

Christ in Prophecy
Jesus in the Old Testament 36
Loving as God Loves (Hosea)
Key Verses: Hosea 2:23, 3:5

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Opening

Tim Moore: Welcome to Christ in Prophecy and our Jesus in the Old Testament series. Nathan and I have been looking forward to working our way through the Minor Prophets for some time. Not only because he wrote a book focusing on these often overlooked messengers from God, but also because they offer so much insight into God's prophetic plan.

Nathan Jones: Exactly, Tim. And thanks for the plug. The minor prophets came from a variety of backgrounds and utilized a variety of techniques to communicate the word of the Lord. Well, today we're going to turn our attention to Hosea. At 14 chapters long Hosea ties with Zechariah, but ironically, both are longer than Daniel, who is considered a major prophet.

Tim Moore: You know, the importance of the prophets' messages cannot be judged by the length of their books. All serve the Lord faithfully and pointed toward the coming Anointed One, the Messiah. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah call the righteous Branch.

Part 1

Tim Moore: Michael Branch is the pastor of Brightstar Bible Church in Glenpool, Oklahoma, and a good friend of this ministry. So, Michael, we want to welcome you to Christ in Prophecy today.

Michael Branch: I'm certainly glad to be here today, gentlemen. I'm excited.

Tim Moore: Well, we are excited, too. And we want to establish right up front for our viewers that although we are talking about Hosea, you bear little resemblance to Hosea in a very important way. You have been blessed with a wife who is a wonderful helpmate in your ministry. And as a matter of fact, we want to bring our viewers a very special treat by bringing a favorite hymn to them, sung by your wife and your two daughters.

Krista, Kassidy & Kenna Branch Singing: Great is Thy Faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father.

There is no shadow of turning with Thee.

Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not. As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

Great is Thy faithfulness.

Great is Thy faithfulness.

Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided.
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.
Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth.
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide.
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.
Blessings all mine with 10,000 beside.

Great is Thy faithfulness.

Great is Thy faithfulness.

Morning by morning new mercies I see.

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided.

Great is Thy faithfulness. Great is Thy faithfulness. Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

Tim Moore: You know what a wonderful way to start this episode, and a great blessing for all of us.

Nathan Jones: Folks, while we're looking at Hosea, he's back in a 750 to 715 B.C. Mostly his prophecy ministry was about 740 BC. He ministered to the northern tribes of Israel. He was a loving, forgiving guy. He was an acting prophet, he performed. So the Lord then asked him to act a particular message out, and it was to go marry a harlot and have children with her. Why would God ask Hosea to do that?

Michael Branch: Well, you know, it seems that they were ignorant of God's ways, that they had rebelled. And it just, you know, kept snowballing over time and God had had enough.

Tim Moore: And they, being the nation itself.

Michael Branch: That's right. The nation of Israel. And so, God was using, Hosea as an object lesson, if you will. And we would look at that and think, whoa, wait a second, God, what's going on here? But, you know, I believe that any time you obey God, even in circumstances such as that, you're going to get a deep spiritual blessing out of that. I think Hosea probably did as well.

Nathan Jones: And if you look at the original Hebrew, it's not necessarily that she was a harlot, but a woman of unfaithfulness.

Michael Branch: Yes.

Nathan Jones: And since she was a woman of unfaithfulness, and Israel, as God's wife, was a group of unfaithful people he became a human object lesson.

Michael Branch: That's right. Yeah, that's right.

Tim Moore: I think sometimes we don't catch the fact that sometimes our lives are object lessons. Do we treat them that way? Do we use circumstances of our lives as opportunities to glorify God, or do we just kind of mope in our own dissatisfaction at times?

Michael Branch: Sure. Well, you know, I think with all believers, if we're not careful, will sink into a life of kind of mediocrity, and we're going through the motions. We become religious, relying on the traditions of men and eventually the love is lost. And that's really no different as we read in the Old Testament. No different than being unfaithful to God when you begin to, in a way, you're worshipping an idol of just comfort and mediocrity.

Tim Moore: Joni Eareckson Tada was with us recently, and her life is a living testimony of faithfulness to God, regardless of circumstances. And overflowing with joy in spite of circumstances, dare we say. You know, one of the things I find very tragic about Hosea's life was he was told to give his children names that were meant to communicate prophetic warnings to the people of Israel. And their names were very strange. Do you have a recollection of what some of those names were in this book?

