

## INTRODUCTION

It was the job of God's prophets to point out the spiritual problems in a nation. But they were more than whistle blowers; God's prophets also told the people what they needed to do to fix their spiritual problems.

In commercial aviation there is a process to fix minor problems with the equipment. It's the pilot's job to record if the aircraft he is flying has any minor maintenance issues, and it's the maintenance engineer's job to fix the problem. After a pilot secures the aircraft, he fills out what is often called a "Squawk sheet." He lists any of the minor problems he encountered with that particular aircraft.

Here are some actual squawk reports from Qantas Airlines. (P is for pilot; ME is for Maintenance Engineer).

P: Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.  
ME: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

P: Test flight OK, except auto-land very rough.  
ME: Auto-land not installed on this aircraft.

P: Aircraft handles funny.  
ME: Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly right, and be serious.

P: Target radar hums.  
ME: Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics.

P: Mouse in cockpit.  
ME: Cat installed.

P: Noise coming from under instrument panel. Sounds like a midget pounding on something with a hammer.  
ME: Took hammer away from midget.

I'm glad they can have a sense of humor at Qantas, and you'll be glad to know that Dustin Hoffman in "Rain Man" was right. He said, "Qantas never crashed." Since the advent of jet travel, Qantas has never had an airline crash.

God sent prophets to keep the nations from crashing. They filled out a spiritual squawk report for a nation's sins. But they did more than just point out problems; they also prescribed a remedy to repair the spiritual problems.

Hosea is one of my favorite prophets, because God used his life and marriage as a parable to teach us about His love and grace.

Hosea 1:2-8. "When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, 'Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.' So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Then the Lord said to Hosea, 'Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel.' Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, 'Call her Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer show love to the house of Israel, that I should at all forgive them. Yet I will show love to the house of Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but by the Lord their God.' After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. Then the Lord said, 'Call him Lo-Ammi, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.'"

There are three important truths we can draw from this amazing book. First, let's look at the symbolic story; then the prophetic message; then we'll examine the personal applications.

### **I. THE SYMBOLIC STORY: Hosea's love for an unfaithful wife**

Go back with me in your mind 2,800 years ago to a small village in Israel. A young man named Hosea, which is a derivative of Joshua, Jesus, in the New Testament, lived there. God spoke to him and told him to get married. He probably smiled at that and said, "Sure!" And God said, "I've got just the girl picked out for you—her name is Gomer." Again, Hosea smiled because he had heard Gomer was a gorgeous girl, and every man wanted her. But then God said something that made Hosea frown. He said, "By the way, Gomer is a prostitute, but marry her anyway. And get ready because she is going to be unfaithful to you and to your children." Hosea must have said, "What? Lord, that's a strange command!" And most of us will admit God sometimes tells us to do strange things that don't make sense to us at the time.

But Hosea obeyed the Lord and married Gomer. He hoped his love would prevent her from returning to a life of prostitution. They had three children, two boys and a girl. For several years, it looked as if God was wrong about her, and they were a happy family. But one morning Hosea walked into the kitchen and found a "Dear Hosea" letter. Gomer wrote, "Dear Hosea, I'm no longer fulfilled as a wife and a mother. You were never the man for me. I feel trapped. I want to live. I want to love. I want to laugh. So, I'm leaving you and the kids and returning to my former profession. Don't try to find me. It's over Hosea. Goodbye." You can imagine the pain and heartache Hosea must have felt. Some of you have had that very thing happen to you. Hosea's heart was broken, because rejection hurts.

We don't know how long Gomer was separated from Hosea, and we don't know how many men she welcomed into her arms, but there is evidence her life spiraled out of control, because we see she had sold herself into slavery. She was nothing but property to be bought and sold by evil men.

Then the Lord Hosea gave instructions again.

Hosea 3:1-4. "The Lord said to me, 'Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.' So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.\* Then I told her, 'You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.'"

