

**Big Plans = Big Grace
Even Though Caught Cheating...Love and Grace Win
Hosea 2: 8 – 14**

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Hosea has been explaining the lengths that he will go to in order to see his wife restored to him and remain faithful to him. He knows his dysfunctional home life is an example to the dysfunctional nation of Israel and is reflective of how Israel has treated YAHWEH. There have been some things though, that Hosea has been doing that his wife is not aware of. She thinks her lovers are doing these things. Israel has the same blindness problem. Everything that Israel had, and remember at the beginning of Hosea, they are a prosperous well protected nation, came from the Lord. Not from their false gods.

And here is the dirty little secret from Hosea to us, these same conditions exist today. We have an entire generation that believes the world came into existence by random chance or worse, was started by aliens.

Even the church must be reminded that He made it all (Revelation 3:14).

The reality is simple, yes, an extraterrestrial was deeply involved in creation. God made everything out of nothing. Here we are in the 21st century AD still thinking the same as the nation of Israel back in the 6th century BC.

Just as ingratitude is a serious problem for Gomer in her relationship with Hosea, the same could also be said for Israel. Ingratitude is also a serious issue for us today. How many in our culture today think they are the ones responsible for what God has provided? We have been too busy worshipping at the altar of self-sufficiency rather than falling before the throne and worshipping the one who has made it all.

Hosea 2:8–9

“Yet she does not know that it was I myself who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold, Which they used for Baal. Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax That I gave to cover her nakedness.” (NASB 2020)

Verse 8, according to some commentators, is a pivot point where Hosea begins to talk directly to the nation of Israel here. But there are still some elements of his personal home situation being reflected as well. Let’s examine a typical country western song.

Hosea loves his wife, yet she is busy looking for love everywhere else other than to the one person who truly loves her and will provide for her. Yes, she is looking for love in all the wrong places, looking for love in too many faces. In this, we see the love of God for his people, and for us as well.

Before coming to Jesus, we are all totally blind to all that God has done to woo us to Himself. The Holy Spirit has been doing whatever is necessary to get our attention and help us realize our need for salvation and realize He is the source of what we think we have done on our own.

Consider this, Hosea’s wife, Gomer, has moved in with her latest lover who says he will take care of her, yet he does not have the wherewithal to do so. So, Hosea provides the basic foodstuffs his wife would need and never stops doing so. Her lover tells her “Look what I have done for you,” yet it was Hosea the whole time who did not cancel the credit cards.

This is a common occurrence today when one spouse is involved in adultery and the other spouse is unaware. There is one party who continues to be the dutiful spouse and pays the bills, prepares the meals, and takes care of the kids. Until the discovery takes place, and then everything changes.

I remember listening to a judge in Beaumont, Texas years ago who talked about the adultery discovery moment. He heard this from couples showing up in his courtroom. He noticed a trend. If the cheater was the husband, and the wife who discovered it was local, then he would arrive home with all his earthly belongings in the front yard.

But if she was of Cajun extraction, then not only would all his earthly belongings be in the front yard, but they would also be on fire.

And we thought some of what Hosea was saying is a bit harsh.

For YAHWEH, there is no such thing as a discovery moment. He sees and knows everything. He is omniscient you know. He always knew about predilection towards apostasy and deep defection in His people, Israel. Nothing took Him by surprise. He has been warning them. That is what Hosea is doing. The amazing thing is the claim made by Israel at the top of verse 8. They claim that they did not know that YAHWEH was the one who made all the provisions for His people.

Israel attributed it all to Baal but alleged they could not know that God did this. Today, we call that agnosticism. Our culture has numerous members of it making the same assertion today. They are also active in attributing it all to random chance and evolution.

Hosea 2:8

“**And she did not know** that I gave her the grain and the wine and the olive oil, and I multiplied money for her, but she made silver and gold for Baal.” (Lexham Press 2020, Hosea 2:8)

They claim to not know. Really? Let’s go back to Mount Sinai.