Michael Branch: Well, yeah Jezreel, God sows. You know, He will visit bloodshed on the house of Jehu.

Tim Moore: Oh, my.

Michael Branch: That doesn't sound good. And I'm not necessarily great at pronouncing the names, I'm sure, as you guys are, too, but Lo-ruhamah she has not obtained compassion. And Lo-ammi, not my people. In other words, I will not be their God any longer. So, you know, our usual response to something like that, because we're talking about God telling them to name their children something in a prophetic message, and it was fulfilled, that the kids would go astray. It's almost as if God, in our minds, was unfairly, treating the children or blaming the children for something that the mother had done. But we need to understand the God we're dealing with, and that He's always just and He's always righteous. And, you know, those children, as we see later, sowing the wind, reaping the whirlwind, those children were just as complicit in what was going on as mom was.

Nathan Jones: What's interesting with Hosea, his relation to his children is because Gomer was unfaithful. And what a name Gomer. That the children were likely not even his, and still he had to take care of them. So, we see these different dynamics of relationships here. And there's also a dynamic between Hosea and God that he has a special pet name for him. What was Hosea's name for God? A term of endearment?

Michael Branch: Well, it's Ishi, which is my husband. Right. And then you've got the other name, which is Baali is my Master or the Baals, these false idols that Israel was so prone to follow after and worship. And so, it speaks of the relationship or a transformation of relationship in the way you love your wife is obviously going to be different than how you treat your office assistant. Right? Or at least it better be. And so, this really points to the transformation in, for us, in the life of a believer is when we truly know Christ, there's a true transformation that takes place in us. There's a relationship of intimacy. We know Him and He knows us, and that's really what this is talking about here.

Nathan Jones: Reminds me of Romans 9:25 and first, Peter 2:10 where it creates a relationship between the Church and God. Of course, Christ over the Church is considered the head, but He's also considered a groom, and we're the bride. And it's neat that when you read the Old Testament, God looked at Israel sometimes as a child, there's all sorts of different relationships it's compared to, but also as a wife. And Hosea's wife, Gomer was a cheating, self-centered, evil type of woman. And that's what God's wife had become.

Michael Branch: That's right. And you know, we are no different in our faithfulness to the Lord. I mean, there is nothing in our own righteousness that has any appeal to God. You know, our righteousness is as filthy rags. So, it's wonderful that our relationship, as the bride, relies upon the faithfulness of the bridegroom. Isn't that nice?

Tim Moore: It is, certainly is. And that's why the song your girl's sang today is so beautiful and captures God's faithfulness. He is a faithful bridegroom, even when we have proven faithless. And of course, our goal is to be faithful to our loving Savior. But His love for us is so much greater and unfathomable. And so, as that husband, He is the faithful one. And Hosea does stand in as a type.

Michael Branch: Yes.

Tim Moore: You know, I think it also shows the lengths to which our loving bridegroom will go to rescue his bride.

Michael Branch: Absolutely. When you look at the, almost the poetry, the imagery of. There's a passage, you I believe, chapter two, where Gomer or Israel, because we know that they're kind of connected. "I will lead her into the wilderness," almost this imagery of romancing her, speaking kindly to her, providing for her, giving her everything she needs. And then the result of that, of her true repentance, the result of her true repentance is God pouring out His compassion. And then in that compassion and mercy, you see this transformation in her, where she begins to sing like Israel did when they were freed from Egypt. There's this burden that's been lifted off of their shoulders. And now she's singing in freedom. And this the joy of this romance, or being romanced by God. You know.

Nathan Jones: Michael, one of the joys of writing *12 Faith Journeys of the Minor Prophets* was I led every chapter with a little historical fiction to kind of introduce you to the person. And one of the ones that really touched my heart was something that Hosea did to Gomer. Back in that time period, as you know, if you got into debt, you were sold into slavery. And at this point because of her excessive living and her prostitution, she was so much in debt that she was put on the auction block to be sold. What did Hosea do? Very similar to what Christ did for us for Gomer.

Michael Branch: Wow, I mean, you know, he bought her, and he purchased her the same way Christ purchased us with His precious blood, Paul says. So, you know, we are the benefactors of the bridegroom paying the bride price, purchasing us. And even though we were so unworthy of even being purchased the way Gomer was.

Tim Moore: I think there's a demonstration as well, because Gomer continued to return almost as the Scripture, says like a dog to its vomit, to her former lifestyle. And I think there's another good fictional account of this in *The Chosen* where Mary Magdalene still feels the weight of her past that just wants to drag her back into how am I possibly worthy of being in relationship with Jesus Christ? And yet Jesus is so very gracious to bring her back to Himself and back into that relationship. He's not going to let her go, even though her past wants to drag her down. I think too many of us as Christians have had baggage in our lives that has been forgiven of us by our Lord and Savior. And yet it still wants to pull us back. Satan is trying to drag us. And Jesus, as our perfect Bridegroom, is faithful to continually redeem us over and over again. Once for all, by His blood, but he is gracious to continually pull us back into relationships.

Michael Branch: Yeah, we often forget that. That, you know, there's a lot of weight on our shoulders, on our hearts and minds with the shame of our past, and sometimes letting go of that is hard for us. And we need to remember that, as you said, man thrown into the sea of forgetfulness, he forgets it and never thinks of it again. And so, but for us, I think sometimes we have to walk those steps. It takes a little while for us to remind ourselves over and over, go back to Scripture and see that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Nathan Jones: Well, this Jesus in the Old Testament series, we're looking for actual Christophanies, or Theophanies appearances of Jesus Christ. We're looking for typologies, people or events or symbols that point to Jesus. I think we've got a really strong one here in the Book of Hosea. Would you say that Hosea is a type of Christ?

Michael Branch: Yeah, I'm actually fascinated by those Old Testament Christophanies you know, Christ appearing in Scripture before He ever was born in Bethlehem. And yeah, there's a very powerful one here. I mean, just what we've been talking about with the bridegroom and the bride and, or the sinner and the kinsman redeemer. And I think that this is a powerful story in that regard.

Tim Moore: You know, I said that we sometimes have to be reminded that we have been forgiven. Christ is gracious to continually pull us into relationship. But there's another side to what is presented in Hosea to those whom have been called there is a higher expectation that we will try to remain faithful to God. So, He has great condemnation, if you will, for the nation of Israel, because they should have known better than to stray from Him. And I think Jesus, even in His ministry, had a condemnation for certain cities who He ministered to, who witnessed firsthand His graciousness, His mercy, His power of healing and administering. And yet they rejected Him. And we need to take seriously our call to remain faithful to our faithful God.

Michael Branch: You know, the reference of they have sown the wind and they reap the whirlwind.

Nathan Jones: Hosea 8:7

Michael Branch: Yeah, amazing. And I think that what we should take from that is when leadership is weak, I think about actually, you know, where there is no vision, the people perish. And if you drill down into that, where there is no prophetic Word, where there is no God given Word to guide the people, in our case, the Word of God. When leadership, you know, tries to lead without the direction of the Word of God, what happens is the people are unrestrained. There is no vision. The people perish. They flounder. They wind up, you know, it's like an F4 tornado. It's the whirlwind. And, you know, we see this in Scripture over and over again as the father and the sins visited upon the son and the grandchildren. And I think what we need to realize is that sometimes when we're sowing the wind, 10 years, 20 years from now is when in the lives of our children and grandchildren, that's when utter chaos ensues. And we need to be thinking about that always, and never let our foot off the gas in our pursuit of Him knowing that He's always pursuing us.

Tim Moore: And passing that information on. In chapter four, verse six, it says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being my priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children."

Michael Branch: That's right.

Tim Moore: And boy, what a powerful indictment that is that we sometimes say, oh, look at these young people, they're straying. Why are they straying? Because those who should have been passing down to them knowledge of the true and living God have not done so faithfully. Boy, that is a challenge and an indictment for all of us as we witness the world going amuck today.

Nathan Jones: Well, look at the time period. This is 740 B.C. When was ten tribes of northern tribes taken? 722, they were taken only 18 years later after this message, which means then what did the people do? They rejected Hosea's message. They didn't repent. They didn't return to the Lord. They kept on, so God's like, I'm done with them. And that, I think, applies greatly to the United States. Wouldn't you say? Because we as a nation have had prophet after prophet, we've had signs of nature and society. We've had preachers and teachers like yourself at your church preaching the Word. If the next generation doesn't accept it and ask for forgiveness, is America doomed to destruction?

