

## **GOMER'S INFIDELITY: HOSEA'S ORACLE TO THE FAITHLESS ISRAEL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The current state of modern churches can be compared to the Israelites' waywardness that inspired the prophetic message of Hosea. God used Hosea's unhappy marriage to symbolize the social, political, and religious conditions of Israel. This was a period when social and moral decay worsened alongside increasing wealth and stark poverty. The nation engaged in dishonesty; false measures were common, the strong exploited the weak, the rich oppressed the poor, justice was lacking, and the courts appeared ineffective. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the true meaning of Hosea's marriage to Gomer in relation to his prophetic message to Israel's spiritual life. The study's goal is to analyse various interpretations of his marriage and to highlight its significance for 21st-century churches. It was found that the prophet, who had foreknowledge of the covenant established by Yahweh at Sinai, saw this covenant as a perfect marriage. This covenant formed the foundation for genuine repentance through his troubled marriage with Gomer. This study takes a literary approach and suggests that today's church needs to understand that God desires genuine repentance and love for Him rather than love for the world.

**KEYWORDS:** Unfaithfulness, Waywardness, Gomer, Oracle, and Israel.

### **INTRODUCTION**

God uses different media to communicate and to call His people into repentance. For instance, for Moses, God used a burning bush to speak to this disgraced prince (Ex. 3:1-10). For Balaam, God used a donkey to speak to this pagan prophet (Num. 22:28-31). While calling King Saul to order, God used the bleating of some sheep to speak to this wayward king (1 Sam. 15:14). In the case of the Widow of Zarephath, God used an empty meal barrel and a dead son to speak to this poor widow (1 Kings 17:9-24). To the discouraged prophet Elijah, God used a touch, a

meal, and a small, still voice to speak to him (1 Kings 19:1-18). To speak to the head of the Syrian army, Naaman, God used an Israelite slave to speak to this great general (2 Kings 5:4). Also, in the New Testament, God used a rooster to speak to Simon Peter, the fallen preacher (Matt. 26:69-75). In the narrative under consideration in this study, the Lord uses the unhappy marriage experience of Hosea to illustrate the social, political, and religious situation in Israel and to us. The prophetic oracle of Hosea came at a critical time in the history of the Israelites. This was a period when social and moral conditions had greatly deteriorated alongside an increase in wealth and extreme poverty. The nation engaged in dishonest gains; false balances were used, the strong took advantage of the weak, the rich oppressed the poor, justice was at a premium, and the courts apparently did little to change the situation (Wood 277). Evidently, the book of Hosea was addressed to a particular people, specifically the Northern Kingdom; however, the oracle of Hosea in Israel is a dynamic metaphor that speaks to the present day and the situation by announcing the eternal principle of divine providence, which will always operate wherever similar conditions prevail.

## THE MAN HOSEA

The name Hosea comes from the Hebrew הוֹשֵׁעַ *hoshea* and Greek Ὡσηέ or Ὡσηε *Osee*, meaning salvation, help, or deliverance (Hastings 419). The name is associated with the original name of Joshua in Hebrew and Jesus in Greek. It is also linked to the name of the last king of the Northern Kingdom, Hosea. For the sake of distinction, however, the English Bible always spells the name of the prophet as Hosea (without the second “h”) (Archer 321). He was likely a native of Northern Israel because he often spoke of places in the Northern Kingdom, such as Lebanon, Tabor, and Samaria. He used the word Ephraim not less than thirty-seven times. This term is typically used in the Old Testament for the Northern Kingdom (Adekunle 22-23). Out of all the prophetic materials contained in the Old Testament, the writing of Hosea was the only one to emerge from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This notable eighth-century B.C. prophet lived during a period of great national anxiety. He was born during the reign of Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.), the last great king of Israel, and according to the superscription of his book (1:1), he exercised his prophetic ministry in Israel when Uzziah (783-743 B.C.) and Jotham (724-688 B.C.) reigned in Judah (Harrison 362).

