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1. HOSEA

1.1 Revelation of the LORD in Hosea's Marriage

Hosea 1

A. The Birth of Three Children by Gomer, Hosea's wife (1:1-3)

Hosea appears as a prophet of the LORD in Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, when Jeroboam, the son of Joash, is king of that nation. Verse 1 of ch. 1 also mentions the names of certain kings who reigned over Judah in Jerusalem at that time, namely Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

The Lord's strange command to Hosea to take a wife of harlotry and to have children with her (v. 2) has held the attention of many believers and commentators of the Scriptures throughout the centuries.

Much credibility (especially on linguistic grounds, but also on the basis of God's revelation) can be given to the opinion of Professor van Gelderen in his commentary on Hosea¹. He describes it this way: it is not intended that Hosea should marry a "professional" prostitute, but rather a girl who has the tendency to become, as

¹Ed. note: The author refers to the Dutch commentary written by C. van Gelderen and W.H. Gispen entitled "Het boek Hosea" in the series "Commentaar op het Oude Testament"; Kok, Kampen, 1953.

wife, an image of unfaithful Israel. The girl is Gomer, a daughter of Diblaim. (There is no symbolic meaning in these names.)

The reason for this strange command is: “for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the LORD” (1: 2b). The word, “land,” really means “people,” namely the people of the ten tribes, the covenant people of God. But this is not a casual choice of words. It means that the nation is unfaithful to God, but Hosea calls this nation the “land”, and, thus he refers to Canaan.

Canaan’s soil has been drenched with heathen idolatry since the time of the Canaanites, Hittites, *etc.* Unbelief, superstition, idolatry and immorality blossomed then. Israel’s entry into Canaan (under Joshua) should have established on that soil the rule of the LORD’s grace and Spirit through his Word. Unfortunately it was not Canaan (the land) that was changed, but Israel, the nation. The nation of the ten tribes lost the fight against Canaan in a spiritual sense. And it is this Canaanized nation of God which shamefully forsakes the LORD and plays the harlot.

Hosea is obedient to God’s command. He marries Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim and she conceives and bears him a son.

Hosea wants to marry and his eyes fall on Gomer. But he does not follow up his intention without asking for God’s approval in prayer. In response he receives the assurance . . . that he must nevertheless take her. He must not be repelled by the suffering which Gomer’s adulterous nature will cause him. He has to take her as his wife and beget children with her. With the utmost clarity he hears the voice of God: Go, start a family, and your experience with your family will be the image of my experience with Israel. (van Gelderen).

This is Hosea’s first prophetic encounter and v. 3 speaks briefly of his obedience to this divine command.

B. Three Revelations of the LORD on the Birth of Hosea’s Three Children (1:4-12)

Verses 4 and 5: God’s revelation is shown at the birth of Hosea’s son Jezreel; vv. 6 and 7: God’s revelation is shown at the birth

people of Israel.” Is there a difference between “house” and “people” in this context?

3. Can the same be said of phrases, “the people of Israel” and “Sons of the living God” in v. 10?
4. To what time period do the promises of vv. 10-12 refer?
5. Is it permissible simply to apply those promises to the unfaithful church of the present day?