

Session 1: The Prophet Hosea

C. A Political Word

We have seen that the word of the Lord is an event in time. So the first verse goes to locate the time during which the word of the Lord was given through Hosea. Four kings of Judah are listed and one king of Israel. You can read more about their reigns in the Time-chart (to find the time-chart, click on the helps section of this course). This was the time of the divided kingdom, with Israel in the north, with Samaria as its capital, and Judah in the south, with its capital in Jerusalem (for more information, see Map 2, also in the helps section).

Uzziah reigned from 767-740 B.C. and Hezekiah died in 687. Jeroboam II reigned in Israel from 782 to 753 B.C. From his writings, it is possible to deduce that Hosea began his work as a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam, that is before 753 B.C., and continued until Samaria was conquered by the armies of Assyria in 722 B.C. We can deduce this because Hosea spoke out boldly on the political situation of his day and, since we know the outlines of the history of his time from other sources, we can work out what he was speaking about.

What happened to Hosea in 722? We don't know. Perhaps he died in the siege or was killed in the battle that followed. Perhaps, like most of the inhabitants of Samaria, he was taken into exile in Assyria. Perhaps he escaped to Judah, the southern kingdom. If he did not, we know that at least his prophecies must have escaped and been brought to Judah by some of those who recognized him as a prophet. It was in Judah that his words were brought together as a permanent record, and that is why there are more Judean kings mentioned in verse 1 than kings of Israel: because the editors were interested in what Hosea's words now had to say to Judah.

Activity 1.2

Ponder the following:

- What ideas did I have about the word of the Lord before reading this verse?
- What ideas do I have about it now?
- What questions do I have arising from the study so far?