According to Von Rad, Hosea was a contemporary of Amos, Isaiah, and

Micah (139); others, like Folarin, have included Jonah as Hosea's contemporary (49). Looking at his family background, Hosea was probably from a family of sufficient social standing; that is why his father's name "Beerī" is mentioned. As for Hosea's occupation, Winward submits that he was a farmer; others, noting the reference to "oven" have inferred that he was a baker (45-49). This means that he took over the family business from his father. Although Amos stressed divine righteousness, which for him comprises the most important moral attribute of divine nature, Hosea emphasized true love as a characteristic feature of the divine declaration with man. There are no other biographical details apart from those he provides in his own prophecies.

## **HOSEA'S MARRIAGE AND ITS PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION**

Scholars such as Von Rad, Young, Bright, and Harrison have all acknowledged that the greatest problem confronting any interpreter of Hosea's marriage found in chapter 1:3 is, "Could the Holy God tell Hosea to marry an adulteress?" (Folarin 27). Because of this strange command and the type of adulterous person Gomer proved to be after Hosea married her, considerable discussion has arisen among scholars regarding the proper understanding of the marriage. The various views asserted may be divided into four principal types as discussed below:

### **Allegorical Marriage**

This view sees the marriage as never having happened historically but understands it as either a vision or an allegory. This view was held by Medieval Jews and continues to be popular into the last half of the nineteenth century (Knight 270). Those who hold it say that God would not have commanded a prophet to marry an unchaste woman, especially since the priests had been expressly forbidden to do so (Lev. 21:7, 14) (Smith 130). They also point out that the significance of an act, as described in the book, is regularly given immediately after the description (e.g., 1:2; 4; 6; 9, etc.), which is a pattern in symbolic literature. Young advances two arguments: first, Hosea's ministry would have been shattered had he married an unchaste woman; second, the messages given to him would have been too far apart in time to be meaningful in relation to one another (Brown 40). His call and leadership would have been called into question. Subsequently, evidence against this view includes several points. Archer, for instance, raises two objections to this

interpretation: the story of Hosea's marriage is presented as a straightforward narrative; therefore, there is no evidence in the text that it was intended to illustrate a theological teaching. In other words, Hosea's straightforward narrative style gives little indication of symbolism being intended, contrary to Young's assertions. Additionally, if the transaction did not take place, even though it is presented in such a factual manner, then the possibility arises of questioning the historicity of any number of other episodes, which are narrated in Scripture as if they were sober history (Archer 323). Therefore, the marriage of Hosea should not be considered an allegory.

### **Literal Marriage**

This view holds that the marriage did occur and that Gomer was already an unchaste person, possibly a temple prostitute. Arguments in favour of this view are mainly three: to start with, this is the most natural meaning of God's command to Hosea, "Go take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness" (1:2). Also, the command "take" most likely applies to "children of unfaithfulness" as well as "an adulterous wife." Therefore, Gomer must already have been a prostitute at this time to have such children. Finally, as far as the ethical impropriety of this command is concerned, it was only the law that forbade the priest to marry an unchaste woman, but Hosea was a prophet (Walther 27-27). With respect to the first reason, however, it is questionable whether this view takes the command in its most "natural" meaning. One would hardly expect the descriptive term "an adulterous wife," אִשָּׁה זָנוּנִים (eset Zenunim), on this basis, but merely the word "harlot" זֹנָה (Zonah). Additionally, one would expect the terms "an adulterous wife" and "children of unfaithfulness" to carry parallel meanings; if the first refers to a woman who already practiced prostitution, then the second should mean children who did the same, which is unlikely considering the probable age (21-27). However, as a prophet, he was not at liberty to do just anything, since he was God's representative; it is a command that must be obeyed, and Hosea has no other option than to obey. Furthermore, a more likely parallel meaning takes "an adulterous wife" to signify a woman of adulterous character (but not necessarily having practiced adultery yet), and the children being born to have similar character; a view supported by 2:4 (cf. 4:2; 5:4).

