

**Love in Action  
What Forgiveness Really Means  
Hosea 3**

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The grace of God, in full display at the end of chapter two, shows us that Israel will ultimately be restored. We know this to be a certainty thanks to what Hosea tells us. The future looks fantastic. But what about today? What does the near term have in store?

This will be reflected in one more reference to the ongoing Hosea – Gomer saga. Hosea is going to be asked to do something very hard to do. It remains hard to do even today. To love as God loves and forgive as God forgives.

Hosea 3 will show us the work of God's redemption and point us to the ultimate display of God's love, the cross of Christ. Just as Jesus purchased us from the slave market of sin, Hosea will purchase Gomer from slavery as well.

Hosea 3:1–5

“Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet is committing adultery, as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.” So I purchased her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and a homer and a lethech of barley. Then I said to her, “You shall live with me for many days. You shall not play the prostitute, nor shall you have another man; so I will also be toward you.” For the sons of Israel will live for many days without a king or leader, without sacrifice or memorial stone, and without ephod or household idols. Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.” (NASB 2020)

Some commentators say this is not about Gomer, but I think the context demands that it be about Gomer, even though she is not mentioned by name. “The nation that God continues to love is not one that has committed general acts of adultery, but one whose adulterous behaviour, in turning to ‘other gods’, is specifically directed against him. The people are certainly indicted for their wider moral failure, but a central charge is that they have turned away from their divine husband (cf. 2:2–13). For the prophetic sign-act to be meaningful, this must be paralleled in Hosea’s relationship.” (Routledge 2018, 40)

For this study, this unnamed person is Gomer and not someone else.

This is one of those sections that can be hard to translate. So if you review various English translations of the text, you may have seen some variances in the content. Nothing that changes doctrine though.

For example, I have some difficulty agreeing with the way some of the translations have translated verse 1 into English. In the NASB 2020 translation it almost sounds like God is saying go break up a marriage, which He is not saying. “Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet is committing adultery...” (Hosea 3:1a, NASB 2020)

This is not the only translation that the translators have interjected their own interpretation into the translation.

“Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery...”” (Hosea 3:1a, NKJV)

For those of us trying to get to what the original intent of the text says, that means prayerfully examining other translations. We also need to remember the overall context of the first two chapters of Hosea and that this is still part of that story. The love story of the love gone wrong of Hosea and Gomer, compared with YAHWEH and Israel.

It also means ultimately turning to the Hebrew text.

Verse one begins with the Lord talking directly to Hosea. “The Lord said to me.” The English from the NASB is a bit too soft here, the Hebrew word translated “said” is the word אָמַר (yomer) which means “say, mention, think, command.” (Brannan 2020)

If God sought me out to talk directly to me, as is the case here, I would not consider what He says to be a suggestion of something to do. Rather, I would lean towards this being more directive. I just have trouble seeing God say, “Hey Ken, here’s an idea, what do you think?” I would see this as more along the lines of “Ken, I have something for you to do, it’s going to be hard, but you must do this.”

Then He would point to the cross and that would be enough.

We will see as we move forward, Hosea picked up on the directive nature of what the Lord is telling him.

He is told to “go again.” What do we see in the Hebrew?

“Go” is in the imperative, that word is clear, “again” though is the word עוֹד (od). It means “a going round, continuance...expressing continuance, persistence, usually of the past or present, still, yet. (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1977, 728)

Then the Lord commanded me, Go persistently, love. The word “love” is also an imperative in the Hebrew. Hosea is clearly commanded to go persistently, just like he did in the past basically, and he is then commanded to love. The imperatives, “go,” “love.”

Consider Hosea’s personal life at this point. His wife has cheated on him so consistently that two of his three children have no idea who their biological fathers are. Hosea has raised them, he is their dad, but

he is not their father. They are part of the family only because he has allowed them in. This is reminiscent of our relationship with God.