*\*about a bushel and a half*

So Hosea went to the slave auction block prepared to buy back his own wife. He scraped together all the money he could find, and in desperation even took a bushel and a half of grain. Can you imagine the scene? Here was Gomer, stripped naked by the slave master so potential buyers could see what they were bidding on. Hosea hardly recognized his wife because of the toll sin and shame had taken on her once-young body. One man yelled out, "Ten pieces of silver!" Hosea said, "Eleven!" Another man said, "Twelve pieces of silver." "Hosea said, "Thirteen!" "Fourteen pieces of silver!" Hosea countered, "Fifteen pieces of silver!" Everyone dropped out except one man who said, "I'll give you fifteen pieces of silver and a bushel of barley!" Hosea said, "I'll give you fifteen pieces of silver and a bushel and a HALF of barley!" The other man waved his hand, "You can have her. She's not worth that much, anyway." The auctioneer said, "Sold!"

Now that Hosea had her, what would he do? According the Mosaic Law, he had the right to accuse her publicly and have her stoned to death. That would have restored his public standing as a man of righteousness. Or he could have taken her and said, "You lived like a slave, so I'm going to make you a slave. You're going to work your fingers to the bone from sunup to sundown to repay what it cost me to buy you." But instead Hosea tenderly approached Gomer and wrapped his robe around her nakedness. He said, "Sweetheart, I know what you've done, and I forgive you. I still love you. Will you come back home and be my wife and a mother to your children?"

You say, "What a love story!" And that's a picture of how much God loves unfaithful people—and unfaithful nations. Because there is also a

## **II. THE PROPHETIC MESSAGE: God calls an unfaithful nation to return to Him**

Hosea's marriage to Gomer was a living parable of God's relationship with Israel and with any nation that wanders from Him. Hosea is preaching came from his own personal experience of love, pain, and redemption. He told the Israelites that, like an unfaithful wife, they were guilty of spiritual adultery. Hosea could say with passion and honesty, "I know how God feels, because I felt the same way. You have broken the heart of God who loves you!"

God gave Hosea a vision of the future—a time when Israel would return to Him. He said, "For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days." (Hosea 3:4-5)

A hundred years ago when preachers read about Israel, they had to say the church was Israel; some even called America the "new Israel." But we don't have to wonder about the identity of Israel, because since 1948, Israel has been reborn in fulfillment of scripture. America isn't Israel, but there is a recurring historical pattern in Israel's history that can be seen in our nation. This pattern has three stages.

### **A. God has blessed our nation**

Hosea pointed out that from the beginning of His dealings with Israel, God had blessed this nation. We read these tender words from God, "When Israel was a child, I loved him...I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them." (Hosea 11:1, 4)

The same can be said of America. America is great, because as the songs says, "God shed His grace on Thee." God blessed our nation because our founders were people who were looking for a land where they could live with the freedom to express their faith, free from a state church.

During this series I've provided historical documentation to prove that our Founding Fathers possessed a great trust and belief in the God of the Bible. Take out a dollar bill and look on the back, and you'll find the American Seal. Above the seal you read these words in Latin, "*Annuit Cœptis*" which means "God favors our undertaking."

We're all familiar with the date July 4, 1776, the signing of the Declaration of Independence. But do you know what happened exactly 40 days before that, May 17, 1776? The Continental Congress called the citizens of the colonies to a period of fasting and prayer—and only at the end of the 40 days of prayer did they sign the Declaration of Independence. They issued this call on March 16, 1776: "Desirous to have people of all ranks and degrees duly impressed with a solemn sense of God's superintending providence, and of their duty, devoutly to rely, in all their lawful enterprizes, on His aid and direction, do earnestly recommend, that Friday, the Seventeenth day of May next (40 days before July 4), be observed by the said colonies as a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer; that we may, with united hearts, confess and bewail our manifold sins and transgressions, and, by a sincere repentance and amendment of life, appease His righteous displeasure, and, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, obtain His pardon and forgiveness; humbly imploring His assistance to frustrate the cruel purposes of our unnatural enemies... it is recommended to Christians of all denominations, to assemble for public worship, and abstain from servile labour on the said day."

Like Israel, God blessed this young nation, even in times of great trouble. We won the War of Independence when the British surrendered at Yorktown, but 31 years later they were back for the War of 1812. There has only been one time in history when our capital city has been occupied by enemy troops. It was on August 24, 1814 when British General Robert Ross attacked Washington D.C., which had only 8,000 residents, half of whom were slaves. There was little resistance, and the British captured Washington easily.

After eating the meal Dolly Madison had set for the American soldiers in the White House Dining Room, Ross and his troops set fire to the White House and other public buildings.

