9. He purchases her and takes her to the country (3:2-3).

10. The domestic tragedy is used as a text from which to preach to the nation that Jehovah will not give Israel up, even though it is necessary to punish her for her sins (3:4-5).

116. Why did Hosea marry such a woman?

There are two interpretations of this story. One is that God actually directed the prophet to marry her that he might teach the nation a lesson. The other is that Hosea married her and only discovered her true character after the third child was born. But either interpretation can be accepted without doing any damage to the central theme of the book—the message of love to the nation of Israel. The great teachings of Hosea revolve about this one thought—that the sin of the nation cannot alienate the love of God.

117. Why was the first child named Jezreel?

The Hebrew town of Jezreel was associated in history with some of the bloodiest chapters in the whole record of the kingdom of Israel (I Kings 16:33; 18:45-46; II Kings 8:29; 9:30-37; 10:7, 11), and the name was given to the child as a living sermon to the nation against militarism and the bloody house of Jehu whose descendant still sat upon the throne. It was a protest against the proposed alliance with Egypt and an appeal to the nation to remain neutral and keep out of the impending war. Hosea was announcing the doom of the nation because it had oppressed the poor and spilled their blood in fruitless wars.

118. Why was the second child named Not pitied?

The name indicates the message of unrelenting wrath which Hosea preached to the people at that period of his ministry. Scholars are divided in their opinion as to whether or not Hosea knew of his wife's infidelity at this time; but no matter which way the truth lies in the case the significance of the name remains the same. It is a sermon of stern judgment to a nation that shows no sign of repentance, and it represents the heart of the preacher as being bitter and unloving.

119. Why was the third child named Not my people?

Some have assumed the name to mean that Hosea was denying the child's paternity. But this can hardly have been the case. The name was a sermon of judgment—Yahweh has cast the people off because of their sin.

The idea of a chosen people was one of the major doctrines among the Hebrews, who believed that Yahweh had chosen them as a special people whom he was bound to protect against their enemies under all circumstances. No one had ever before presumed to suggest that he might disown them. Hosea was trying to impress them with the fact

that sinning was such terrible business that it was even capable of severing the ties that bound them to Yahweh, and the child's name was to be a sermon to that effect.

120. What were these terrible national sins?

According to the priests, as we learned in our study of Amos, sin was nothing worse than an incorrect performance of a ritual. But according to Amos and Hosea the sins of the nation were economic, social, and political misdeeds. In his earlier ministry Hosea does not mention specific sins, but in his later sermons he makes bold and vigorous attacks on the stupid policies of the nation (6:4; 7:11; 8:4; 9:6) and calls them outright sins.

121. Was Hosea correct in his interpretation of his times?

Less than twenty years after Hosea closed his ministry the northern kingdom of Israel ceased to exist. The Assyrians came down in force, sacked the capital of Samaria, and carried 27,290 persons off into Assyrian captivity. The nation therewith passed off the stage of history, never again to appear as a political unit, and for the very reason that Hosea had declared—a combination of corrupt religion and debauched politics.

122. Why was Israel's religion so corrupt?

For generations the priests had taught the people that Yahweh would care for them no matter what happened, if they were faithful in their performance of the ceremonies. They had met those conditions with great care, and yet the nation fell. When disaster overtook them their faith went crumbling along with the walls of their capital. The theory of the priests simply did not work. The reputation of the priests and religious leaders suffered a staggering blow and their doctrines were repudiated. The events of history had disproven everything the priests had taught, and they had no new solution. A religion of ceremony and ritualism does not produce prophets—it only breeds priests.

123. Why is the story of Gomer so important?

If the story of Hosea had contained nothing to teach except the tragedy of one man's marriage, the book would never have been preserved for us as scripture. But out of the catastrophic domestic experience one man came to an understanding of the great fact that God is capable of amazing love. Amos somehow discovered God's concern for justice; and Hosea, when he found there was love in his own heart for Gomer in spite of her infidelity, caught a glimpse of the undefeatable love God had for the nation.

124. Is this the beginning of the doctrine of love?

This is the first record we have in th Scriptures of the love of God as an essential quality of his nature and character. We must keep in mind,