Furthermore, this command to Hosea was given by God Himself; it was not just something Hosea did or that some human told him to do. It is quite inconceivable that God would have commanded anyone, much less a religious

leader, to marry such a person (21-27). Similarly, Folarin, citing Jegede, states that for God to tell Hosea to marry a real harlot would be against God's nature. It would amount to great inconsistency if, after telling the religious leaders and the people of Israel not to marry harlots, He turns around and tells Hosea to marry one. This did not illustrate God's purpose, for God did not marry adulterous Israel (28). The God whose eyes cannot behold iniquities (Habakkuk 1:13) cannot tempt His prophet to do anything that is against His own attributes.

### **Literal Marriage - Gomer as Chaste**

This view holds that the marriage indeed occurred, but Gomer was chaste when married and only became adulterous later (279). This is the preferred interpretation, despite Pfeiffer calling it plain "sleight of hand" (567). The phrase "an adulterous wife" should be understood proleptically (Wood 279). Gomer was not a harlot at the time Hosea married her, and if she was not, then the observations raised in the second view are removed. Such a marriage would have been difficult for Hosea to contemplate and carry out, knowing his bride would surely prove to be unfaithful, but the ethical problem of his marrying an acknowledged harlot would not have existed (279). Furthermore, Young has objected that this view would take many years out of Hosea's life to allow for his marriage, the birth of three children, his separation from Gomer, then their reunion, and that all this would have unduly shortened Hosea's prophetic ministry. Yet for the events, six or seven years would probably have sufficed, which is by no means excessive in comparison with a normal lifespan (253). Another point in favour of this view is that, as the book shows, Hosea genuinely loved Gomer as God loved the children of Israel, even in their sinful acts, calling them to repentance. Both Young's objections to the preferred view can be answered if Gomer was chaste when they married. There is no reason for the marriage to have shattered Hosea's ministry. People could have sympathized with a husband whose wife had proved scandalous; they might well have listened more closely to his message because of this. Nor is the objection valid that Hosea's message would have been too far apart in time. In answering the question why God allowed His holy servant to go into this unholy union, Veldkamp submits:

The time had come when the word as preached no longer made any impression upon Israel. Therefore, the spoken word would have to be reinforced by a predication through deeds. The Israelites would have paid little or no attention if Hosea had spoken to them in allegorical terms and had told them what he saw in a vision. After all, everyone has a dream. But a

marriage between a prophet of the Lord and a wanton woman who ran away from her husband would surely draw their attention. Everyone would be buzzing with gossip; it would soon become the favourite topic of conversation. That was exactly God's purpose, once everyone was talking about the scandal and had a chance to express his sanctimonious opinion about the slut whom the prophet had chosen as his wife, Hosea would speak up and say, "you people are just like that wife of mine (18-19).

While it is true that Hosea was given a new message each time a child was born, we need not think that these messages comprised everything Hosea preached (Wood 279-280). Hosea was a prophet who lived what he preached. Perhaps the most convincing reason in favour of the preferred view is that it implies a significant parallel between Hosea's marriage and God's experiences with Israel (cf. 1:2; 6:7; 2:2-13). In the Old Testament, Israel is portrayed as having been chaste, especially by God at Sinai under a covenant relationship (Jeremiah 2:2-3), though God, of course, knew that she would become unfaithful. Additionally, the parallel requires that the woman loved by Hosea again (Chapter 3) be the same Gomer as in Chapter 1 (280). Archer has the following to say in support of his viewpoint:

At the time Hosea married Gomer, she was a woman of overtly loose morals if Hosea delivered his message in later years, he may well have looked back upon his domestic tragedy and seen in it the guiding word of God. Hence, the words encouraged him to marry in the first place, though her future infidelity was foreknown to God, would have been tantamount to a command, marry "an adulterous woman" even though the command did not come to the prophet in precisely these words (323).

