

The Prophetic Wisdom of Hosea

LESSON
TWO

Revelations for the Wise
Faculty Forum



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The Prophetic Wisdom of Hosea

Lesson Two: Revelations for the Wise

Faculty Forum

With

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Rev. Sherif Gendy
Rev. Michael J. Glodo

Dr. Douglas Gropp
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Question 1:

Hosea designed his book to impart wisdom to God's people, so how should we understand the concept of wisdom?

Dr. Daniel Treier

Wisdom is the growing capacity to run with, rather than against, the grain of God's created order. Sometimes the vocabulary is used in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, for something that's merely a skill or perhaps for abstract philosophizing. But of course, that's only going to run so far in terms of going with, rather than against, the grain of God's creation. So, ultimately, wisdom begins where it ends, with the fear of the Lord. And it's a growing capacity to live in light of the fear of the Lord. So, wisdom is both a process and a product. We have two ways — toward life or toward death. We're to choose the way toward life and grow in our ability to walk in it in the right direction, rather than choosing to go in a wayward direction and pursue folly. So, wisdom is communicated through tradition. The wisdom literature in the Old Testament provides us with memorable, punchy sayings that enable us to capture the best of what the community wants to pass on regarding how to live well. But wisdom involves not only tradition; it also involves inquiry. It involves ongoing reflection about how that tradition relates to present-day circumstances and challenges. So, the traditional wisdom of Proverbs is balanced out by the more reflective and challenging wisdom of Job or Ecclesiastes.

In the New Testament, of course, wisdom has a new dimension. It becomes more fully personal as it is embodied in Jesus Christ and enabled by the Holy Spirit. Wisdom is further democratized or spread around through the capacity we have to gain the mind of Christ by the Holy Spirit. All of God's people can grow in wisdom rather than having wisdom be initially focused in a group of sages who are learning to teach others how to live well... The other emphasis in biblical wisdom comes in terms of virtue, and the way that moral and spiritual excellence is formed in community. Of course, ultimately our relationship to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit

is the center of how we gain wisdom, but Christ, by the Spirit, forms wisdom in his people as the people of God grow together in virtue over time.

Dr. Eric J. Tully

In its most neutral, in its most basic sense, wisdom just simply means skill. It means doing something effectively... Whether that's being a skillful carpenter and cutting wood to the correct dimensions, or whether it's being an effective stone mason and being able to cut blocks for a building to the correct dimensions, wisdom means being skillful at something. And often, the ways that we think about wisdom are ways in which we think about living life skillfully, knowing not only what to do but when to do it, knowing the proper social situation for something, living life in an effective way so that you get ahead, so that you prosper, so that you live the life that you want to live... Wisdom has a very practical orientation in the Bible. It's dealing with the kinds of things we run across all the time, whether it's relationships, dealing with authority, thinking about our use of money, thinking about relationship to our parents, in thinking about our job, and even table manners — all kinds of really practical issues like that. And then, in a broader way, wisdom is concerned with order, being able to understand life and the world correctly so that we can live skillfully. We know the kinds of pitfalls to avoid. We know the ways to get ahead in life. And it's the Bible that begins to help us understand that if we really want to live life skillfully, we have to do that in terms of the fear of the Lord. So that's where we really begin to move from the most basic sense of wisdom as being something that you're good at, even if it's wrong or neutral, to being something that is related to our relationship with the Lord and recognizing that he is the Creator of the entire world, and that if we are properly related to him, then that is what will help us to live life skillfully.

Question 2:

What significance for Hosea's overall message do we gain from the closure of his book in 14:9?

Dr. Larry Trotter

Hosea 14:9 says:

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them (Hosea 14:9).

And so, this is the prophet's parting shot, and in the prophet's parting shot we hear God's final plea to Israel saying, "The Lord's ways are right. Your ways are not right." The Lord's ways are right, and so you have two choices: you can either walk in them and stand, or you can rebel against them and walk in your own way and stumble.

Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

Usually, when evangelicals look at Old Testament prophetic books they're noticing how prophets predicted things, and then they're looking for the ways those predictions were fulfilled. That's just sort of the normal thing. And will even go further and say how they were fulfilled in the New Testament in Christ. But in the case of the book of Hosea, the very last verse of the book, 14:9, is sort of a key as to what the significance of this book was. It's where Hosea calls for his readers, the people who first received his book, to learn wisdom from the prophecies that he had given earlier in the book. Verse 9 of chapter 14 stands alone and is, as it were, a key for understanding what the purpose of everything he has said before actually was for the people that first got the book... Now, in reality, Hosea does make predictions, and those predictions are fulfilled, sometimes even before Hosea's life was over. But Hosea refers to those predictions, and even sometimes their fulfillments, in order to reach a goal, and the goal is that his recipients, the people reading his book, would learn wisdom and understanding from the prophecies that he had given... And as Christians, when we think about the book, there are many ways we can approach its various themes, it's predictions, it's fulfillments, all the sorts of things that are there because there's lots there, but one of the crucial things that we have to do is to take the clue of 14:9 and understand that this book was not just designed to give wisdom to the first people who received the book, but it's also given to us so that we may receive wisdom also.

Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

In Hosea 14:9, the last verse in the book of Hosea, we read these words:

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them (Hosea 14:9).

This verse is, in fact, what we might call a "wisdom saying," because in it the prophet asks, "Whoever is wise ... let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right." The Lord's revelations that came to his people throughout this book came through metaphorical language, whether through Hosea's marriage to Gomer the adulteress, or through his three children whose names have specific indications and meanings. So, the reader needs wisdom to understand the meaning and the purpose of the book, and to understand God's thoughts and purposes. Also, the generations that would come afterwards and read this book would not live when Hosea married Gomer, nor would they see his children. They would need divine wisdom in order to understand the purpose of this book and the message God intended to send to his people in this book. That's why the ending of this book is very significant as it asks for wisdom to understand the message of the Lord to his people in the book of Hosea.