Exodus 20:18–21

“All the people were seeing the thundering and the lightning, and heard the sound of the horn, and saw the mountain smoking—and when the people saw it they trembled with fear and kept their distance. They said to Moses, “You speak to us and we will listen, but do not let God speak with us, lest we die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you so that you do not sin.” The people kept their distance, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.” (NET)

Solomon identified this disease 200 or so years earlier.

Ecclesiastes 1:9–11

“History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. Sometimes people say, “Here is something new!” But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new. We don’t remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now.” (NLT)

Being a historian, I learned years ago that this statement is incredibly true even today 2900 years after it was written. No one remembers the past. No one learns from the past.

Using the argument that they did not know though is attractive. This became very popular, thanks to T. H. Huxley, who coined the term in the mid-nineteenth century (1869). The word “agnosticism” (related to Gk. agnōsia, “not knowing”) was coined as a technical term It denotes an attitude that refuses to recognize knowledge that is not logical or empirical. In particular, agnosticism denies the claim that God is knowable. In general, it might be called metaphysical abstention. (July 1999 - 2003, 33-34)

I still struggle though with the choice of term as I have found there is another term as well that relates the same sense. I really appreciate the high-sounding term taking the Greek word gnosis, the word meaning knowledge or wisdom an placing the a in front of it to mean the opposite of gnosis. But why the Greek instead of the latin term “ignārus meaning “ignorant of a thing, not knowing, unacquainted with, inexperienced, unaware. (Lewis and Short 1891, 879)

Our English word, dating from around 1616, ignoramus would mean essentially the same thing. Agnosticism was more intellectual sounding than using “ignoratio elenchi, literally, ignorance of proof (1588) : a fallacy in logic of supposing a point proved or disproved by an argument proving or disproving something not at issue.” Have you ever noticed that Satan always likes to make his lies sound intellectual appealing to our sin nature (Genesis 3:4 & 5). (Merriam-Webster Inc. 1996)

So, let’s talk a bit about agnosticism. Many of us have family members who moved to this square. Agnosticism appears to be more popular than atheism these days. Most of this deals with intellectual honesty and what it means when someone says they are an atheist. “Atheists can’t be certain there is no God. Most of them are really agnostics rather than atheists.” (Kreeft 2008, 58)

Romans 1:20

“For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.” (NLT)

Nothing to see here. Now I will stick my head in the sand. But there are those who were atheists who are seeing what the evidence points to. Antony Flew, former atheist relates:

I must say again that the journey to my discovery of the Divine has thus far been a pilgrimage of reason. I have followed the argument where it has led me. And it has led me to accept the existence of a self-existent, immutable, immaterial, omnipotent, and omniscient Being. (Flew and Varghese 2007, 155-156)

Time prevents us from going to deep into this, but this is where Israel had gone to, and it remains a popular destination today. But believing in God, per Blaise Pascal, is more reasonable than not believing in God. “The argument is called “Pascal’s Wager”, after Pascal, a seventeenth-century French philosopher, scientist, and mathematician. He invented the world’s first working computer among many other things, such as the vacuum cleaner and public transportation.” (Kreeft 2008, 57-58)

Blaise Pascal

Yes; but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least. You have two things to lose, the true and the good; and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to shun, error and misery. Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is. (Pascal n.d., 68)

“Agnosticism cannot begin and end where it likes. God cannot be expelled from the intellect without the moral quality of the whole nature going down; without the heart also being as agnostic as the mind. Agnosticism is a larger question than any that can be limited to the mere dry intellect. And agnosticism of this kind means not only deprivation of moral sensibility, as expressed in the action of gratitude, but it makes responsibility at once frivolous and impossible. Responsible to whom? Responsibility never reaches its true realisation until it touches the point of reverence—simple, earnest, continual dependence upon God.” (Exell n.d., 16)

In reality, what Israel had was self-centered ingratitude. They were attributing all God did to Baal depriving God of His own honor. Those who reject Jesus in favor of “not knowing” do the same today.