This implies that at the time of Hosea's marriage, Gomer was probably only a potential harlot; she became a harlot later. Supporting this view, Folarin, citing Jegede, argues that this is the best perspective for illustrating Israel's adultery or unfaithfulness to God. When God chose Israel through Abraham, she was faithful, but she turned away later in time (28-28). Therefore, God extended His love toward Israel, though she continually proved unfaithful to Him. Hosea took Gomer to be his wife when she was still a pure young woman, though he knew that later she would become unchaste during their marriage. Similarly, God had taken Israel in a pure condition, fully aware that she would become unfaithful in due course.

Besides, Gomer bore three children for Hosea: these are Jezreel, לֹא רָחֲמָה (Loruhamah), and לֹא עָמִי (Loammi). "Children of unfaithfulness," translated as יָלַד יְנוּנִים (yalad Zenunim), is exactly parallel with "an adulterous wife," אֵשֶׁת יְנוּנִים (eset

Zenunim). The phrases may be translated literally as “children of harlotries” and “wife of harlot,” referring to the immoral acts of the wife. The same word in “children of harlotries” could well mean the parallel thought: immoral acts of the children. Thus, children of harlotries could refer to children who came to be like their mother (Keil 170). Keil believes the children were the result of adulterous acts by the wife, born before her marriage to Hosea; for Keil holds that Gomer was a prostitute before she married Hosea, a view already seen as unlikely. Harper, on the other hand, believes that the first child was Hosea’s, but that the second and third children were those of another man, since their names are of a different type from the first (145). As will be seen, we should realize that God designated all three names for their symbolic significance regarding His own relation to Israel. They may have all been Hosea’s own children (Wood 170). Therefore, the argument that they are not Hosea’s children does not suffice here.

Furthermore, the first child was called 'Jezreel' (which in Hebrew sounds very close to Israel: (יִשְׂרָאֵל). Yizreel and Yisreel, respectively). This means "God sows" or "God scatters"; this is the name of the place where Jehu slew many people in his bid to wipe out Baal worship. Jeroboam, the reigning king at the time of Hosea's message, was from the house of Jehu. Although Jehu slew some people for worshipping Baal, his own house, through Jeroboam, was still committing the same sin that Ahab committed: the worship of Baal. Therefore, God was going to scatter Jeroboam's house for the bloodshed at Jezreel (Hos. 1:4) (Folarin 28-28). Wood states that the punishment for Jehu's sin is the cessation of the kingdom of Israel as a nation (171) due to the sin committed. To understand the narrative in its plotline, there is a need to examine the religious life of the people during the time of Hosea in relation to his prophetic oracle.

### **Spiritual infidelity**

Another view, held less widely, is that the situation is one of spiritual rather than physical infidelity. Gomer became unchaste because, like the Israelites of Hosea’s day, she became guilty of marital unfaithfulness. However, one must ask whether the difficulty of God’s ordering Hosea to marry an unchaste woman is any greater than His ordering Hosea to marry one who worshiped false gods. Moreover, the question arises as to how Hosea could have used this kind of infidelity by his wife as an illustration for people involved in the same type of sin (Wood 279). This view also has its weaknesses: although Israel sinned by going into prostitution with Baal, the god of the Canaanites, subjecting a holy prophet to an unholy act would be

a costly joke and call into question the integrity of the man of God.

