

A Love Letter from Heaven

By David Wright

In the eighth century before Christ, the Assyrians were threatening to destroy the northern tribes of Israel. Because God's people had forsaken him to pursue the worthless idols of surrounding nations, the Lord would deliver them into the terrible hands of the enemies they most feared. Although Israel's betrayal both hurt and angered God, his love for his people never wavered. In fact, he sent a powerful message of love in the person of Hosea.

The Lord asked this prophet to marry a woman named Gomer. Her marital misconduct would serve as an illustration of Israel's unfaithfulness. God instructed Hosea to "take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the Lord" (Hos. 1:2). It's impossible to know whether Gomer was a prostitute both before and after her marriage, or only after. It is clear, though, that Hosea married Gomer knowing full well that she would bring shame on his name. Having the same knowledge, God chose the people of Israel.

When Gomer had thoroughly degraded herself, the Lord asked Hosea to "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" (Hos. 3:1, NIV). Just as the prophet took back his unfaithful wife, so would God forgive and restore his unfaithful people.

The account of Hosea's marriage is a love letter from heaven. God's grace is so great that he continues to care for us even when our sins have sullied our relationship with him. Have we spurned that faithful love, or are we returning it?

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