Question 3:

Given that Hosea's purpose was to challenge Judah to gain wisdom, how should we understand the purpose of biblical prophecy in general?

Dr. Gordon H. Johnston

So, when we study prophecy, one of the major questions we have to ask is, "What's the main purpose of prophecy?" In a lot of popular-level contemporary literature, it tends to focus on trying to tease out the mysterious details and get a timeline as far as this event versus that event following next, and prophecy then becomes a study more for intellectual exercise, cognitive information. But biblical prophecy itself, when Yahweh inspired the prophets, it was primarily to move the people to obedience. So it wasn't so much content and information oriented as much as functional. Yahweh's primarily calling the people to obedience, calling them to repentance. For those that are already obedient to persevere in faith and obedience; to those that are disobedient to repent of their sins. So, it's primarily to move the people. If you will, biblical prophecy, Yahweh would reveal to the people that judgment was coming, but for the purpose that this could be avoided if the people would repent. Or he would reveal to the people this is the blessing that's in the offing, but that was with the assumption that if they continued to persevere in faith and obedience. So it's almost if you could think of a highway with exit ramps where the prophet would tell the people that they're on a path of danger, and this is what's at the end of the road, but there's an off ramp. And so, it's not simply that this is set in stone, that there's a calendar that we have to fulfill in the future, but it's primarily giving the people a providential edge, if you will, that this is your fate, but this is fate that can be avoided if there's repentance.

Dr. Gregory R. Perry

A lot of times, I think, many readers of Scripture think that prophecy mainly was about prediction, that prophets made predictions, and then they came true, and that illustrates God's sovereignty. And, of course, it does. There is an element, a predictive element, in many prophecies that we see fulfilled in the New Testament. But the main purpose of biblical prophecy we see in a passage like Jeremiah 18, where the prophet goes down to the potter's house, and he talks about how the potter is working with the clay, and he says to the people of God that God has the right to reshape them. And so, the main thing that prophets did was call people back to covenant faithfulness, and so he says, "If I were to say that disaster will come upon you, and yet you turn from your wicked ways, and then I relent of my plans to bring disaster against you," that would be a fulfillment of the prophet's role. Or, if God says that he's going to bring good things, that he's going to plant and increase them, and yet they go and they are wicked, and they turn from the covenant, and God then relents of his plans... So, what we see is that instead of this prediction, that this is going to happen, what God does is he offers two ways. He says, "If you are faithful to the covenant on the one hand, I will bless you. If you're disobedient to the covenant on the other hand, the curses of the covenant will come against you." So, the

prophet's role is to represent the covenant and to call God's people back to covenant faithfulness.

Dr. Scott Redd

Many people believe that the purpose of biblical prophecy is to tell something about the future. Well, of course, that's incredibly significant and important to biblical prophecy. As a matter of fact, a false prophet is one who mistells the future. It's not the main purpose of biblical prophecy. Rather, biblical prophecy was a way for God to communicate to his covenant people in a way that would either encourage them to continue on the path on which they're on, or to dissuade them and to encourage them towards repentance that they might return to a path that they should be on... So biblical prophecy is not so much about prognostication of future events as it is about proclamation of God's words to his people, requiring them either to return to him from a path of disobedience, or to encourage them along their way in covenant faithfulness to continue seeking him and following him... We find a clear example of this in Jeremiah 18 where the prophet articulates that when God proclaims a blessing on a nation and that nation turns away from the Lord, then that blessing will turn to a curse. Likewise, if God declares a curse on a nation and that nation repents and turns back to him, that curse will turn to blessing. So you see, the purpose of prophecy is not so much to just tell something about the future, but it's really to change behavior, to call God's people to him, to call them to covenant faithfulness. We see this throughout the Old Testament. In the case of Jonah with the Ninevites, calling the Ninevites to repentance. Jonah is not a false prophet because his prophecy of destruction over Nineveh does not come true. Rather, he shows that he is a true prophet, because when the Ninevites repent and turn to the Lord in repentance, the destruction is mollified and put off... Likewise, in the story of David and his son with Bathsheba, David is told that his son will die as a result of his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah. However, David laments, and repents, and turns to the Lord saying, "Who knows? Maybe the Lord will take this judgment, this curse, away from me." David knew that true prophecy requires repentance, requires a response of faithfulness... This is also the case with the story between Isaiah and Hezekiah. When Hezekiah becomes ill, Isaiah tells him, "Put your house in order for the disease that you have is fatal." But Hezekiah repents and he turns to the Lord, and the Lord relents and extends Hezekiah's life. You see, Hezekiah knew that Isaiah was not a false prophet because his prophecy did not come true, but rather, his prophecy had the desired effect of calling about faithfulness in God's king, Hezekiah.

Rev. Michael J. Glodo

The main purpose of biblical prophecy can be understood if we have a sense of the prophets as, say, ambassadors or secretaries of state. They came as representatives of God, and they came to call God's people back to faithfulness to God's covenant with them. At times, it was to call them to repent and to turn away from sin, and at other times it was to give them hope in difficult circumstances. When the prophets came to call the people to turn back to God, it was to turn away from sin, from individual sin, but particularly we see to call people from sinning against one another, from gaining an advantage against others, from being unjust, from not being merciful, and those

kinds of things; and also to call them to turn back from serving other gods that they had begun to worship, sometimes alongside the God of the Bible, and sometimes to the exclusion of him. And so often we speak of the prophets as those who brought a covenant lawsuit, like a lawyer would bring, to bring God's people back, to give them an opportunity to repent, and to turn to him and be faithful to the covenant that he had given them at Sinai, in the book of Exodus. Or we see the fuller version of that in the book of Deuteronomy... But there was not always this message of only woe. There was a message of hope often, or sometimes in alliteration we say, "woe and weal." You know, good news. What was their hope? What could they look to for God to deliver them from their circumstances, or how they could persevere in them? So, the prophets came to bring a message of warning at times and of hope at other times. But the important thing to remember is that he spoke to them in those circumstances initially, and how we read those prophecies today has to start with what they meant to those people then. And occasionally God would predict things in the future that would confirm or seal his authority, his credibility, his faithfulness. Unfortunately, we tend to think of the Old Testament prophets as *only* predicting things, which is actually probably a lesser percentage of what they did, than to speak words of warning and words of hope and blessing.