## **RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN ISRAEL IN THE TIME OF HOSEA**

The mid-eighth century was a period of hideous dissonance. The state of Israel was externally strong and prosperous, yet religiously rotten. As voiced by Amos and Hosea, and shared by others, Israel's faith could no longer make peace with her, for Yahweh had been completely alienated from His people in the Northern Kingdom (Folarin 29). Yates submits that the priests had failed in their responsibility to lead the people to know God's word and His requirements for them. These priests had led the people into sin and had made sinning attractive. Priests and rituals made no higher demands on the people, making it increasingly difficult to keep human hearts from sinning. It became the fashion of the day to live a life that lacked a moral tone and then to worship in the sanctuary with reckless abandon. The so-called "holy women" were kept at the central sanctuaries as temple prostitutes to gratify the lust of the men. The people had forgotten the love of God and the covenant made at Sinai. It was a heart-rending experience; the prophet, whose heart had been broken, was chosen to speak to these sinful people (55-58) as one who had firsthand experience with an unchaste wife. He declared the mind of Yahweh to the people without compromise. The Northern Kingdom was trapped in idolatry, as though under a spell, bewitched by it and utterly helpless to extricate itself. The people had so wholly given themselves to this senseless idol that only judgment remained (Feinberg 30-31). Apparently, sacred prostitution, common in the fertility rites of the Baal cult, was still practiced. The people built "high places" and set up images and Asherah poles "on every high hill and under every spreading tree" (2 Kings 17:7-12), (Wood 162) sinful nature was at its peak and echelon.

Pfeiffer believes that the old sanctuaries for worship of Yahweh were turned to the worship of Baal (572). The worship of the living God was turned to the worship of Baal, the god of the Canaanites. Van Gemeren describes Israel's religion as syncretistic, meaning it adapted to cultural changes in the ancient Near East (106). The people combined the worship of Yahweh with the worship of Baal. Veldkamp views the religion as spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness (8). Israel is engaging in religious adultery. Similarly, McPherson remarks that it was not that the Israelites had stopped worshipping Yahweh, but that they had tried to combine the worship of Yahweh with the worship of Baalim, the gods of Canaan (3), something that provoked the anger of Yahweh against His chosen people. Nevertheless, Hosea

accused the people of unfaithfulness, cruelty, gluttony, drunkenness, luxury, and foolish rivalry. The poor man couldn't obtain justice, for the judges were easily bribed, merchants gave short weight and charged high prices for goods of poor quality, and they regretted that the Sabbath and New Moon should interrupt their trade, yet they desired "the day of Yahweh". To an outsider, the nation appeared very religious; people offered sacrifices lavishly, freewill offerings were publicized, and tithes were paid on a large scale, but it was rotten inside.

Thus, the prophets were silent, and the Nazirites were tempted to break their vows. Subsequently, the prophets said such an offering could not be acceptable to Yahweh, who looks beyond the offerings to the conduct of the giver and the spirit that prompts him to present the sacrifice (Dahunsi 31). Yahweh judges the intent and motives of the giver, and not only the gifts. Meanwhile, Amos had preceded Hosea in preaching against idolatry and sin, but the people had clearly paid little or no attention to his message. Now it was Hosea's turn, and the fact that Amos had not met with greater success did not make Hosea's task any easier. Yet he continued and spoke out strongly against the evils of the day. He also warned of ruin and disaster if his message was not heeded (Wood 162). Despite these warnings, Israel continued in her prostitution and forsook Yahweh, their God, who instituted their marriage at Mount Sinai.

## **THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN ISRAEL IN THE TIME OF HOSEA**

Hosea was raised in a period of opulence, prosperity, and scheming during which the rich and powerful availed themselves of opportunities to live luxuriously (VanGemeran 105). The political, social, and religious elements that influenced the functioning of Amos relate no less to the work of Hosea (Kuntz 273). The prophet ministered in the Northern Kingdom in the stirring days just preceding the fall of Assyria. Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.) was the ruler and a strong one. He had established approximately the same boundaries on the east and north of his country that had been held in the empire days of David and Solomon. This success had given him a remarkable position of influence along the entire Mediterranean coast. Similarly, Uzziah, king of Judah and a contemporary of Jeroboam for thirty-seven years, had expanded territory to a size nearly that of the southern boundary in the earlier period. Together, Israel and Judah had almost reduplicated the area held by Israel's two greatest rulers (Wood 164).