However, the very next day, an unusual weather phenomenon occurred. Although hurricanes seldom make landfall around Washington, a violent hurricane roared ashore and two hours of torrential rain and winds extinguished the fires, and the White House wasn't completely destroyed. Tornadoes spawned by the hurricane killed more British soldiers than the battle of Washington itself! The weather was so bad, General Ross decided to leave Washington rather than occupy it. As he was leaving, he asked an American lady: "Great God, Madam! Is this the kind of storm to which you are accustomed in this infernal country?" The lady answered, "No, Sir, this is a special interposition of Almighty God to drive our enemies from our city." Indeed, you won't read this in the history books, but that storm probably turned the tide and made the difference between defeat and victory in the War of 1812. Had Washington burned to the ground and the British troops not been decimated by the storm, we might be loyal subjects of Queen Elizabeth to this day! But God intervened. God has blessed our nation.

## **B. Our nation has turned from God**

Hosea's charge against Israel was that they had committed spiritual adultery. They had turned from the true God to worship false gods. See if his description of Israel 2,800 years ago doesn't sound like our American culture in 2012. "The Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: 'There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.'" (Hosea 4:1-2)

How has America turned from God? We have forsaken His moral law and principles. Let me mention again two moral issues indicating that America has turned from God. First, we are in the process of redefining a 4,000 year-old definition of marriage. I'm not talking about a Judeo-Christian definition of marriage, but a definition from the majority of cultures. Islam allows a man to have multiple wives, but the vast majority of international cultures recognize marriage as a permanent union between one man and one woman. In 1996, our government passed the Defense of Marriage Act that defined marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman. It passed by overwhelming majorities in both the Senate and the House (85-14 in the Senate and 342-67 in the House). President Clinton signed the bill into law. But last year the Obama administration told the Justice Department not to defend this law and they are proposing it be repealed and replaced with the Respect for Marriage Act. If it were passed, Texas and other states would be forced by the Federal Government to recognize same-sex unions as marriage.

Some people argue that we're living in different times; that these modern times call for modern morality. Homosexual behavior isn't new. It has existed as long as humanity has existed. Homosexual conduct was the sin that brought God's judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah. And for centuries, homosexual conduct was called the crime of sodomy. Until 2003, sodomy was still a punishable crime in the U.S. It is still considered a crime in 70 nations around the world.

I'm not attacking homosexuals. God loves homosexuals, He loves adulterers, He loves hypocrites, and He even loves Baptists. But when any culture to put its official stamp of approval on what the Bible calls sin, it is an indication of how far they've wandered from God's Word.

But in my mind, the issue of same-sex unions pales in comparison to the horrific sin of abortion. In 1973 our nation legalized the killing of a baby in the womb. Again, abortions weren't new. Doctors and non-licensed medical quacks had performed them for decades. Before *Roe v. Wade*, abortion was also a crime punishable by law.

We aren't angry with those who have had abortions; our heart goes out to you. We know there are three victims of every abortion: a child, a mother and a father. We know parents who choose to abort a child struggle with the emotional fallout for the rest of their lives. We're one of the few churches in America that has an abortion recovery ministry called C.A.R.E. Christ-centered Abortion Recovery of East Texas. It was envisioned and led by Dr. Grace English. Abortion is a double tragedy. It not only stops a beating heart, but it destroys human potential. We have missed the impact of the lives of those millions of Americans who never had a chance to live outside the womb.

Sally Jenkins is a syndicated newspaper writer. She has commented: "The first babies aborted in 1973, when abortion became legal in the US, would have been 39 in 2012—in the prime of their lives. But we'll never know what would have become of the 52 million American babies aborted since then. Abortion doesn't just involve serious issues of life, but of potential lives—Heisman trophy winners, scientists, doctors, artists, inventors, Little Leaguers—who would never come to be if their birth mothers had not wrestled with the stakes and chosen to carry those lives to term." Who knows? The next Albert Einstein, or Jonas Salk, or Billy Graham might have been part of that number.

### **C. Our only hope is to return to God!**

Hosea's message to Israel was that they had not only broken God's Laws, but they had broken God's heart. And I believe the heart of God is broken over our national sins as well. His instructions to Israel are words that we need to follow. He said, "Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: 'Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously.'" (Hosea 14:1-2) We need to confess our national sins and return to the Lord.