Question 4:

Why did God tell Hosea to marry a wife of whoredom?

Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

Usually when someone makes an announcement of a marriage it's a joyous thing. It's a situation where a man knows a woman, and the woman is fantastic. She's just perfect. She's everything he ever wanted in a wife. But in the case of Hosea, when God commanded him to marry Gomer, he actually said, "She is a woman of adultery," or "She is a woman of whoredom" — any number of ways you can translate it. And what's behind that expression is this: it is that Gomer had been a prostitute in the worship centers, the fertility worship centers that were all over Israel. In those days, if you were not a wealthy person, one of the ways you actually supported your family, one of the ways that you made sure that your family had food to eat, was that your daughters would be given over to the worship centers in prostitution. And so, when God tells Hosea to marry Gomer, who is that kind of person — a woman who had gone through that — he's actually reminding Hosea that his marriage is not going to be this wonderful, joyous experience, but rather, it's going to be troubled. And in fact, it ends up being troubled because later on she returned to that practice. And the reality is, is that God did this for Hosea so that it would be impressed upon his heart, so that he would not be able to escape the pain of what was happening with the people of Israel and their relationship with God, because God had chosen Israel even though he knew that they had this propensity toward whoring, toward adultery, toward being unfaithful to him as their husband. And he also knew that Israel was going to continue to have that propensity to turn away from their covenant requirements, the loyalty that God had required of them.

But God had Hosea marry her despite that fact. He had him marry Gomer despite the fact that she was that kind of women with those kinds of propensities, because God had married himself to Israel. He had become her husband, and Hosea was to exemplify in his life, and even to learn in his own life, the pain that that caused God, to see his people turn away from him and why his judgment would come against them, because they had violated something sacred — their relationship with God.

Dr. Carol Kaminski

In the book of Hosea, God does come to the prophet, and he is going to embody the message that he is giving to Israel. And the message he's giving to Israel, the primary message, is to say that the Israelites have been forsaking God and worshiping other gods. And in the book of Hosea he's going to use this language of "playing the harlot" or "committing adultery" with other gods. And we see from the Prophets that in many cases they're going to embody the message, and in fact, God tells him to go and marry a woman of harlotry. And there is, I will mention, there is some debate about the language being used there because it's not the usual term for a woman who is either a prostitute or playing the harlot. It's a little bit of a different term, same verbal root being used. And so the question for some scholars is, does this mean that she's a woman of, kind of, not a literal prostitute, but is she a woman who, like every Israelite... Is it a spiritual kind of term? Is she a woman of spiritual harlotry? And so, in that sense she's like every Israelite. Or is she actually a prostitute? ... I think my own view is that I think we are right to say that it is a woman of harlotry, and it's not quite the same term being used. However, I think once you get to the next woman who's mentioned, a woman committing adultery, I think it's absolutely clear, and everyone agrees there, and I actually think that they're the same woman, not two separate wives. And I think that it's really a poignant message for Israel that here, Hosea, of course his language is very passionate when you look at the book; beautiful language about God's love for Israel. Why? Because I think he's also suffering in his relationship with his unfaithful wife. So, he's able to give that passionate message because of that. And I think she clearly is representing Israel's turning after other gods. So, I think that he's experiencing that with his own wife.

Question 5:

What did God intend to convey through Hosea's marriage and their children's names?

Dr. David Correa, translation

Through Hosea's marriage and the names he gave to his children, God wanted to illustrate his relationship with his people. God demonstrated that he was a faithful God, a loving God, a patient God. Nevertheless, we see that because of the constant disobedience and infidelity of his people, God came to the point of divorcing his people, to the point of saying, "You are no longer my people." ... This is shown by the name "Lo-Ammi," a name given to one of Hosea's children. We see something similar with the name "Lo-Ruhamah," meaning "no pity." So, the people came to be a

people who were no longer pitied, no longer loved by God — “Now you are no longer my people. I divorce myself from you.” And yet, God says, “How can this be? Therefore, take Lo-Ammi and Lo-Ruhamah and make them yours once again,” just as Hosea shows through his relationship with his unfaithful spouse whom, in spite of her infidelities, he took back.