Meanwhile, the concurrent reign of Uzziah of Judah (792-740 B.C.) and Jeroboam II of Israel rivalled the “golden age” of David and Solomon in prosperity and peace (2:4-12). Trade and commerce also flourished in the land. The politicians and merchants in Samaria improved the standards, but the farmers and workers suffered poverty and oppression (Van Gemeren 105). Therefore, Israel was rotten from within; Uzziah in Jerusalem and Jeroboam II in Samaria had their own way in the world. They are boastful of their power and might, and wealth. Jeroboam’s son, Zechariah, was murdered within six months after he mounted the throne. However, it was during these years of anarchy, bloodshed, revolt, and the breakup of a nation that Hosea, the prophet to the Northern Kingdom, preached. He was called upon to deliver Yahweh’s message to a people who had little or no concern for spiritual matters. They had not listened to Amos; they were not disposed to give heed to Hosea. Dissolution, decay, and death were all around him. Chaos, anarchy, fraud, and broken covenants were visible on every side. Hosea stood his ground as God’s representative in those troubled days. With all these oracles coming from different angles, the people ignored the warnings from the prophet and continued to promote lawlessness and unfaithfulness.

## **THE IMPLICATIONS OF HOSEA’S MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH**

The central thought of Hosea’s message is God’s covenant with Israel that the people had broken. This covenant was made at Sinai in the wilderness, at which time God found Israel like “a grape in the desert” and “early fruit on the fig tree” (7:10). The Same is the covenant of Jesus with His church, which was sealed with His own blood on the cross. The “grape in the desert” is a symbol of the blood of Jesus on the cross of Calvary that was shed for the sins of the world. Through the passing years, however, they had wandered away from this God, and the more He called them, the further they went from Him (11:2). Thus, the 21st-century churches are forgetting the sacrifice of the cross to follow the dictates of the world. Hosea was able to let them know that they had broken the covenant so graciously made with them (Wood 166). In the same vein, the church is also guilty of breaking the covenant.

To begin with, God made a covenant with Israel, and Israel continues to break it through severe sin. Today, as in the days of Hosea, the church is guilty of breaking covenant; the love for self-praise and materialism has overtaken the church. Both the pew and the pulpit are pursuing material gains. We have various churches

that focus more on prophecy, miracles, signs, and wonders, abandoning the gospel of holiness and righteous living. The Church of God has shifted from a place of spiritual renewal into a mini shopping centre where pastors and prophets sell spiritual materials such as anointing oil, handkerchiefs, and holy water. Some pastors today, like medical doctors, have consultation offices where members pay for consultations. The love for money has replaced genuine love for God.

More so, just like in the days of Hosea, people cheat and commit different kinds of atrocities daily, all in the name of religion. The national and international news media are filled with cases of prophets who participate in fraud immorality, and a host of other kinds of abominable things (Akinola 132). The Church of God is now becoming a den of robbers. Recently, a preacher of the gospel began selling miracle ATMs to his congregation; the said ATM would deposit miracle alerts into their individual bank accounts. The level of deceit among gospel ministers today is alarming, causing desperate members to fall into the devil's camp. The words of Jesus, "Feed my sheep," have now turned into "Duped my sheep" by worldly pastors who entered the ministry primarily to exploit innocent and unsuspecting members. Unfortunately, we see some pastors who were faithful to their calling beginning to compromise their stance in the name of getting rich quickly. Some who were known for preaching holiness are now being converted into prosperity preachers and miracle workers. A true church will preach the unconditional love of God. Members need to understand that they are to love God not for what they think they need, but to love Him for who He is. This is the love that Jesus has for his church, which the prophet Hosea exemplified.