Galatians 4:4–7

“But when the appropriate time had come, God sent his Son, born by a woman, born under the Law, in order to redeem those who were under the Law, and thus to adopt them as his children. Now because you are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to cry out, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if you are a child, then you are also an heir because of what God did.” (ISV)

In Christ, believers are “the sons of God.” The language of inheritance is crystal clear. It derives from and advances the Old Testament idea that humans were meant to be in the family of God all along. It’s no coincidence that the New Testament writers repeatedly describe salvation into Yahweh’s family with words like “adoption,” “heir,” and “inheritance” to describe what the Church really is—the reconstituted divine-human family of God. (Heiser 2015, 308)

This acceptance by Hosea, of Gomer’s kids, points us to what Jesus Christ will achieve for us on the cross. Restoration and adoption.

Back to Hosea though and what he has already done. He has financially supported an absent partner up to the point that he withdrew all support from her and left her with nothing. The whole neighborhood knows what she is. He took care of her and loved her, yet she lived as if he didn’t even exist. This is a picture of YAHWEH providing for and taking care of Israel and the way Israel lived.

The community knows though because of Hosea’s actions. They all know what she has done to Hosea. How she has intentionally hurt him and how wounded he has been by all of this.

Did Hosea still love Gomer after all the actions we studied earlier. If it was me, no. I would be done. The love is gone. At this point, Hosea appears to have moved on as well. In human terms, there is no way Gomer will ever come back short of God intervening. He has moved on.

It would have been impressive enough had Hosea found that in spite of everything he still loved his truant wife, and had then perceived that God’s love must be like that too. But in fact it was the other way about. It was God’s love that rekindled Hosea’s, when the Lord said ‘Go again, love (her)’, and gave him the pattern to reproduce. (Kidner 1976, 40)

Again, if it was me, the only way I would ever even talk to her again much less bring her back to the house would be if God Himself told me to do so.

He did and He provided the pattern.

God loves Israel, that much which He made abundantly clear in chapter 2, but Hosea is a human and His prophet. Hosea has been faithful to what God has commanded Him to do, no matter how personally painful it has been. What God is asking Hosea to do is not easy, but it is necessary and fully reflects who God is. He is love.

Christ has done the same for us. We intentionally hurt Him and ignored Him following the example of Adam and Eve. But Jesus loves us.

For us as believers, we too need to understand that when we come to Christ, His yoke is indeed comfortable (Matthew 11:30) but as He begins the process of sanctification in us, making us more like Christ, tough love is sometimes required and that is not comfortable.

As we mature in Christ, we realize something that we did not see before coming to Him. We live in a culture that is at war with the Lord. As we become more like Him, Christ will lead us to make changes in our life. This will change how we live and that could be considered by some to be dangerous.

Before, I could care less about those around me, but now because of Jesus, I want to reflect His love to them. I want to see them come to know Jesus and avoid the doom that all of us faced without Christ. I have become an extremist.

Because of the Holy Spirit in us and directing us, we find ourselves making decisions that are countercultural. Sometimes living for Christ will be downright unsafe and dangerous. Just talk to Paul. "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," (2 Timothy 3:12, ESV)

Just like Hosea, our relationship with the Lord leads us to living somewhat unsafely in the culture. We say and do things that are rather extremist, using the language of our culture.

Stop and think about some of the things we take for granted as normative being a believer and then look at the way the culture does life. "Do you believe Jesus is the only way to heaven? Extremist. Prayed for someone you don't know? Extremist. Believe marriage is meant to be between one man and one woman? Extremist. Would you give up a good-paying job to do mission work? Extremist. Do you believe Christians have a responsibility to talk about Jesus with nonbelievers, even with strangers? Extremist." (Kinnaman and Lyons 2016, 11)

There is a hostility toward Christians and Christianity at least as irrational as any anti-Semitism. In fact, recently in the United States overt hostility toward certain Christians has been far greater than overt hostility toward Jews. (Yancey and Williamson 2015, Kindle Locations 140 - 142)

Is it getting any better? We already know that a Biblical Worldview is rare, only 6% nationwide. (Barna, American Worldview Inventory 2021 Release #1: America's Dominant Worldview Syncretism 2021)

But that is the nation as a whole, surely it must be getting better with the attention that has been spent reaching and teaching over the past 20 or so years here in this country? What about the Millennials?