The problem though is Jesus, today, does not allow for someone not to know, just as God did with Israel. Here is the deal about Jesus, you must decide about Him. We have all been forced into a corner because He was a well attested to historical figure here on earth; so who is He? “He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (C. S. Lewis 1980, 52)

Saying you do not know who He is is simply a cop out. We have serious historical evidence about Jesus, just like Israel had about God.

Facts About Jesus

So, looking at the facts, we know the following:

- Jesus is a historical figure who was here on planet earth between 3BC and 33AD.
- The facts surrounding His birth are exceptional (Brown 2019)
- His birth was anticipated and watched for by a group founded by Daniel, the Magi
- An attempt was made by Herod to kill Him when he was around 2 years of age
- He and His family escaped to Egypt returning years later when Herod died to live in Nazareth
- At the beginning of His ministry, He identified with the Suffering Servant
- He made many claims during His ministry to include claiming to be God (John 1:23, 4:26, 6:35, 8:12, 10:10, 11:25, 14:6)
- He claimed that if He was killed, He would resurrect Himself from the dead (John 2:18 – 22)
- He claimed to be Messiah (John 4:25)
- He claimed He will invade the world to rescue His people
- He will rule the world from Jerusalem (Matthew 19:28 – 29)

- He will resurrect every one of His followers who ever lived (John 6:38 – 40)
- He claimed to be God (John 14:8 – 15)
- He claimed God’s attributes (Matthew 18:19 – 20, 28:18 – 20)
- He performed miracles attesting to the Kingdom

If Jesus is not God, what is he? The bottom line on the argument for Christ’s divinity is that:

1. Jesus was either Lord, liar, lunatic, guru or myth.
2. He could not possibly be a liar, lunatic, guru or myth.
3. Therefore “Jesus is Lord” (the earliest Christian creed). (Kreeft and Tacelli 1994, 158)

Fact – Jesus Was Executed and then Rose from the Dead

In the mid-1800s, an amazing marble slab was found. It is called the Nazareth Inscription.

The Nazareth Inscription is one of the most powerful pieces of extra-biblical evidence that the resurrection of Christ was being preached right from the beginnings of Christianity. It is a Greek inscription on a marble tablet measuring approximately 24 inches by 15 inches. The exact time and place of its discovery is not known. The text records an abridged decree by Emperor Claudius, instituting the death penalty for tomb robbing, a very unusual punishment.

This fact clearly proves that the story of the resurrection of Christ was widely known almost immediately after His crucifixion. In other words, the story of the resurrection of Christ must have been a story that was circulated by his Apostles themselves, and it was not a later invention by Christians of the post-apostolic period, as some modern scholars in the past have argued. (Compton 2009, 106)

The decree was a strict prohibition against disturbing graves. “As noted by Maier, all previous Roman indictments of this nature prescribe only a fine for the offender, but this order demands capital punishment.” (Habermas 1996, 176)

Why capital punishment and why only in Judea? Claudius the Emperor as part of his investigation into riots in Rome involving Jews resulted in his having all Jews expelled from Rome. Suetonius blamed this on the friction between Jews and Christians.

Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome. (Suetonius 1914, 53)

The disturbances were over the resurrection. Jews continued to follow the lie and spin from the High Priest referenced by Matthew. While the Christians preached Christ crucified and raised from the dead.