Most importantly, Hosea speaks of God's love and patience with Israel during the time they were breaking the covenant (WinWord 47). Hosea preached love in its slightest sense; it was an agape love demonstrated. God loved Israel not because the people loved Him or based on their sacrifices, nor because they worshiped Him more than any other nation (Jack 27). Now, despite the increase in the number of churches and denominations, government institutions seem to be weak and failing; there is a lot of decay and rottenness in most areas of our national lives. The level of corruption is on the increase; this clearly shows that the impact of Christianity is not much felt in society today. When will the church be the salt that Christ called her, or when will she shine the light of Christ to this dark world? (Akinola 133). The answer is not difficult to find. The world has entered the church while the church has joined the world in all her levels of lawlessness. As God loves Israel based on His covenant with their father. God's love for His church is based on

the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross of Calvary (John 3:16), unfortunately, today the church is taking the grace of God for granted. People engage in different kinds of lawlessness in the church without being checked. Some move from one church to another in search of miracles. Others move to places where their sins and wayward lives would be covered. Hypocrisy is now the order of the day.

Furthermore, Hosea directly or indirectly preached against the separation of husband and wife. The Church not only has a record of many divorces today. The church is guilty of promoting separation and divorce. The home is the bedrock of society. Therefore, the church must promote sanity in all her conduct, especially in the Christian home. Those coming into marriage today must learn to put on the garments of endurance as they relate to one another. Preachers of the gospel must promote the concept of true marriage by holding firm to the marriage vows “for better for worse, for richer or poorer”, by discouraging the new version “for better for better, for poorer you go”. Parents must also help in building up their children in the ways of the Lord. The sanctity of the Christian home must not be compromised for anything. Forgiveness, as seen in Hosea’s relationship with his wife Gomer, should also be encouraged instead of separation and divorce, which are being witnessed today. So also, despite the failure of the Christian homes, God is still looking for an opportunity to bring her back to Himself through repentance.

Aside from the love of God for his people, Hosea also gave a note of solemn warning of severe punishment upon the people for breaking God’s covenant (Von Rad 115). Wood explained that God has been patient, but a time will come, however, when patience will no longer be appropriate, and punishment will be necessary. This is seen, for instance, in 5:1-15, where general statements regarding this punishment are set forth. This punishment would come in the form of desolation for the land (4:3) and exile for the people. God says, “They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind,” and in 10:5-8, by a direct indication that the people would be carried captive to Assyria (Wood 167). This is a strong warning to the church; to avoid impending doom and dangers, there is an urgent need for the church to return to her first love. The body of Christ must fight hypocrisy and any form of religiosity without godliness. Even if every institution and system fail, the Church must stand out, rebuke the abnormalities, and restore a godly attitude patterned after the scripture for the society.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Yahweh desires true and sincere worship. People must not serve God because of what they think they will get, but serve Him because of his love.
2. The church, which is the bride of Christ, must, as a matter of urgency, repent and retrace her steps back to Yahweh, her husband.
3. The church leadership must address the issue of love for material gain at the expense of the Lord.
4. There is a need for more prophets like Hosea, whose homes will preach and communicate Yahweh's unfailing love for His church.

## CONCLUSION

The issues raised in this study have revealed that Hosea's marriage with Gomer was real and that it was his prophetic role in Israel at the time of Israel's faithfulness. The church needs prophets, as in the days of Hosea, who would speak truth as handed over to them by God to bring men back to God. Hosea paid for Gomer's restoration; likewise, God in His righteousness restored Israel to Himself. Therefore, the Gospel Ministers are expected to serve others, preach, and teach the undiluted word of God. They must be blameless and faultless. They have the responsibility of returning the church to her husband through genuine repentance and the undiluted word of God. Gomer was lost, but was restored, so also the Church today should restore the world to the love of God through evangelism. The fact is that the Church is the dream of God to establish his covenant in every heart. And this cannot happen unless we revisit our foundation and work on the old path.

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