

## **Week 5      The Hosea Paradox: *The God who is faithful to the unfaithful.***

### **Background**

Hosea lived in the tragic final days of the northern kingdom (Israel) during which time 6 kings reigned within 25 years. Four of them were murdered by their successors while still in office and one (Hoshea) was captured in battle and only one (Menahem) was succeeded on the throne by his son. These kings, given to Israel by God in anger and taken away in wrath ( Chapter 13 v 11) floated away like a twig on the surface of the waters (Chapter 10 v 7). Bloodshed followed bloodshed (Chapter 4 v 2) Assyria was expanding westward and Menahem accepted and paid tribute to Assyria but shortly afterwards in 733 BC Israel was dismembered by Assyria because of the intrigue of Pekah (who had gained Israel's throne by killing Pekahiah, Menahem's son and successor). Only the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh were left to the king of Israel. Then because of the disloyalty of Hoshea, Samaria was captured and its people exiled in 722 – 721BC bringing the northern kingdom to an end.

### **The Hosea Paradox**

*Read Hosea Chapter 1*

God is using Hosea as a visual aid to show the hurt that Israel were causing Him by their actions and worship of other gods and alliances with Assyria. So God tells Hosea to marry a wife who would be unfaithful to him.

Perhaps you can relate to the sense of betrayal that God evokes when he inspires Hosea to write the words of Chapter 2.

God is explicit about the pain, anguish and turmoil that He experiences because of Israel's unfaithfulness.

In Chapter 3 the Lord tells Hosea to go and show his love to his wife again. This is an example of God continually loving Israel even though they kept rebelling again and again.

1. Is God naïve – continuing to believe the best in the face of all the evidence?
2. Is God foolish – unable to learn from His mistakes?
3. Is God weak – manipulated by His betrayer?
4. Is God gullible – does He really believe those empty promises that it will be better next time?

The dramatic life story of Hosea the prophet can help us get to the bottom of these questions, because his failed marriage was designed to serve as a worked example – a visual aid made flesh – specifically constructed to help the people of Israel understand the heart of their God.

Hosea's prophecy ends on a challenge that is worthy of reflection.

*Read Chapter 14*