Think about the level of revelation that we have today? Consider Israel and the level they had. For a people who had the level of revelation that Israel did, “this was an inexcusable stupidity in the Israelites, since they had been abundantly instructed, that the abundance of all good things, and every thing that supports man, flow from God’s bounty. Of this they had the clear testimony of Moses; and then the land of Canaan itself was a living representation of the Divine favour. It was then a prodigious madness in the people, that they who had been taught by word and by facts that God alone is the giver of all things, should yet not consider this truth.” (Calvin and Owen 2010, 90)

Hosea 2:9

“Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax That I gave to cover her nakedness.” (NASB 2020)

Since Israel has attributed all that they have to false gods, the real provider of the basic needs of life, YAHWEH, says He will take it all away. The picture from Hosea is he ceases supplying Gomer food and stops paying her bills. He places an ad in the Samaria Post saying he is no longer responsible for any of the debts accrued by Gomer and he cuts her off. All her credit cards are now cancelled.

The picture that has been drawn for us by Hosea is that the relationship with Gomer started off well but then detoured. He has done what he could to encourage her to return. He has outlined the consequences for her, yet there is an insistence by her to continue in her prostitution and wandering. She has indicated that perhaps she will return to her husband, but the reality is her heart is not in it. So, he cuts her off completely. It is this ongoing difficult relationship that points out the same problems YAHWEH has with Israel.

The people of Israel would understand what it is Hosea is implying when he says he will take away even the ability for Gomer to make clothes leaving her with nothing. She will not be able to buy or make clothes to clothe herself leaving her naked and "in Semitic society public displays of it (nudity) were considered shameful (as is still the case in Orthodox Judaism and Islamic society). God's judgment on Israel will expose the people shamefully to observers." (Dearman 2010, 116)

If God suddenly takes away the gifts then, not only is the loss more painfully felt, but regarded as a punishment far more than when they have been prepared beforehand for a bad harvest by the failure of the crop. Through the manner in which God takes the fruits of the land away from the people, He designs to show them that He, and not Baal, is the giver and the taker also. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 38)

What does this look like? Harvest time arrives. There has been plentiful rain and the crops have grown large and are looking good. But the day before the harvest...shades of Joel 1:4 hits.

Joel 1:4

"What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten." (ESV)

This is the type of judgment that God is now talking about. The sudden removal of those things that had been attributed to Baal. The bounty of the land.

Hosea 2:10

"So now I will uncover her lewdness Before the eyes of her lovers, And no one will rescue her from My hand." (NASB 2020)

Back to the theme of the punishment in this culture for adultery...exposure. This is more than a moment of discovery; this is exposing Gomer for who she truly is and removing all doubt from the community that she has not been faithful to her husband.

Israel will be exposed to the surrounding nations as having nothing. This nation which had been rich, will be rich no longer.

When a nation no longer has the resources to pay a bribe to the enemy to keep them away, then that means the enemy has no recourse but to take the one resource that remains, the people. Having the basics removed and being laid out naked for Israel also means they are no longer even a viable trading partner for any of the surrounding nations. Her lovers, figuratively, see the truth that there is nothing there without the blessing of YAHWEH, there is no longer any incentive to rescue them, they have nothing anyone could want.

They are uncovered and laid bare to all.

The word translated as lewdness is נבלות (nablut). "The word seems to refer to the shameful sexual offenses which the nation, God's wife, had committed with the Baal gods. This stripping would take place "to the eyes of her lovers," i.e., false gods and foreign nations. In the eyes of both her deities and her allies God would strip Israel of her national wealth. Israel would be exposed to the derision of those who once admired her." (Smith 1994, 217)

Just as our culture today is materialistically driven, so was Gomer and so was the nation of Israel. It was all about stuff. When stuff is taken away, if that is all you have, then devastation and depression sets in. Stuff was your god. Back to Solomon, who had stuff but knew reality.

Ecclesiastes 5:10–11

“If you love money, you will never be satisfied; if you long to be rich, you will never get all you want. It is useless. The richer you are, the more mouths you must feed. All you gain is the knowledge that you are rich.” (GNB)

1 John 2:15–17

“Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father. Everything that belongs to the world—what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of—none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live for ever.” (GNB)

Through the removal of material things, since that is what they are living for, joy ends.