In spite of Israel's sins, God was willing to draw them back to His heart, the same way Hosea received Gomer. He said, "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth." (Hosea 2:14-15)

The valley of Achor was the place where Joshua had directed the Hebrews to stone Achan and his family for his sin of stealing and lying. Achor was a place of miserable memories. But God promised to turn the misery into a miracle. He offered them a door of hope. Instead of misery, there would be the music of joy. God wants to offer America a doorway of hope as well.

And in spite of our problems, I am very hopeful for our nation. My newest book coming out this month is called *HOPE—When You Need it the Most*. There's even a chapter in it about Hope for America. HOPE stands for Having Only Positive Expectations. I have only positive expectations for our nation.

There is a very important election this week. But regardless of who is elected, there is still hope for America. Our nation's return to God won't start in the White House, the Courthouse, the Statehouse or the Jailhouse; it's going to start in the church house when we, as God's people, get serious about living out our faith in a godless culture. Our hope is not dependent upon who is sitting in the Oval Office in Washington. Our hope is found in the One who is sitting on the throne of heaven. Governments change; cultures change; laws change, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Whoever gets elected, we will remain One Nation Under God, and we'll still sing that song that says, "God bless America, land that I love! Stand beside her and guide her; through the night with a light from above!"

### **III. THE PERSONAL APPLICATION: The Christian life is like a marriage**

Hosea is the second-greatest love story in the Bible. The greatest love story in the Bible is John 3:16. "For God so loved (say your name) that He gave His one and only Son. That if (say your name) will believe in Him, (say your name) will never perish, but have eternal life." Here are two things you can take home with you from Hosea.

#### **A. God loves you so much that He paid the highest price to know you**

God loves you. He always has, and He always will. Hosea went to that slave auction and paid everything he had to redeem Gomer. And Jesus came into the world and paid everything He was and everything He had to redeem you. The Bible says, "It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19) At the cross Jesus bid the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood to buy you back, even though you were an unfaithful sinner.

God knows the very WORST about each of us, yet He loves us more than we can ever imagine. When you heard the story of Hosea and Gomer, there were probably some of you thinking, "I sure couldn't love a husband or wife who was repeatedly unfaithful to me!" You're right, but remember Hosea was acting out God's love for us!

#### **B. Salvation is a personal relationship with Jesus**

When you marry someone, you don't get a marriage, you get a mate! When you become a Christian, you don't get a religion; you get a living relationship with a Savior! Even Hosea knew that. God said, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me." (Hosea 13:4) There is only one name under heaven whereby you can be saved and that is the name of Jesus.

Through the years I've known many people who just couldn't accept the fact that God loved them enough to save them. They thought they had to get better and clean up their act so they

could earn God's offer of forgiveness. But that's the problem. You can never be good enough to deserve God's love and acceptance. Did Gomer deserve to be redeemed?

## CONCLUSION

I loved the movie, "Saving Private Ryan." I recently read an article about the movie written by a retired Army Ranger named Tom Allen. As you know, the movie is about the Normandy Invasion and Tom Hanks plays the character of Captain John Miller. Captain Miller led a small team behind enemy lines to find Private Ryan to take him from battle because four of his brothers had already been killed in combat. Tom Allen wrote that he was proud to see the brave Rangers storm the beaches, but there was a part of the movie he didn't like. You know that at the end of the movie Captain Miller finds Private Ryan, but he refuses to leave because his platoon is being attacked. So Captain Miller and the other members of his team join in the firefight. Captain Miller is shot and as he's dying he grabs Private Ryan played by Matt Damon and his last words are, "Earn this."

Retired Army Ranger Tom Allen wrote that the words, "Earn this," made him really angry. He said a Ranger would never say that. The motto of the Rangers is not "Earn this," it is *Sua Sponte*, which means, "by my own accord" or literally, "I chose this." He said if Captain Miller had been a real ranger, his last words to Private Ryan would have been, *Sua Sponte*. "I chose this of my own accord, I volunteered. There's no charge, now, you go and live."

Look at the cross. Jesus isn't saying, "Earn this." We never could. He is saying, "*Sua Sponte*. I chose this, I volunteered for this. There's no cost to you and because I love you, now live!"



## OUTLINE

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### II. THE PROPHETIC MESSAGE: God calls an unfaithful nation to return to Him

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes