. 10-11 (Actually, 2:1 is a part of this, and is a transition.) Here is the salvation and hope. Do you see the aspect of this promise that will only be complete in the Millennial Kingdom? Note that Paul quotes from this section in Romans 9:26. Notice too, how the name, Jezreel, that formerly denoted judgment, now becomes a word for salvation.

Hosea 2

V. 1 This is transitional in that the children of this blessing are to cry out to the mother, the nation.

Vs. 2-13 This is the declaration of God's judgment on Israel, mirrored in some respect by Gomer's actions toward Hosea. You can imagine that people were watching this drama between Hosea and Gomer, getting really mad at the behavior of Gomer in response to the kindness of Hosea. But when they said to Hosea, "Too bad you married a whore," Hosea's answer would have singed their ears; because the idolatrous people of Israel were the real whores.

But, on a personal level, can you imagine Hosea going through this, feeling all the love and betrayal and ridicule and anger. This is what God felt toward Israel, and still feels as those He loves betray Him.

V. 3 Notice this image of the wilderness. God will use isolation to punish Israel as in v. 7. If you understand the scope of biblical redemptive history, Israel is still in this wilderness, being prepared to finally cry out for their Messiah.

Vs. 14-23 (actually to 3:5) This is the declaration of hope and redemption. Notice again that the fulfillment of this promise of redemption is still future.

V. 14 It is in the hardness and isolation of the wilderness that God will woo Israel to renew her faithfulness.

Hosea 3:1-5

This is the command to buy back his wayward wife who has become the slave of another. God did the same thing with His people, and with us, as slaves of sin. That is why Jesus is our Redeemer. He bought us back.

V. 5 We have seen this in Ezekiel. David will be the ruler of the reunited and redeemed Israel.

Isn't it interesting that even when God is meting out judgment, He is very careful to affirm His love and to give hope of redemption? Who says there is no love or grace in the Old Testament?

## **1 John 5**

Vs. 1-5 There is a lot packed into these verses. John is repeating what Jesus Himself said so many times in so many different ways: "Why do you call me Lord and do not do what I say?" Remember, Jesus' commandments have to do with following, not living morally and staying out of trouble. Those "right living" things are assumed of anyone who names the name of Christ. His commands have to do with following and acknowledging Him, testifying to Him, in a lost world. We are to work in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples. We are to have our loins girded and our lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return home from the wedding feast, to open up to Him at once when He comes and knocks. (Luke 12:35) Obeying Jesus has nothing to do with living mousey, moral, invisible lives on earth. In v. 5 this belief that overcomes is not silent or invisible.

Vs. 6-12 This is a great affirmation to the redeeming power of Christ as our Savior. This also seems to be a rebuke to some of the false teachers. There was a line of thinking and teaching that said that the man Jesus was not God the Son, but was only possessed by God the Son. In their thinking, at the crucifixion, God the Son left that poor guy on the cross because it is impossible for God to suffer or endure such sinful behavior by men. By the way, that was probably also Satan's thought. The incarnation, God becoming fully man and remaining fully God, was a mystery. If Satan had understood that Jesus was fully God and fully man, he might have understood that Jesus could pay for the sins of man. I think this "wisdom of God" is what Paul was referring to when he said, *None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* (1 Cor. 2:8) Jesus was not only anointed as the Son of God at His baptism, by water, but He was shown to be the Son of God at His death, by blood. The Holy Spirit testified over all of this. The incarnation is the reason why salvation can only be through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Vs. 13-15 The key thoughts here are, *that you may know, this is the confidence, and we have the requests.* All of these things were shaken by those teachers who had attacked the full adoption as sons that we obtain through Jesus, claiming Jesus was only a man and not the God-Man.

Vs. 16-17 Apparently there were people sinning and being chastened by God with death. We see this in Acts 5:1-11 and in 1 Corinthians 11:30. As we've seen in 1 Corinthians, Christians are capable of a lot of sin and God does, at times, chasten by using sickness and death.

V. 18 Jesus is the one who *protects*, in His hand, those who abide in Him.

V. 19 So we should live like it, working in the harvest.

V. 20 Our lives are to be lived very simply, in Jesus, seeking Jesus, following Jesus.

V. 21 Any passion other than Jesus can lead us into idolatry.

### **Psalm 124**

I wonder what this sounded like as it was sung by the people as they walked to Jerusalem for the feasts. It is interesting too, that this psalm is of David. That might be why there is the thought of deliverance from enemies.

Vs. 1-5 David understood that with all the fighting, ducking, and hiding that took place over the years he ran from Saul, if it hadn't been for the Lord, he would have died. In all the battles David waged for Israel, it wasn't his ability as a leader that won the day. It was not that he had some incredible fighters that gave the victory. It was the Lord. This is the same for us. This realization can't be "lip service;" it has to be heartfelt and deeply understood.

Vs. 6-7 We can say the same not only regarding salvation, but as we escape the effects of the sin within us every day we walk on this planet.

V. 8 Amen!

### **Proverbs 29:5-8**

Vs. 5-6 Lots of capturing birds imagery here. (Notice Psalm 124:7.) I wonder if that imagery is continued in the *righteous man* singing. I guess the guy doesn't understand that he is spreading a net for his own feet.

V. 7 Here too is an inability for the wicked to understand.

V. 8 Those who start fires (among people) often get burned by them, but a wise man understands how to put them out.