Knowing that 24 out of every 25 Millennials (yes, 96 percent) lack a biblical worldview is the paramount challenge facing the United States today. (G. Barna 2021, 76)

Living for the Lord today is hazardous. The change the Holy Spirit causes is evident in what Paul says the work of the Spirit achieves.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

"Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (NLT)

Hosea is being commanded to do something that was cross cultural for him. In his culture, adulterers were normally put to death, and they were not routinely restored to their vows. That may no longer be the entire case in an apostate Israel, but we have already seen the lengths that Hosea went to in order to drive repentance and a change. Now the hard command. God tells Hosea he must love Gomer just like God loves Israel. Unconditional love is the requirement. He must love her again.

God tells Hosea the same thing He tells us...forgive those who have wronged us and love them to the Lord. Really? But Lord, do you know what she has done to me?

Hosea does not question God. He does not protest. He understands who God is and what His attributes are, and He knows that one of those attributes is, God is love. He is living out the story of the love of YAHWEH for His people who have done no better than Gomer has.

The command to forgive is tough. Adding love, tougher. Peter was concerned about this.

Matthew 18:21–22

“Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.” (ESV)

That does not mean stop at 490 times, it means to forgive. That is hard for us to do without the Holy Spirit empowering us to do so. Even the Corinthian church had to be told to forgive someone they had churching for gross immorality.

2 Corinthians 2:6–9

“This punishment on such an individual by the majority is enough for him, so that now instead you should rather forgive and comfort him. This will keep him from being overwhelmed by excessive grief to the point of despair. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. For this reason also I wrote you: to test you to see if you are obedient in everything.” (NET)

How do we do with that idea of forgiveness? When a Pastor fails and falls due to sex, money issues, power issues, you name it. If they repent, does the church seek to restore them and place hedges to help them?

Forgiveness and love is hard to do. The brother in Corinth was involved in a relationship that even gentiles would have considered wrong, but he repented. He stopped the action, repented, made changes to his life and started living as a follower of Jesus Christ again. So, Paul said to restore him.

What about Pastor’s or leaders who fail? Are we going to look to the scriptures for our answer or to our legalism?

Here, Hosea is commanded to take a different path, one his neighbors would question his sanity over.

Purely on the basis of love, Hosea is to reach out to Gomer who by this time is involved with another man. She is now an adulteress which Mosaic law regarded as grounds for divorce (Deut. 24:1–4); but Hosea is to love Gomer as the Lord loves the Israelites. (Livingston 1995, 607)

Looking again at the Hebrew in verse 1 and our translation. Then the Lord commanded me, Go persistently, love your wife.

The Hebrew word used is *אִשָּׁה* (issah) which can mean “woman, wife, female.” This was translated earlier in Hosea as wife. You can see some of my angst over some of the English translations. Why change the meaning when the overall context has not changed? (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1977, 61)

Then the Lord commanded me, Go persistently, love your wife.

The NLT and NET Bibles agree with this translation.

Hosea 3:1

“The LORD said to me, “Go, show love to your wife again, even though she loves another man and continually commits adultery. Likewise, the LORD loves the Israelites although they turn to other gods and love to offer raisin cakes to idols.”” (NET)

### Hosea 3:1

“Then the LORD said to me, “Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover. This will illustrate that the LORD still loves Israel, even though the people have turned to other gods and love to worship them.”” (NLT)

Again, the hard thing to do. Go, forgive your wife and love her again even though right at this moment she is living with someone else, loving them and ignoring you. To help us with this, as we go about forgiving, Paul reminds us something about what the Lord did for us.

### Romans 5:6–8

“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” (NLT)

We were no better than Gomer when Jesus died for us. We were no better than Israel. Yet Jesus still died for us. At the right moment, He did this for you and me. And He did it willingly and joyfully.