Hosea 2:11–12

“I will also put an end to all her joy, Her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, And all her festivals. And I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, ‘They are my wages for prostitution Which my lovers have given me.’ And I will turn them into a forest, And the animals of the field will devour them.” (NASB 2020)

Gomer was into the good life. She was driven materialistically and wanted more of what she perceived as the good things of life. Men, clothes, jewelry, stuff, houses, chariots, and fine food.

She wanted all of this without the worries of maintaining a relationship or of taking care of the consequences of her lifestyle, kids. She lived for pleasure, like Israel, and like our culture today. As part of her arrangements with her lovers, Gomer was given land and some crop. She is a serious gold-digging high maintenance woman. Hosea is perceptive enough to know that once all that is removed from her, joy disappears as well since that is all she was living for. Pleasure and stuff were her gods.

Hosea wants to see radical repentance and he is telling us how far he is willing to go in order to have Gomer come back into her right mind and be his faithful wife. To do that, Hosea is willing to reduce Gomer to less than the basics. He loves her and does so unconditionally. But there are consequences for her behavior she must deal with. Hosea intends for that to become a reality for her. Tough love for sure.

This also clarifies for us the tough love God is displaying to Israel. He loves them, but they need to come to their senses, repent and return.

Sometimes loving someone means to let them actually suffer the consequences of their lifestyle choices. We hate to see them suffer because of those choices, but at the end of the day, that just maybe what it is the Lord uses to drive them to repentance and the cross.

For Hosea, it means making certain that those crops and land she received become wholly unproductive. She believes they are her due for services rendered. Hosea is instead eyeing economic catastrophe.

For Israel, the Lord will turn towards that which the nation attributed to Baal.

The LORD asserts who was really in control. I will ravage promises severe destruction for her vines and her fig trees, which are symbolic of Israel’s prosperity and satisfaction (cf. 1 Kgs. 5:5; Jer. 5:17; Joel 2:22; Mic. 4:4; Zech. 3:10). (Mackay 2012, 92)

The crops are not the reward for Israel, as they think they are, for services rendered to Baal.

The nation of Israel had adopted the mindset of the nations around her. They thought “the deity owed prosperity to the worshipper on the grounds of cultic obedience. But given Hosea’s view that all such worship counts as ‘whoring’, the hope of prosperity becomes nothing more than a prostitute awaiting her fee.” (Moon 2018, 56-57)

The animals of the field will devour them. Who are the animals? Jerome tells us. “First the Assyrians and Chaldeans devoured her, the Medes and Persians and Macedonians, finally the most savage beast mangled her, the empire of the Romans, unnamed in Daniel that the fear of those to be devoured, already great, might be increased.” (Jerome 2017, 164)

Hosea 2:13

“I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them And adorn herself with her nose ring and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me,” declares the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

Here in verse 13 the message is very clear, and it is for Israel. They will be punished. Judgment is coming. This is not a negotiation; it is an intervention by the God of the Universe.

First the plurality of Baals, each city had their own.

There are examples for us in the Bible. “Baal-berith at Shechem (Judg. 8:33; 9:4); Baal-gad (Josh. 11:17) in the valley of Lebanon west of Mount Hermon; Baal-hamon (cf. Song 8:11), location unknown; Baal-hermon (Judg. 3:3; 1 Chr. 5:23), near that northern mountain; Baal-peor (Num. 25:1–9; Hos. 9:10) in Moab.” (Hubbard 1989, 89)

Israel celebrated various festivals for the Baals they had set up for themselves in different cities in the Kingdom. “He mentions, note, the Baals, that is, the idols, by the part referring to the whole, and he customarily calls the demons lovers, as it is obvious that in the worship of the idols those worshiped by them were the demons.” (Theodore of Mopsuestia 2004, 49)

Moses prophesied of this coming behavior.

Deuteronomy 32:17

“They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.” (ESV)

As Israel would participate in these festivals, they would dress up. The women would bring out all of the jewelry and dress to impress. The goal is to impress the idol. What? First, we need to understand the mindset of the idol worshipper.

