

Session 10 The Forerunner Message in Hosea 1-3

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The main themes of the book are Israel’s unfaithfulness, judgment, and end-time restoration.
- B. Hosea endured the pain of his wife engaging in adultery. God compared Hosea’s unfaithful wife to the nation of Israel (2:2-13). In the midst of her pain, Israel will one day confess, “I will return to my husband, for it was better for me” (2:7). Hosea’s story is told in Hosea 1-3.
 - 1. The Lord wanted Hosea’s pain-filled marriage to be a prophetic picture of how the Lord felt about His marriage to Israel.
 - 2. The Lord wanted Hosea to experience the pain, disappointment, and joy of the recovery of a broken marriage relationship. This equipped Hosea to be the first prophet to make known the Bridegroom God to Israel and the nations.
 - 3. The Lord used the names of Hosea’s three children to declare His message to Israel.
- C. Hosea’s message was new in two ways—in introducing the Lord as the Bridegroom God and in declaring that the northern kingdom of Israel would be destroyed. The message was that the Lord as a Bridegroom God orchestrated both judgment and restoration.
 - 1. This was the first time that the “Bride of Christ” message was declared to Israel, and it was given in the context of judgment.
 - 2. Only by understanding His heart as a Bridegroom can we interpret His judgments. The One who judges loves so much that He will remove all that hinders love.

D. Outline of Hosea 1-3

- 1:1-9** Judgment on Israel (1:2-9)
- 1:10-2:1** Promises of Israel’s restoration
- 2:2-13** Judgment on Israel as a harlot
- 2:14-3:5** Promises of restoration that reverses God’s judgments
 - 2:14-20 Renewed love between Israel and the Lord
 - 2:21-23 Renewed land in Israel
 - 3:1-3 The restoration of Hosea’s wife
 - 3:4-5 The restoration of the Lord’s wife

- E. Hosea started prophesying to the northern Kingdom around 760 BC, warning Israel of the destruction that came when the Assyria invaded Israel and deported their people in 721 BC.
- F. Note: Five dates that are important to know to better understand the message of the prophets.
 - 931 BC civil war—the 10 tribes of Israel (north) fought against Judah (south).
 - 721 BC Israel (north) was destroyed by Assyria (about 200 years after the civil war started).
 - 586 BC Judah (south)—Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar).
 - 536 BC The Jews returned from Babylonian captivity to rebuild Jerusalem and temple.
 - AD 70 Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans (1948 re-established the state of Israel).

II. JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL (HOS. 1:2-9)

- A. Hosea ministered during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He was a contemporary with Isaiah, Amos, and Micah. Uzziah reigned 52 years (792-740 BC). His son Jotham was co-regent from 750-740 BC, then sole ruler from 740-735 BC. Ahaz reigned 735-715 BC, including the crisis of 721 BC. Hezekiah reigned 715-687 BC.

¹The word of the LORD that came to Hosea...in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. (Hos. 1:1)

- B. The Lord commanded Hosea to take a wife of harlotry at the beginning of his prophetic ministry because Israel (the northern kingdom) was engaged in harlotry by departing from the Lord. The Lord commanded Hosea to embrace the same kind of marriage that He had with Israel so that he would experience some of the pain that the Lord felt over Israel.

²When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD.”³So he went and took Gomer...and she conceived and bore him a son. (Hos. 1:2-3)

1. **Land committed harlotry:** The Lord gave Hosea the reason for commanding him to take a wife of harlotry—because the land has committed harlotry by departing from the Lord.
 - a. The nation of Israel in Hosea’s generation walked in a spirit of harlotry (4:12, 5:4).

¹²...the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God. (Hos. 4:12)
 - b. End-time Jerusalem will be called “Sodom” spiritually (Rev. 11:8).

⁸And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem] which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. (Rev. 11:8)
 - c. Isaiah 57 gives a prophetic snapshot of sin in Israel’s end-time leadership. The measure of sin that Isaiah described here will be surpassed by the leadership in Israel and the nations in the end times when darkness covers the earth (Isa. 60:2).

³“Come...you sons of the sorceress, you offspring of the adulterer and the harlot! (Isa. 57:3)

2. The Lord will judge Babylon for defiling the nations as a great harlot (Rev. 17:1-6).

- C. **Wife of harlotry:** Some see Gomer as his literal wife, while some interpret this as a vision or allegory. There are different views of interpreting the command for Hosea to marry a harlot (1:2).

1. View #1: Hosea’s wife Gomer became unfaithful to him *after* they were married, and the Lord required him to “take her back” to be his wife after a breach in their relationship. This view parallels the relationship between the Lord and Israel most closely (2:2, 4; 4:12; 5:4). Israel became unfaithful to the Lord after He “married her” at Sinai (Jer. 2:2-3).
2. View #2: Hosea’s wife was a harlot *before* he married her.
3. View #3: Hosea’s marriage to a harlot was only a vision or allegory.
4. View #4: Hosea’s wife was “a wife of harlotry” in a spiritual, not physical, way.

- D. **Children of harlotry:** Were they born to Hosea in the years that she had been unfaithful? Being “children of harlotry” may indicate that his children had to bear the stigma of people knowing that their mother was a harlot (2:4-5) and questioning who their father was. Or, it might imply that after they grew up, they embraced the same spirit of immorality as their mother.
- E. Hosea’s marriage was a very painful, costly, and unusual prophetic act—he endured as husband what the Lord had endured in His covenant with Israel. Hosea shared in God’s experiences and therefore can speak with God’s heart. His life with his wife Gomer mirrors the message of Israel’s sin, punishment, and redemption—it is the essence of Hosea’s prophecy.

- F. Hosea obeyed the Lord and took Gomer, and his wife who bore him a son named Jezreel (1:3-5).

³So he went and took Gomer...and she conceived and bore him a son. ⁴Then the LORD said to him: “Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge [bring] the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and bring an end [721 BC] to the kingdom of...Israel. ⁵It shall come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.” (Hos. 1:3-5)

1. **Call his name Jezreel:** The Lord told him to name the child, *Jezreel*, which means “God sows” in the sense of God scattering. It pointed to a valley in Israel with the same name. That is, *Jezreel* means “scattered by God” and points to the historical significance of what happened in the valley of Jezreel in the past and what will happen there in the end times.
2. **Bring an end:** The Lord declared that He would end Israel’s northern kingdom (721 BC).
3. **Valley of Jezreel:** Many significant military and violent events occurred in this valley.
4. **I will avenge the bloodshed at Jezreel:** Jehu shed much blood in the valley of Jezreel when he killed Joram, Jezebel, and Ahab’s entire household (2 Kgs. 9:4-10:11). It is referred to as the “bloodshed at Jezreel” because Jehu slaughtered many in Jezreel.

⁷...“You [Jehu] shall strike down the house of Ahab...that I may avenge the blood of My servants...at the hand of Jezebel. ⁸For the whole house of Ahab shall perish...

¹⁰The dogs shall eat Jezebel on the plot of ground at Jezreel... (2 Kgs. 9:7-10)

- a. The verb “avenge” can be translated as “to visit” or “to bring on.” The Lord would visit or bring upon Jehu’s house the same judgment that came on Ahab’s house. One translation is, “I will bring the bloodshed of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.”
- b. God bought on Jehu’s house the “bloodshed of Jezreel” for not learning the lesson of *Jezreel*. Jehu embraced idolatry as Jeroboam and Ahab did (2 Kgs 10:31; 13:1). Jehu, the divine instrument of God’s judgment on Ahab, was guilty of the same sins.

³¹But Jehu...did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam... (2 Kgs. 10:31)

- G. **Break the bow in Jezreel:** The Lord declared that He would break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. The child’s name Jezreel also spoke of a future judgment in the valley of Jezreel occurring on “that day,” when God broke the power of Israel’s army, symbolized by a bow.

1. The initial fulfillment of this occurred when the Assyrian king attacked and subjugated Israel in the Valley of Jezreel in 733 BC and again in 721 BC (2 Kgs. 15:29; 17:3-5).
2. Armageddon is located in the valley of Jezreel.

H. Gomer bore two more children who were given prophetic names by the Lord (1:6-9).

⁶*She conceived again and bore a daughter. Then God said to him: “Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away [721 BC].
⁷Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the LORD...and will not save them by...battle...”⁸Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son.
⁹Then God said: “Call his name Lo-Ammi, for you are not My people, and I will not be your God. (Hos. 1:6-9)*

1. **Lo-ruhamah:** This means “to not receive mercy or love.” “Lo” means “no” or “not.”
2. **I will utterly take them away:** The Lord did not give mercy to Israel at the time they were taken from Israel as captives by the Assyrians in 721 BC during Hosea’s lifetime.
3. **Mercy on Judah:** Mercy was granted to Judah by delivering Jerusalem supernaturally in 701 BC when an angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (2 Kgs. 19:32-36; Isa. 37).
4. **Lo-Ammi:** Another son was named “Lo-ammi,” meaning “not My people.” The Lord did not protect Israel “as His people” in the generation that suffered the invasion of 721 BC.