Dr. Carol Kaminski

So, in the book of Hosea God is really trying to communicate his message to his people through Hosea’s marriage as well as the children’s names. And so, the marriage is representing this forsaking for other gods, as his wife is forsaking him and for the sake of other lovers — that’s kind of the imagery that’s being used. But you also have it with these children. I mean, you have the first son being born called “Jezreel.” Now, Jezreel, we might not know much about that name and think, you know, it’s just an ordinary name, but if you’re an Israelite, and you’re in the northern kingdom, this is a powerful term that’s being used because it recalls key events that have happened in the northern kingdom, especially with King Ahab and Jezebel. And it recalls this event where Ahab had wanted this man’s vineyard — Naboth — wanted his vineyard, and he wasn’t able to get the vineyard, and so his wife Jezebel organizes these two false witnesses and basically has the guy killed, and then Ahab takes the vineyard. And this is all taking place at Jezreel. And so, that happens there. There are several other events that happened at Jezreel, like terrible bloodshed that happens, including Jezebel getting killed, as well as Ahab’s seventy sons and their heads get cut off and sent to Jezreel. So, as soon as you hear the word “Jezreel,” it is bringing up these terrible events, and it is announcing God’s judgment for what took place at Jezreel. And then you have two other terms. . . You have the first one being Lo-Ruhamah is in Hebrew or “no compassion.” I mean, this is a *terrible* term when you think of it because God says he’s no longer going to have compassion on his people. This picking up that there’s going to be an exile coming. They’ve been worshiping idols since 930 B.C., so this means for almost 200 years they’ve been worshiping idols and God hasn’t destroyed them because of his compassion. So, when he says, you know, Lo-Ruhamah, he’s really pronouncing that judgment is coming and he’s withdrawing his compassion. And then the last term, the last name is Lo-Ammi, which means “not my people.” And then again, this is very significant at the heart of the covenant relationship God made with Abraham — Genesis 17: “I will be your God; you will be my people.” You think of it in the Mosaic covenant: “I will be your God, you will be my people.” Now he’s saying through this third child, Lo-Ammi, “You are no longer my people.” And in fact, he’s going to treat them like they are not his people. He’s going to treat them like the nations, and so judgment’s coming. I will mention that immediately after he says Lo-Ammi, not my people, there is going to be hope that at the place where it is said “not my people,” they will be called children of the living God — wonderful little nugget of hope in the midst of that, and Paul’s going to pick this up in Romans to say that this is the hope of the Gentiles coming in. So, you have judgment being pronounced but also this little window of hope of the future restoration.

Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

The names of Hosea's children, in particular, demonstrated God's judgment against sin — the people's sin. Each time Gomer bore Hosea a boy or a girl, the severity of the judgment gradually increased. For instance, we read about the first son Gomer bore in Hosea 1:4, where it says,

And the Lord said to him, “Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel” (Hosea 1:4).

Actually, there are at least two reasons behind choosing the name Jezreel. The first reason is that it sounds similar to Israel in pronunciation — yiz-RAH-eel and YIZ-rah-eel. The other reason is that there was a valley in Israel called the valley of Jezreel. This valley is associated with many bloody events. We read about it, for example, in Judges 6:33 and 1 Samuel 29:1. Also, the name Jezreel is related to the story of Ahab and Jezebel and the killing of Naboth. We can find this in 1 Kings 21. We also read about it in the killing of Ahab's family through Jehu the son of Jeshoshaphat in 2 Kings 10:11. Actually, there is a very important passage in 2 Kings 10:28-31 that, although Jehu son of Jeshoshaphat obeyed God's command and killed the family of Ahab, he did that for his own personal purposes and ambitions. That is why the Lord said in the book of Hosea: “I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel.” We read in 2 Kings 10, beginning with verse 28:

Thus Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel. But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin — that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan. And the Lord said to Jehu, “Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.” But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin (2 Kings 10:28-31).

Although Jehu destroyed the altars of the Baals, he erected idols and walked in the sins of Jeroboam. That is why Hosea's first son stands for the judgment of God on the Israelites, for the bloody events that were related to Jezreel, especially against the house of Jehu, and for the corrupt religious and behavioral practices that were in the kingdom at that time. The second child, the daughter, whom Gomer bore to Hosea, was called “Lo-Ruhamah.” We read about her in Hosea 1:6:

She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the Lord said to him, “Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all” (Hosea 1:6).

The name “Lo-Ruhamah” in Hebrew means “no mercy.” The Lord declared that he would remove his mercy from the people of Israel. Mercy here is related to the covenant faithfulness of the Lord. So, the Lord here says that he will remove his mercy from the midst of the people. We read about the last child that Gomer bore Hosea in verses 8 and 9:

When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. And the Lord said, “Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God” (Hosea 1:8-9).

The Hebrew name “Lo-Ammi” means “not my people.” This was the highest level and the hardest of the Lord’s judgments.

Question 6:

What does Hosea’s family life teach us about a prophet’s role in representing God’s covenant with Israel?

Dr. Gregory R. Perry

The prophets represented God’s covenant to his people and to the king over his people, and oftentimes the way that the Lord would ask them to do that was by acting out a living parable. We can think of Jeremiah, and he’s building a siege ramp, and that is symbolizing what is about to happen against the city of Jerusalem. Well, in a similar way, because God’s people were going after other gods, Hosea was called to the difficult task, like Jeremiah was, of bearing witness against the covenant people. And we can think about the importance of covenant language. Kings in the ancient Near East, great kings who conquered other kingdoms, would use the language of love to call people to covenant loyalty to them: “I want you to love me.” That sense of a fatherly relationship or a husband-wife relationship symbolized the covenant loyalty that that king expected of those people. And so, in that context, when God is calling his people to covenant loyalty, he uses the imagery of adultery to powerfully illustrate the pain that God himself experiences in the breaking of this covenant as his people go after other gods instead of holding fast in covenant love to him. And so, it is a powerful illustration of Israel’s infidelity to the covenant that God calls Hosea to illustrate in this very painful way.

Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

God entered into a covenant relationship through which he took the initiative to show mercy and benevolence to his people. But, just as Hosea’s wife was unfaithful and an adulteress, the people were unfaithful in their relationship with God. They were worshiping other gods and committing various sins that kindled the Lord’s wrath... Within the covenant, God had entered into a relationship in which he adopted Israel as his people, and he was their God. Through this covenant, he declared his name to Moses saying, “*ehyeh asher ehyeh*” or “I am who I am.” So God, through Hosea’s last child, was saying to Israel, “You are not my people” — “Lo-Ammi.” Moreover, he said, “I am not your God.” In Hebrew, “I am not” is the reversal of his covenant

name that he declared to Moses. He was saying, “I am not,” or “not *ehyeh*” — “I will not be your covenant God.” Thus, Hosea’s marriage and children illustrate how God dealt with his covenant people. He declared his judgment over the people because of their sins and because they had acted contrary to the conditions of the covenant, conditions that required their loyalty in response to the covenant mercy and grace that God had initiated and shown them.

Question 7:

Why do New Testament authors refer to the time from the first coming of Christ to his return as “the last days” or “latter days”?

Dr. Brandon D. Crowe

The Old Testament hope — and we should begin there — was that whenever God intervened to bring his kingdom in a permanent way, God’s king would be established, his kingdom would spread, the nations would come in, his enemies would be destroyed, and there would be a re-gathering of the people, the temple would be rebuilt, and there would be a great day of flourishing. And all of this was understood to happen at one time, and it was all going to happen. Trace back to Genesis and Numbers and Deuteronomy to what the prophets developed the phrase called “the last days,” or “the latter days.” But something surprising happens when we come to the New Testament. When Jesus comes, he comes as God’s king, and he comes bringing God’s kingdom in a very real way, and he brings the beginning of the messianic blessings, and he begins to re-gather the people, and he begins, in one sense, to bring in all the nations. But all of those hopes from the Old Testament don’t happen all at once. There’s a delay. This is where we get the phrase, “already, not yet.” *Already* the blessings of the messianic age are here but *not yet* in their fullness. All of these hopes from the Old Testament for the latter days, they have begun to be realized but not completely, not in their consummate form. And so we see this illustrated very well, for example, in Luke 4, when Jesus begins his ministry. Whenever he begins his ministry and he reads from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 61, he reads about the forgiveness of sins, the great news of jubilee, the redemption and the release of the captives, but he cuts his reading off from that text before mentioning the day of the vengeance of our God. And that seems to be intentional because Jesus brought in the beginning, the blessings, the hope, but not the end when all of the enemies would be defeated. And so all of these hopes that were anticipated in the Old Testament, they had begun to be realized in Jesus, the days of blessing and the fruitfulness. We see even like in the wedding at Cana in John 2, it’s a great day of, the water has turned into wine, and there is so much more wine than anybody could have ever imagined. And that is one of the hopes of the messianic age. These things have begun to be realized, but the complete gamut of what would happen whenever God definitively fixes all that is wrong with the world, all of that has not yet been consummately perfected, and that’s why we refer to this whole span of time from the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ, as “the last days,” because it is this time frame in which all of the latter days hopes will be fulfilled, culminating with the second coming of Christ.

Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

Some theologians refer to the whole period from Christ's first coming to his return as "the last days" simply because that's exactly the way the New Testament refers to them. On the day of Pentecost, when Peter was preaching after the Holy Spirit had been poured out by the risen Lord Jesus, Peter quoted from the prophecy of Joel the second chapter, and Peter, under the inspiration of the Spirit, tweaked just a little the wording of Joel. Joel had said, "It will come to pass after this; I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." Peter shows now in the light of the fulfillment, it's more specific than that. "It will come to pass in the last days ... I will pour out my Spirit." So the death and resurrection of Christ, his ascension, and now his celebration of his coronation, his enthronement at the Father's right hand by pouring out the Spirit, marks the beginning of the last days. The writer to the Hebrews picks up that same theme at the very beginning of that epistle. He says, "In times past God spoke to the fathers through the prophets ... but in these last days God has spoken to us in his Son." And so, from a biblical point of view, all that the prophets were looking forward to, begin to be fulfilled in a profound sense with the first coming of Jesus the Messiah, with his death and resurrection, his undergoing in a sense last judgment for his people, and his entering into the resurrection as the firstfruits of the resurrection, and that fact that he's now ruling and reigning at the Father's right hand and extending his power by the work of the Spirit among his church on earth. That marks this time as "the last days."

Dr. Vern S. Poythress

The real question is what are the last days in Scripture? Second Timothy 3:1 says,

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty (2 Timothy 3:1).

As you read through the rest of 2 Timothy, you find that Paul is addressing Timothy in the first century in terms of things that are happening then, so he's indicating the last days encompass Timothy's own time, and of course, we're still in them. In the Old Testament, there is the phrase "the latter days" or "the last days," looking forward to the great climactic salvation that God will bring in the future. Well, that climactic salvation has already happened in its first installment in the first coming of Christ and will be consummated in the second coming. So, the last days, from that standpoint, encompasses both ends from the first to the second coming of Christ.

Question 8:**Why does Hosea condemn foreign alliances in his book?****Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation**

The prophet Hosea, in his book, condemned the foreign alliances Israel had made. That's because these alliances indicated a declared rebellion against God who had entered into a covenant relationship with the people. Within the context of this

covenant, God was the real king over the people. These alliances took place because Israel was seeking military protection and supplies, and this meant that they put their trust in these foreign nations instead of trusting the Lord. It also showed that they rejected the covenant the Lord had made with them as they put their trust in foreign nations. These nations didn't just supply them with support and military resources, they also had a negative impact on them through imposing their laws and legislations, most of which were against the laws and the commands of the Lord. And also, there was the influence of their religions that affected Israel.

We see in Hosea 10:6 that Israel gave presents to the Assyrian king. And in 12:1 Israel did indeed make a covenant with Assyria. The prophet announced to the people that these alliances would not benefit Israel — not in any military, political, social, or spiritual level. The prophet highlighted this point in 8:7-10. So, the prophet Hosea condemned these alliances because of their political danger. And from the spiritual aspect, these alliances indicated the people's rebellion against the Lord within the context of the covenant that he had made with them. In that covenant, God told them that he is their king and that they must put their trust in him alone. *He* would be the source of their help during hard times.

Rev. Michael J. Glodo

Hosea condemns the Syro-Ephramite coalition, that is, the alliance between Ephraim and Syria, for the same reason that the prophets frequently condemn such alliances. Isaiah warned Judah, "Don't lean on the sharp reed of Egypt because it will pierce your hand." That is, Judah was tempted to form alliances with Egypt because everybody is looking for a partner to protect themselves against the empires, first the great Assyrian Empire, but then the Babylonian Empire, which displaces Assyria. But this whole matter goes back to the very beginning of Israel being saved out of slavery in Egypt and the crossing the Red Sea, the song of Moses and Miriam: "[We] will sing to Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and ... rider he has thrown into the sea." And from then on, Israel is taught they must depend upon God as their king and not depend upon the strength of nations... This is the great sin of David when he took a census because God had not commanded that census. But David wanted to number his military strength, so he counted his horsemen, his chariots, his warriors, and so forth, and when he did that, it was a subtle indication that he was relying upon military strength rather than God to be the divine Warrior King who would defend his people. And it wasn't just because God was jealous. That's part of it. But beyond that, to be dependent upon other people is always a two-way deal, because as we see in the tragedy, the tragic turn that Solomon's life took — his alliances with the Queen of Sheba, with Hiram of Tyre — ends up eventually bringing the gods of those people into the sanctuary in Jerusalem. And so the intermarriage in the days of Nehemiah as well as the corruption of worship to the bringing in of false gods before the exile, all these things are along the same theme, which is, when you make a bargain with the nations, it cuts both ways, and it corrupts. You see it very simply in the life of Abraham who refused to pay tribute to the king of Sodom, but instead gave tribute to the King of Righteousness ... because to be beholden to the nations runs contrary to be loyal to God. And so, to depend

upon Syria, for Ephraim, or to depend upon Egypt later, for Judah, those things inherently corrupt true devotion to the Lord. And the lesson for us today is, when we make bargains with the world where we are enriched by the ways of the world and we become empowered by the ways of the world, the world inherently disempowers us and enslaves us. So it's a great lesson for us to continue to remember.

Dr. Larry Trotter

Hosea condemns foreign alliances really in keeping with the Deuteronomic code. If you go back to the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, foreign alliances are forbidden basically because they represent a lack of faith in God — depending on foreign alliances instead of depending on God for salvation. And there are other practical concerns as well. They don't work. Foreign alliances don't work. They entangle Israel and Judah in relationships in which the people of God always come out badly. They come with a high price tag, and that is subjugation to foreigners. Also, foreign alliances have a tendency to corrupt the faith of Israel and Judah. As they have to depend on the foreign alliances, their faith in God wanes, and in some cases they even fall into the idolatry of worshipping the gods of those powers to which they've become voluntarily subject.

Question 9:

Why does Hosea provide such harsh condemnations of idolatry?

Dr. Carol Kaminski

Well, really, in the book of Hosea the topic of idolatry is absolutely central. So, if you look at it, there's a couple of key pieces of background that's important. I think one is the Ten Commandments. The first commandment talks about you're only to worship the Lord God — the first two commandments — and then you're not to worship any idols, you're not to make them, but you're not bow down to idols, because this is an absolute breach of the covenant relationship with Yahweh. He requires loyalty, and he will accept no rival worship of any other gods. So, of course this is Israel's problem. The golden calf narrative right out, you know, they haven't even got into the land yet, and they're worshipping idols, and this becomes really a paradigm of God's people. And then Hosea is in the northern kingdom, and in the northern kingdom you have the first king, Jeroboam. He sets up two golden calves just like the one they made in Egypt — the first thing he does at Dan and Bethel — and he says, "Here are your gods, O Israel." So, you have from 930 B.C. to 722, for two hundred years, you have idols being worshiped in Dan and Bethel, and you have Baal worship during the time of Ahab. So, this is a central problem, and really as soon as those idols were worshiped, they should have been destroyed. But God is gracious and compassionate to them. And so, how does his grace manifest itself? One of the ways is by sending a prophet, and he sends Hosea to really condemn the issue of idolatry, and he's going to do it through visual, through his own marriage, and through this image of playing the harlot after God. So, it's really at the fundamental core of the relationship God has with his people.

Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

Israel, instead of showing loyalty and submission to the Lord and worshiping him alone and not other gods, they engaged in worshiping idols and entering into relationships with other nations, which had a negative impact on the people's loyalty to the Lord. That is why the Lord described the condition of the people as they went "whoring" away from him, because they were engaging with other gods — especially the gods of the Canaanites where adultery and sexual impurity were part of their rituals. So, when the Lord said of the people, or of the land, that it had committed great whoredom, such a phrase not only refers to the spiritual aspect of leaving the Lord and trespassing his covenant, but the literal aspect too, as at that time, the people were indeed worshiping foreign gods through relationships full of sexual practices and immorality.

Question 10:

What can we learn from the fact that Hosea wasn't the only prophet giving similar warnings to Israel and Judah prior to their exiles?

Dr. Donna Petter

Prophetic activity was really profound in ancient Israel before the exile. And evidence of that is that there were sixteen prophets that God raised up to speak a word to the nation. And this is because... Why sixteen prophets? Why not one? Why not five? But there are sixteen of them. And so, that is evidence that the story of the Bible is that God is relentlessly pursuing people for relationship. But in the Old Testament those sixteen prophets are really visual aids of God's grace that he is relentlessly pursuing Israel for a relationship and the hope that Israel will get back in relationship with God as she had stepped out time and time again. And so, in that regard, prophetic activity is profound, and sixteen visual aids of God's grace show up on the scene of redemptive history in the Old Testament and reveal that. But there's more that I would say as to why there was so much prophetic activity before the exile. There is a great verse in 2 Chronicles 36:15-16, and it tells us from the perspective of the Chronicler. So, this is a historical writer writing after the events of the southern kingdom and giving his perspective on ... why Jerusalem fell. And the perspective is, he highlights God's character in all of this. And so, 2 Chronicles 36 says this, that God "sent persistently to them by his messengers." And why did he do that? He sent them persistently with these messengers because, it says, "he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling." And so, the Chronicler is telling us that God's very character was such that he sent the prophets, that it was in his very nature to give them warnings and grace through these prophets. And I think it is really important for us to remember that because a lot of times we think of the prophets as breathing nothing but fire and brimstone down on their audience. But from the perspective of the historian, the Chronicler, these prophets were given by God out of his grace and out of his compassion. But the sad story is, although God persistently kept sending the prophets to his people, the nation rejected the prophets so much so that the wrath

of God had to be brought about in the fall of Jerusalem, and there was no remedy, as it were, for what needed to take place. So, the prophets then are, in many ways, the visual aids. The writing prophets are God's visual aid of his grace to a nation, but they also reveal his character and that he's not ready to just judge any would-be transgressor and shake his finger that them, but he is extending his character through bringing them on the scene.

Mr. Sherif Atef Fahim, translation

The role of the prophets was clearly to warn the people of their sins, to call them to repent, and to remind them of the covenant between God and the people of Israel through Moses, to remind them of the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience. So, this is why there was so much activity. The people had gone far away from God, from the law, and were worshiping foreign gods. So, they were warned over and over that they had to return to the Lord. For example, in the northern kingdom, the kings were all evil, and the nation received many warnings, so their captivity occurred earlier. The northern kingdom of Israel was taken to the Assyrian exile sooner than the southern kingdom. The prophets also warned the southern kingdom. They not only warned them using the law, but they also warned them using what happened to the northern kingdom — “Be careful, this happened to the northern kingdom because they rebelled.”

Dr. Todd Berger

If you are reading in the Hebrew canon — with the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, in that order — the next book that you turn to after finishing the book of Kings, the next page that you turn is the book of Isaiah. And we come to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets. And the way that I view this is that what God has done is he's brought the people to the point of exile, and then if people were in exile, and hypothetically speaking let's say they said, “You know, if God had given us appropriate warning we wouldn't have done this. We wouldn't have been this kind of people if you'd only told us what to do.” Well, when we turn to the book of Isaiah, what we're getting then, in a sense, is we're getting all of the sermon tapes. This is the preaching that they heard in the years leading up to the exile, and so in these two centuries or so, you know, two hundred years or so leading up to the exile, they were hearing the preaching of Isaiah. They were hearing the preaching of Jeremiah. Ezekiel was coming out of the exile, but as you read through the Minor Prophets, you're hearing warning after warning after warning: “Don't do this! Don't be this kind of people!” And that's why the people ended in exile then, was because they had ignored all of the preaching of the prophets... So, as the people were hearing the preaching of the prophets, it left them with no excuse, that they had to end in exile because of their disobedience and the way that they followed other gods.

Question 11:**What can we learn from God's warnings of judgment throughout Scripture?****Dr. David W. Chapman**

So when we think of warnings of judgment, we also immediately start thinking of Old Testament prophecy and judgment against those who are opposing God and opposing his people. And so the warnings of judgment ... they provide assurance for God's people that God is still in control and that he is going to ultimately vindicate them and also judge those who have opposed the work of God and who have opposed his people and thus provide encouragement for God's people to persevere. They also, secondarily, provide a warning for those who might otherwise seek to harm God's people or yet not consider themselves to be part of God's people, haven't yet consented to the gospel; a warning of judgment that could fall even on us and thus encourage us to cling to Christ and to come to him. So, there's that twofold purpose of vindicating God's people, judging those who are not, and that works together to encourage people to flee to Christ, and those who already know Christ to persevere and cling to him.

Dr. Mark L. Strauss

This world is a stage on which a great spiritual battle is taking place, and our actions with regard to that battle are significant, and God has a purpose and plan in this world, and we are to live our lives in line with his purpose and plan. And so, those who oppose God's purposes will pay the price. They will face judgment from him. We as believers have a responsibility to be faithful. And so ... the message that occurs again and again is: hold fast, persevere, persevere to the end, because God is going to win, and God is the sovereign Lord, even though along the way it might seem like things are going in the other direction. And so, the fact that God is going to judge evil and reward good calls us to respond in faithfulness to his message, in faithfulness to his purpose and his plan.

Question 12:**Why does God demonstrate so much patience with Israel when he has promised to judge his people with covenant curses if they disobey?****Rev. Michael J. Glodo**

Leviticus 26 has a lot to teach us about the nature of divine judgment. You see that God anticipates potential future disobedience by Israel, and that ... he's going to call his people back to repentance so that they can avoid the curses of the covenant. But you see this almost like a cascade in Leviticus 26. The warnings are going to be repeated and they're going to be extended... And really, you see this reflected largely in the book of Deuteronomy where God rehearses Israel's stiff-necked rebellion over time and his patience with them. It's where we see God's faithfulness manifested in his longsuffering. And so, God is a patient God. He's not willing that any should

perish, the New Testament says, and it takes a lot to try God's patience. And even in a book like the book of Judges you see repeated cycles of rebellion, disobedience, covenant curses, and then God's people cry out to God. And in fact, there's a beautiful verse in the book of Hosea that I think captures all of this, when God says exile is inevitable for the northern kingdom, he also says, "I will take you into the wilderness and there I will speak kindly to you," so that even when his hand of chastening comes down, it's for the purpose of turning his people back to him. And so, we have to not only appreciate, but we have to see it fully in the Old Testament as well as the New, that God is longsuffering, and he proves himself not just in spite of, but even through the times of rebellion of his people.