Michael Branch: Well, I mean, I think America is going to go the same path that any other nation would, as we see in Romans 1. I mean, you read Romans 1, you see it laid out there that God's judgment is revealed in this way against a nation that would shirk their responsibility in raising up their children and walking the path of righteousness. So very clear picture there of how a nation will crumble, you know, to the very foundations.

Tim Moore: Certainly. Well, I love the fact that you brought up the passage in Hosea 8 about reaping or sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind. Back in chapter five, verse 14, the Lord says, "I even I will tear to pieces," talking about the House of Judah, His own chosen people, "I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver," almost giving them over. But then he says this in verse 15 "I will go away and return to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face, in their affliction, they will earnestly seek Me." So even this going away has a purpose and that is to drive people toward repentance and toward recognizing how in the world have we strayed so far from the Lord that He would abandon us and we have no other hope than return to Him? That is the meaning of repent. And so even in this abandonment wrath, so to speak, there is a message of salvation that is inherent, if people will simply repent, turn to the Lord, He is waiting to save and to be gracious.

Michael Branch: Amen. You know, in speaking about this nation, especially, you know, we often quote, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves," you know, and all of that applies.

Tim Moore: The principle. Yes.

Michael Branch: That's right. The principle. Right. And we, of course, know that He was specifically speaking to Israel. But what a beautiful picture, though, of God's compassion and His mercy. And it also just rolls right over if we look at our own lives and how we are unfaithful and how we often blow it, at least I know I do. I can't speak for you. But you know, you blow it and God, you know, his mercies are new every morning.

Nathan Jones: And that's what the beauty of chapter 11 in Hosea, you really can feel God's heart in this. He feels betrayed. He's angry. He's frustrated, is as much as a divine being can be.

Michael Branch: Sure.

Nathan Jones: And he pours out his anguish. He says, verse 1, "When Israel was a child, I loved him. And out of Egypt I called him my son." He's saying, hey, I treated you like an heir, like a child. I loved you. Then he says, "So, they went from that and they sacrificed to the Baals and burned incense to carved images." You can hear just God's heart breaking. Do you think that God's heart is breaking for his people today, especially the Church, as it gets totally apostate?

Michael Branch: Of course, it is. I mean, you know, God's heart is breaking because He is love. But those whom He loves, He's going to chasten. And I think we should be very worried if there were no chastening. I think these you know, what I would call remedial judgments, this abandonment wrath is actually evidence that God is still giving this nation an opportunity to repent and return. And I pray that that's exactly what we'll do as a nation.

Tim Moore: Yeah, I do too. I have my doubts. But there's also a point that we, as individual Christians are also told in the New Testament not to grieve the Holy Spirit. You say, well, what am I doing to grieve the Holy Spirit? Well, are we, am I in an intentional relationship with the Lord God Almighty? Am I looking to Him daily and staying in that close relationship? I know that Jesus Christ is yearning to be regathered with His bride collectively, which is the Rapture itself. Am I yearning for that glorious event, or am I just kind of going about my life oblivious to the desire to be united with Christ? And so I think grieving the Holy Spirit can be through acts of commission, but frankly, it sometimes can be through a oblivion of omission, even of that heartfelt desire for the Lord's return, for Him to be glorified, and for me to be reunited with Him.

Michael Branch: The Bible is so clear about His imminency, and that the bride is to make herself ready, you know. And of course, we know that that the Holy Spirit is the One who is sanctifying us, making us more like Christ. But we have to also put ourselves in a position of being, of receiving that sanctifying work of the Spirit, you know. And so, yeah, we can shirk our responsibility. We can be lazy. We can be careless. And I think that we should always be pursuing Him as best we can. And if we are faithful to do that, God is so good in, I think, doing what He did with, you know, Gomer and Israel so many times, receiving them, romancing them. I mean, it's just if you know the Lord and you're intimate with the Lord, it is a beautiful thing. And I couldn't live without it.

Nathan Jones: Oh, amen, brother. Well, when Hosea had to buy Gomer off the auction block, the price for a slave at that time was 30 pieces of silver. It seems like he only had 15, and so he gave barley as the other. So basically 30 pieces over to buy out of her life of sin. What did Jesus pay to buy us out of our lives of sin?