III. PROMISES OF ISRAEL’S RESTORATION (HOS. 1:10-2:1)

A. God’s promise of restoration follows the pronouncing of judgment (1:10-11).

¹⁰*Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea...In the place it was said... ‘You are not My people,’ there it shall be said..., ‘You are sons of the living God.’
¹¹The children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and...come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel! (Hos. 1:10-11)*

B. The Lord judged Israel temporarily, but He will not fully cast her off (Hos. 11:8. Rom. 11:1-2).

⁸*“...How can I hand you over, Israel?... My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. (Hos. 11:8)*

¹*...has God cast away His people? Certainly not!...²God has not cast away His people... (Rom. 11:1-2)*

C. **Sons of the living God:** They would again be called sons of the living God (2:23). This family terminology points to the restoration of intimate covenant relationship and privilege.

D. **Great will be the day of Jezreel:** It will be a great day when God restores Israel to relationship with Himself, to one another, and to the land, and He reverses the judgments mentioned in 1:4-10.

IV. JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL AS A HARLOT (HOS. 2:2-13)

- A. The Lord instructed Hosea and the faithful remnant to contend with unfaithful Israel who was like an unfaithful wife to the Lord (2:1-2). Hosea may have spoken this in part to his children.

²***“Bring charges against your mother [Israel]...for she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight... (Hos. 2:2)***

1. **Bring charges:** The remnant of Israel was to contend against apostate Israel.
2. **She is not My wife:** The Lord explained why the remnant must speak up—because the unique bond between Himself and their “mother” Israel had been put on hold.

- B. The Lord warned that He would strip Israel as naked and expose her helplessness (2:3-5). The woman here is a picture of being humiliated and abandoned in desert without provision.

³***Lest I strip her naked and expose her, as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness...⁴“I will not have mercy on her children, for they are the children of harlotry.⁵ For their mother has played the harlot... (Hos. 2:3-5)***

1. **I will not have mercy:** The Lord did not have mercy on Israel in 721 BC because they were children of harlotry. The children who operate in the spirit of harlotry also perish.
2. **I will go after my lovers:** She was resolute to go after her lovers who provided for her. Israel’s “lovers” were the foreign nations. Israel committed adultery by relying on them.

- C. The Lord promised to block her from the lovers she has sought (2:6-7).

⁵***...For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water...⁶“Therefore, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths.⁷ She will chase her lovers...but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will...return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now.’ (Hos. 2:5-7)***

1. **Hedge up your way:** The Lord will frustrate her plans to continue in rebellion (2:6). The final outcome of this is the shattering of the power of Israel (Dan. 12:7).

⁷I heard the man [angel]...and [he] swore by Him ...when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. (Dan. 12:7)

2. **I will return:** When all her plans are frustrated, then she will turn to God (Deut. 30:6).

¹“It shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you...²and you return to the LORD...³God will bring you back from captivity...⁶God will circumcise your heart...to love the Lord...with all your heart. (Deut. 30:1-6)

- D. God spoke of judgment on Israel (2:8-13). She failed to acknowledge that God provided for her.

⁸For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold—which they prepared for Baal.⁹“Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time...[she] went after her lovers; but Me she forgot,” says the LORD. (Hos. 2:8-13)

V. RENEWED LOVE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE LORD (HOS. 2:14-20)

- A. The Lord will remain faithful to His promises even after His people are unfaithful (2:14-3:5).
*¹⁴“Therefore...I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her.
¹⁵I will give her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there...as when she came up from the land of Egypt. ¹⁶And it shall be, in that day, that you will call Me ‘My Husband’... ¹⁸In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air...Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth...” (Hos. 2:14-18)*
- B. *Allure*: God’s main way of turning us from unfaithfulness is by His kindness and beauty. The revelation of God’s beauty and kindness deeply touches the human spirit (Isa. 4:2).
- C. *Valley of Achor*: The valley of Achor (*lit.* trouble) was the place of Achan’s sin and judgment (Josh. 7:24-26). It will be turned into a doorway of hope for a new future.
- D. *My Husband*: Israel will accept Jesus as their Messiah when they see Him as their Husband!
- E. The Lord wants to marry His people forever (2:19-20). The nature of their marriage relationship:
¹⁹I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; ²⁰I will betroth you...in faithfulness...” (Hos. 2:19-20)

VI. RENEWED LAND IN ISRAEL (HOS. 2:21-23)

- A. This promises renewed fertility and restored favor with Yahweh who will reach out to save her.
²¹“It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer...I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. ²²The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine...” (Hos. 2:21)
- B. The Lord will show mercy on Israel and established them in covenant relationship with Him.
²³I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hos. 2:23)

VII. THE RESTORATION OF HOSEA’S WIFE AS WELL AS THE LORD’S WIFE (HOS. 3:1-5)

- A. The marriage relationship of Hosea and Gomer was restored (Hos. 3:1-3).
¹Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel...” ²So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver... ³And I said to her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man—so, too, will I be toward you.” (Hos. 3:1-3)
- B. The marriage relationship of Hosea and Gomer was restored (Hos. 3:4-5).
⁴For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. ⁵Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD...and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days. (Hos. 3:4-5)