What ancient idol worshippers believed was that the objects they made were inhabited by their gods. This is why they performed ceremonies to “open the mouth” of the statue. The mouth (and nostrils) had to be ritually opened for the spirit of the deity to move in and occupy, a notion inspired by the idea that one needs to breathe to live. The idol first had to be animated with the very real spiritual presence of the deity. Once that was done, the entity was localized for worship and bargaining. (Heiser 2015, 35-36)

Knowing that, dressing to impress is intentional and for the purposes of bargaining with the one who possess the idol. There are some dark ideas connecting this with Genesis 6 possibly as well. “Now, adornment in the case of souls opting for idolatry means performing what pleases the unclean demons; just as we say that a person’s soul is appealing when it is seen to be conspicuous for virtues, so, too, it must be presumed that a soul that loves sin is attractive to the herds of demons when it chooses to think and do everything that they find pleasing and lovable. Such a soul would be comparable to a woman of loose morals who is bejeweled in gold in a gaudy manner; she bewitches the heart of her lovers, as it

were, with ornaments to ears and neck. Any form of uncleanness, therefore, adds luster to wicked people.” (Cyril of Alexandria 2007, 78)

We must remember, that the people of Israel are religious hypocrites. They still claim to be God’s chosen people, but they have their hearts elsewhere.

God intends to judge His people. “He would take away their blessings and abandon them to their sins, for one of the greatest judgments God can inflict on any people is to let them have their own way.” (Wiersbe 1996, 17)

At the end of the day though, He will not let them remain in that state for very long. God loves His people, they must suffer the consequences for their faithlessness, but He intends to see them come back to Him because like Hosea and his love for Gomer, God loves Israel.

Hosea 2:14

“Therefore, behold, I am going to persuade her, Bring her into the wilderness, And speak kindly to her.” (NASB 2020)

Surprise! Israel will be restored.

This begins an amazing section of scripture here in Hosea. Judgement is coming and it will last for some time. Yes, a divorce is pending, but there will be a reconciliation at a point in the future. The Lord loves Israel and has not given up on her. The language changes. We expect the full impact of the judgement being described in verse 13 to fall on the nation in verse 14 but we get something entirely different.

Grace.

Psalm 83:12

“For the Lord loves mercy and truth. God will give grace and glory. The Lord will not be holding back good things for those who walk in innocence.” (Lexham Press 2020, Psalm 83:2)

The implication is that wherever the Lord gives any grace, he gives all grace. “The Lord will give”

- Regenerating Grace (Eph. 2:1–5)
- Justifying Grace (Rom. 5:1–11)
- Sanctifying Grace (Heb. 10:10–14)
- Preserving Grace (Phil. 1:6)
- Instructing Grace (John 16:13)
- Directing Grace (Pro. 3:5–6)
- Comforting Grace (John 16:7; Lam. 3:21–26)
- Reviving Grace (Isa. 57:15)
- Sufficient Grace (2 Cor. 12:9). (Fortner 2007, 535)

Here in verse 14, the grace and love of God for His people is fully displayed.

Hosea’s paradoxical presentation emphasises that from a human perspective there are no grounds from which such an action can be logically inferred. It is utterly inexplicable and entirely unmerited. There is not the least hint that restoration will occur because of Israel’s desires or her efforts. All is attributed to the abiding commitment of divine grace and love which is displayed by the sovereign LORD as he reclaims his people. (Mackay 2012, 96)

This is something that God will do. He says “I am going to” which points to this being the result of divine intervention. Israel is insistent on their sin, but God says He will personally intervene and end it. He goes further and says He will persuade, or allure Israel. “Allure refers here to tender, even seductive, speech. Elsewhere the term describes a man’s seduction of a virgin (Ex. 22:16) and a lover’s attempt to entice a man (Samson) into divulging confidential information (Jud. 14:15; 16:5).” (Chisholm 1985, 1385)

The Lord then tells Israel that as part of His allurements, He is going to take her into the wilderness, the desert again. This points back and forward at the same time.