Michael Branch: I mean, the ultimate the ultimate price. But, you know, we think a lot about the physical pain that He endured and all of that. But the fact is that, you know, Christ received upon Himself the wrath of His own Father, the wrath that I deserved, He took upon himself. He took my place. And we often focus so much on His physical suffering when we need to really think about the fact that it was my own personal sin, that He received that payment, God's wrath, He drank the cup of God's wrath on my behalf so that I could be free and I could have that intimacy with the Father.

Nathan Jones: In Psalm 22, which he quoted from the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The first time the Trinity was broken.

Michael Branch: Yes.

Tim Moore: I think we who have been grafted into this family of God are proof that even the prophetic word that came in chapter two, verse 23, this is one of our key verses “I will say to those who are not my people, you are my people, and they will say, Thou are my God.” And boy, that is my testimony. Our other key verse being in chapter three, verse five, talking about the sons of Israel returning and seeking the Lord their God and David, their King, and they will come trembling. And that is to happen, yet when a great number of the Jewish people look upon Him whom they have pierced and cry out as for an only begotten son, and that will occur. But right now, we are blessed, again, to have been a fulfillment of some of these verses, to recognize Jesus as our Savior, to embrace Him as our soon returning king and our glorious bridegroom.

Michael Branch: Amen. We can be hard on Israel sometimes, can't we? Seeing how many times they reject the Lord. But we also know, you know, Paul says in Romans 11 that they're under a partial hardening, that this is God's plan and it was for our benefit because the Gospel would have never been offered to you and I, to the Gentiles, had they not rejected Christ when they did. So we're the benefactors of their rebellion. But we know that He has promised that He would redeem them. He hasn't cut them off for good. It's all throughout the pages of the Old Testament. You know, the song of Moses, you see it there, that yeah, He's going to desolate you. He's going to be brutal to you, but He will not leave you in that place.

Tim Moore: No.

Michael Branch: There's coming a day when He will restore you and all the promises of the kingdom with that.

Tim Moore: So, give us a final word, so to speak, from the book of Hosea. How does he end his entire book? And it's right there in chapter 14, verse nine.

Michael Branch: “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 righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.” What, I mean, just a picture of human nature. It's like, you know, if you are receptive to the Lord, if you seek Him and you listen when He's calling you. Right? He opens our eyes and we respond. That's the way the Lord works. And there are always going to be those who love the darkness more than the light. But we don't know who those are, do we? So, it's our job to just spread the Gospel, tell as many people as we possibly can, because the time is short.

Tim Moore: Well, Michael, thanks again for being here with us today on Christ in Prophecy and for bringing your beautiful wife and daughters and gifting and blessing us with a worshipful song that touched everyone's hearts.

Michael Branch: Well, I was certainly glad to be here. And I'm blessed beyond measure with my wife, with my daughters. I'm glad they could be here to bless everyone else as well.

Tim Moore: Amen.

Closing

Nathan Jones: Well, we call this lesson of Hosea: Loving as God loves, because as a husband, Hosea loved his wayward wife, with selfless and sacrificial love. You have to wonder if his heart was not in turmoil at the indignity of having to purchase his own wife as she sold herself on the street. But his dramatic demonstration of unfailing and unmerited love pointed to the Lord God.

Tim Moore: You know, I pray that when our Heavenly Bridegroom comes, He finds us faithful. Still, we will never match the faithfulness of God, as the ladies sing about today. Until the Lord comes we intend to faithfully proclaim His prophetic Word, pointing people to our Heavenly Bridegroom. Our goal is to motivate believers to urgent evangelism, holy living, and keeping their eyes on Jesus and to warn unbelievers to flee from the wrath to come and into the loving arms of our Savior.

Nathan Jones: Please consider joining us in that effort by becoming a Prophecy Partner. For only \$25 a month, you can ensure that the message that Jesus is coming soon will be proclaimed far and wide. As a prophecy partner you'll get our Lamplighter magazine every other month, as well as other gifts and updates on Lamb and Lion Ministries.

Tim Moore: If you would be willing to partner with us, just call the number on the screen or visit our website. You'll be helping others grow in knowledge of our soon returning King. Well, that's our show for today. Join Nathan and me next week for another episode of Christ in Prophecy. Until then, look up and be watchful for our Lord, our heavenly Bridegroom, who is coming for the Bride of Christ is coming soon. Godspeed.

End of Program