Dr. Douglas Gropp

It's interesting to make a comparison of the covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. Curses in Deuteronomy 28 are fairly straightforward, but in Leviticus 26 they're staged, giving the opportunity at each stage for Israel to repent. The recitation of the curses are designed in Leviticus to provide an opportunity to repent, and at the end of those lists of curses, there's a section, I think it's verses 40-41, actually making provision for the Israelites to confess their sins with the hopes that the Lord will honor the covenant that he made with the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and bring about a restoration... In the prophets and their use of covenant curses in judgment, sometimes they proclaim those curses using a transition word in Hebrew that's translated "therefore" — *lahen* in Hebrew — where it's giving God's verdict on their sins and proclaiming the judgments that is to come. But sometimes the prophets use another term that's often also translated "therefore," but I think should be translated "that is why" — *alken* in Hebrew — and it's really giving an explanation for why the covenant curses are already beginning to be realized. And in that sense, we see in the Prophets the unfolding of the curses together with an implicit call for Israel to repent so as to bring an end to the full realization of the curses, mirroring the staging of the curses that we have in Leviticus 26.

Dr. David Correa, translation

Leviticus 26 teaches us in many ways about God's patience, the great patience of our Lord. However, we can mention one that is very interesting. This was when Moses revealed the judgments that would come for unfaithfulness to the covenant. Moses tells us that the Lord didn't bring complete and total destruction all at once. Rather, he tells us there in Leviticus 26 that if the people were unfaithful, if they were disobedient, God would bring certain calamity to them. And if there was no repentance, he would gradually strengthen the punishment, continuing in this way until they came to the greatest threat, and that was exile. So, we see that God was patient because he gradually intensified the punishment, the curses, that would come upon the disobedient. That teaches us truthfully, as the psalmist tells us, that our Lord is a God slow to anger and abounding with mercy.

Question 13:

What hope for Israel does Hosea provide in 14:1-8?

Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

After the prophet Hosea proclaimed the message of God's judgment over Israel for their sins — leaving the Lord and worshiping other gods — he presented a message of hope in the last chapter of the book, chapter 14. This chapter is divided into two parts. Verses 1-3 have a call to repent and return to the Lord. The prophet says,

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God (Hosea 14:1).

In the second part, verses 4-8, the prophet presents an assurance of the Lord's love and his will to heal his people from sin, from the disease of sin. The Lord says,

I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely (Hosea 14:4).

This is the message of hope that the prophet presents after proclaiming the judgment. There is always a chance to repent and return to the Lord. It is accompanied with God's hand that is extended with healing and love to restore the people and restore their relationship with the Lord once more.

Rev. Michael J. Glodo

As tragic and as agonizing as the message of Hosea is, the last chapter, particularly the first eight verses, end on a note of hope. And it should remind us that God is longsuffering, and he shows lovingkindness to the thousandth generation of those who love him and keep his commands. It begins with the prophet calling God's people to call out to the Lord. It gives them a prayer to pray: "O Lord save us, remove our sin, restore us." It has a response from God, where God answers, "yes" and reminds them that he's always ready to receive his people back when they turn from the idols and turn from their sin and turn back to him. And it ends with a reminder — "Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?" Because, you see, idolatry is not just about bad worship. Idolatry is about turning away from life to death. Psalm 115 is a wonderful hymn about this that says that the gods of the nations, they have eyes but don't see, ears but don't hear; that the gods of the nations, they don't have any power because they're dead gods and the psalmist says those who worship them shall become like them. And Israel would experience what the prophet had said would come about. Israel would experience the death, the lifelessness, the powerlessness, the slavery of idolatry, because it would lead them into bondage in Assyria and lead them into exile. But, "What does God have to do with idols, O Ephraim? Turn to me and I will return to you." That's the basic message of the prophets, as Zechariah even begins his prophecies. And the very last words ... are the word to the wise — open your eyes, be wise, do the wise thing. Own the prayer. Own the prayer of repentance and calling upon God to return and save, and God would be faithful to heed that prayer. And that, you know, that is the key to all prayer, isn't it? If we ask of God what he has promised, we know his answer will always be "yes."

Dr. Todd Borger is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. David W. Chapman is Associate Professor of New Testament and Archaeology at Covenant Theological Seminary.

Dr. David Correa is Pastor of Jesus Presbyterian Church and Director of the Youth Ministry Institute at San Pablo Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Merida, Mexico.

Dr. Brandon D. Crowe is Assistant Professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Mr. Sherif Atef Fahim teaches at Alexandria School of Theology in Egypt.

Rev. Sherif Gendy is Director of Arabic Production at Third Millennium Ministries.

Rev. Michael J. Glodo is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida.

Dr. Douglas Gropp was formerly Professor of Old Testament and Associate Academic Dean at Redeemer Seminary.

Dr. Dennis E. Johnson is Academic Dean and Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Seminary California.

Dr. Gordon H. Johnston is Professor of Old Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Dr. Carol Kaminski is Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Dr. Gregory R. Perry is Vice President for Strategic Projects at Third Millennium Ministries and former Associate Professor of New Testament and the Director of City Ministry Initiative at Covenant Theological Seminary.

Dr. Donna Petter is Director of the Hebrew Language Program and Associate Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Dr. Vern S. Poythress is Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary and Editor of the Westminster Theological Journal.

Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr. is Co-Founder and President of Third Millennium Ministries.

Dr. Scott Redd is Campus President of Reformed Theological Seminary in Washington D.C. and Assistant Professor of Old Testament.

Dr. Mark L. Strauss is Professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary, San Diego.

Dr. Daniel Treier is the Blanchard Professor of Theology at Wheaton College & Graduate School.

Dr. Larry Trotter is Pastor of Florida Coast Church in Pompano Beach, FL, an adjunct professor at Knox Theological Seminary, and the former country director for Mission to the World in Mexico.

Dr. Miles Van Pelt is Professor of Old Testament and Academic Dean at Reformed Theological Seminary.

Dr. Eric J. Tully is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.