The wilderness is where Israel spent time with the Lord after being set free from slavery in Egypt. Jeremiah talked about this as a time when Israel was still experiencing their first love for YAHWEH.

Jeremiah 2:2–3

“Go and shout this message to Jerusalem. This is what the LORD says: “I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness. In those days Israel was holy to the LORD, the first of his children. All who harmed his people were declared guilty, and disaster fell on them. I, the LORD, have spoken!” (NLT)

When we read this here in Hosea 2:4, the first thought is the remembering of that first love, what it was like when Israel became His bride.

This is no different than what the solution Jesus gave for a heart problem in the Ephesian church. They were busy with the doing but had forgotten what it was like when they first gave their heart to the Lord.

Jesus uses this same imagery.

Revelation 2:4–5

“But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.” (NLT)

God’s intent is for Israel to remember what it was like as they started off in their walk with Him. Jesus calls us to do the same, to remember what it was like when we first surrendered to Him. The call from Jesus is to do the same as God is telling Israel, to remember our first love, to remember what it was like when we first became believers. The love of Jesus changed us and turned us into those who reflect His love to others. John tells us what that looks like. Obviously, he had spent some time also considering the words of Jesus and the call to remember our first love.

1 John 4:7–12

“Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been fathered by God and knows God. The person who does not love does not know God, because God is love. By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, if God so loved us, then we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God resides in us, and his love is perfected in us.” (NET)

The other part of this verse tells us of the future. In the future, Israel will once again be in the wilderness. Some commentators say that is from centuries of being outside the land, but the word is specific to the desert they spent time in as a nation at first. Could it be a reference to the mid-point of the Tribulation? Jesus tells His people in Matthew 24:15 & 16 that when they see the future world leader show up in the Temple and declare he is god, they are to head for the hills. They are to head back out to the place and area that they spent 40 years in.

It is there that once again, they are being protected by God and only He can keep them safe. He will be providing food and water for them as well as safety, just like He did when they were rescued from Egypt. Now in the wilderness, He will speak kindly to her.

“The desert into which the Lord will lead His people cannot be any other than the desert of Arabia, through which the road from Egypt to Canaan passes. Leading into this desert is not a punishment, but a redemption out of bondage. The people are not to remain in the desert, but to be enticed and led through

it to Canaan, the land of vineyards. The description is typical throughout. What took place in the olden time is to be repeated, in all that is essential, in the time to come. Egypt, the Arabian desert, and Canaan are types. Egypt is a type of the land of captivity, in which Israel had been oppressed in its fathers by the heathen power of the world. The Arabian desert, as the intervening stage between Egypt and Canaan, is introduced here, in accordance with the importance which attached to the march of Israel through this desert under the guidance of Moses, as a period or state of probation and trial, as described in Deut. 8:2–6, in which the Lord humbled His people, training it on the one hand by want and privation to the knowledge of its need of help, and on the other hand by miraculous deliverance in the time of need (e.g., the manna, the stream of water, and the preservation of their clothing) to trust to His omnipotence, that He might awaken within it a heartfelt love to the fulfilment of His commandments and a faithful attachment to Himself. Canaan, the land promised to the fathers as an everlasting possession, with its costly productions, is a type of the inheritance bestowed by the Lord upon His church, and of blessedness in the enjoyment of the gifts of the Lord which refresh both body and soul. To speak to the heart, as applied to loving, comforting words (Gen. 34:3; 50:21, etc.), is not to be restricted to the comforting addresses of the prophets, but denotes a comforting by action, by manifestations of love, by which her grief is mitigated, and the broken heart is healed.” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 40-41)

It is there in that place, that they will once again be brought into full fellowship as they remember their first love.

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