

Hosea Chapter 1:4-11 - Answers

Hearing from God that his new bride, once a prostitute, would someday go right back to prostitution had been gut-wrenching. And perhaps Hosea really didn't think it was going to happen...after all...she was beautiful....she had left her life of prostitution for him....they were happy...they were going to be bringing children into the world. They were going to be a family. Hosea was going to keep preaching far and wide and then coming back home to his own, wonderful world.

But next God told Hosea He would be the One who would name their three children. And the names He chooses? You wouldn't want your worst enemy to be stuck with these names!

The prophet Isaiah, prophesying in the Southern Kingdom at the same time Hosea was in the Northern Kingdom, was also told by God that He wanted to name Isaiah's children. God named Isaiah's children Shearjashub (meaning "a remnant shall return") and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (meaning "haste to the prey").

What was God doing?

1. (:4) What name does God give their firstborn? Girl or boy? (the name means "cast-away")

The little boy's name was to be Jezreel.

2. (:4-5) What seems to be the message God wants to send by naming this child this name? (Look up 2nd Kings 9:30-33, and 2nd Kings 10:1-11. These two passages give the background)

The name Jezreel would have brought to the Jewish memory horrible but true stories from their past:

A wicked king named Ahab reigned in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, in Samaria. When the Lord God had had enough of Ahab's evil he sent a man named Jehu to once and for all get rid of Ahab and his equally wicked wife, Jezebel.

Jezebel was living in Jezreel. When Jehu arrived in Jezreel to find Jezebel, she tried to seduce him, but he would have none of it. She fell out of a 3-story high window, was smashed to bits, and the dogs of the city ate the flesh off of her bones. She was not even given the honor of a burial.

But that is not the end of the bloodshed at Jezreel. Jehu threatened a city in Samaria (where the sons of Ahab were hiding) that if they did not kill all the sons of Ahab, cut off their heads, and bring them to Jehu at Jezreel, he would destroy that city of Samaria. The leaders of the city, terrorized by Jehu, did just as he said. They beheaded all 70 of Ahab's sons, put their heads in baskets, and sent them to Jehu and Jezreel. After that, Jehu also killed all those who had ever supported Ahab.

So a wicked King named Ahab, all his family and all his followers, are totally wiped from the face of the earth, beginning at the city of Jezreel. And the man who makes this happen, Jehu, is just as wicked himself.

God names Hosea's first little boy Jezreel so the people of Israel will get the message: In the same place Ahab was obliterated, the area of Jezreel – that is the place I will totally wipe Northern Israel totally off the face of the map.

In other words, look at this tiny baby, Northern Israel, and know that his name is a prophecy against you: You will cease to exist some day.

3. (:6-7) What name does God give their second child? Girl or boy? (the name means “not pitied”)

A little girl named Lo-Ruhamah.

4. What seems to be the message God is sending through this second child's name?

The One, True God is saying again: You, Northern Israel, are not to be pitied. You have lived for yourselves, and not for me. You have ignored me. You have chosen to do the things you know I hate. You have put your families before Me. You have put your houses before Me. You have put your pleasures before Me. And I will not have pity on you when your destruction comes, and believe Me, it will come!

In this passage, though, (:6-7), the Lord does say He will have mercy on Southern Israel (Judah). They will be saved from the mass destruction which will indeed come to Northern Israel, but it will not be their armies which will save

them. No, it will simply be the Lord Himself Who steps in and keeps the army destroying Northern Israel from coming any further into Southern Israel.

Read through Isaiah 36 & 37 if you want to see how Hosea's prophecy came true, not just for Northern Israel (Israel), but also Southern Israel (Judah).

Look at Psalm 44:3-8 and see the rejoicing hearts of the people of Israel who know that God is their protector!

5. (:8-9) What name does God give their third child? Girl or boy? (the name means "not my people")

Another little boy, named Lo-Ammi.

6. Why did God choose this name?

The Lord is separating Himself from these people He loves, because they do not love Him. He is clearly saying – no more of you for Me! You are not My people!

7. (:10-11) God is obviously sending a frightful message to the people of Israel through these three names, right? What message does He send next through the preaching of Hosea?

When you read verse 9 you can't help but think God is through with Israel forever! But, no, as you keep reading you realize God is putting this generation of Israelites away from Him for now, but there will come a generation which will once again see His mercy and His love showered down on them...a generation which will hear the words: "You are the sons of the Living God!"

In fact, He declares in verse 11 that the Northern Kingdom (about to be obliterated) and the Southern Kingdom (which will be saved from destruction) will someday be gathered together as one again! They will have a king again! There will be no more "Cast-aways". Jezreel will once again be a place of life and blessing.

Wow! The boys will someday be called "My People". The girls will someday be called "Mercy is shown".

8. Why does God send this next message?

Because God is a God of justice and a God of mercy. He will someday extend mercy to the great-great-great-grandchildren of the people of Northern Israel who so completely ignored their matchless God.

When did this happen? Was there a time when Israel came back in belief and was forgiven of their unbelief by their One, True God? No, not yet, at least not as a whole nation yet. But they will. Because God has promised.

It will happen as it is described in the book of another, later, Old Testament prophet, Zechariah. Zechariah 12:10 – 13:1. Someday, at the end of the Last Seven Years, the nation of Israel will fall to their knees, sobbing in grief, when they realize they lived selfish, horrible lives and nailed their God to a cross. And God will be there, arms wide open, saying: “My People!”

What does this teach us about God? He has to punish sin. But He loves to extend mercy.

How can God punish sin and extend mercy at the same time? In Jesus. He took the punishment deserved by every person on earth because of their sins, and heaped it on Jesus, Who died on the cross in our place. Our sins meant that we were the ones who deserved to die on that cross. But God’s mercy said that He would take the punishment Himself.

Application Questions:

9. Does it seem fair to you that someone could rebel against God and not even care to pay any attention to Him, and then receive mercy and be welcomed back into God’s good graces?

Not a bit fair. But true anyway. The only thing God requires of the sinner who realizes Jesus paid the price for his sin is that the sinner acknowledge his sin and bow his knee in thankfulness to His Savior. Belief. Faith.

10. Read the story of the Prodigal Son and ask yourself again – is it fair that a prodigal son could return home after squandering his father's wealth and then be welcomed with open arms? (Luke 15:11-32)

In Luke 15:11-32 you get a heart-wrenching look at what God longed to do for His mean-hearted, selfish people in Northern Israel at the time of Hosea. He wanted to fold them up in His forgiveness and throw them a party! But they would not turn away from their sin! Forgiveness? Not a bit fair. Fair would have been punishment for eternity. But mercy? Not a bit fair....but God will do it because of love.