### Hebrews 12:1–2

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (ESV)

We all have someone in our life we need to forgive. They may not even know we are still holding something against them. Grudges are like that. They start off small and grow, sometimes becoming huge, other times just small enough to continually cling and impact us daily as we do life.

Maybe you are the one who needs to be forgiven. Asking for forgiveness is hard to do.

Jesus though is our example, while we were still sinners and in the midst of being good pagans, He died for us forgiving us of all we ever did or will do. And then He asks us to do the same, just like Hosea. He asks us to be like Him. “And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:27, NLT)

### Galatians 5:13–14

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”” (ESV)

Who have we stopped loving because of our unwillingness to forgive? Jesus says, “be like me.” Follow me. This is what it means to do so.

This is hard to do but Hosea gets it, God wants it, so Hosea does it. God tells Him that He is acting something out for the nation of Israel. He is also reflecting what Jesus did on the cross.

The nation of Israel has left their first love, they have left the Lord, they have left their husband. That is the picture drawn for us in Hosea.

God is in the process of divorcing Israel, but He intends to restore them. We know this by what Hosea does.

Hosea is told to love just as he did when he first married Gomer. He is to reflect that first love to his straying wife. Does she deserve this? Hardly, but that is what the Lord does for us as well.

Do we deserve His love? Do we deserve His forgiveness?

Ephesians 2:8

“For it is by God’s grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God’s gift, so that no one can boast about it.” (GNB)

If Hosea’s world had been turned upside down by God’s initial demand that he marry a ‘wife of whoredoms’, here he is called to a still more difficult task, that of putting to one side the wrong he had suffered through his wife’s infidelity and also his sense of personal dignity and propriety as he, the injured party, goes in search of her. But Hosea was to pattern his conduct not in accordance with merely human notions of appropriateness, but after the standard God himself displays: love ... just as the LORD loves the sons of Israel. (Mackay 2012, 113)

Just as Gomer is still active in her prostitution, so is Israel as well.

How bad is it now for Gomer? Remember all support had been removed from her, all credit cards canceled, all sources of income removed, including that income she was receiving from her lovers. She was left with nothing, so it appears that rather than repent and return, she moved or was moving even deeper into the lifestyle she had chosen by selling herself into slavery due to her continuing debt. She was now owned by someone and being actively pimped out for cash.

Hosea doesn’t have to search for her, he knows where she is and takes action based on what the Lord has commanded.

There is no “but Lord” or arguments with the Lord. He is obedient to what God said to do. He goes to the slave market to make a purchase.

When Jesus went to the cross for us, He also did so with no argument. He did what was God’s will for Him and for the joy (Hebrews 12:2) waiting for Him. He saw the big picture and was faithful.

Hosea 3:2

“So I purchased her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and a homer and a lethech of barley.” (NASB 2020)

Gomer had become a slave to her sin. What started off as fun, exciting and joyful has turned into captivity. The enemy holds out the promise of excitement to all of us when we are enticed by him to sin. No one will know. Everyone is doing it. It will be fun. There is a thrill connected with the sin, but soon it takes more to get to the thrill. And more, and more. Then there is the guilt and shame, all produced by the same one who lied to get us to sin in the first place.

People stop buying drinks for you and now you must buy them yourself and that hits the pocketbook, especially since you must keep the party going.

What was nothing more than a bit of internet voyeurism turned into a soft porn addiction, then to a hard porn addiction, and now an addiction that must be fed no matter the cost.

Satan lies and the end is always slavery and damaged or destroyed relationships. Jesus came to purchase us out of the slave market of sin and then set us free.

What Hosea does is a picture of what Jesus will do on the cross. Gomer’s predicament is bad. If this is not a private sell but is on the auction block, then what was proposed to happen to her is now taking place. “We know quite a bit about the selling of slaves in antiquity because much has been written about it. For example, the slaves were always sold naked. (Boice 2002, 34)

She is no longer being highly sought after by others and the purchase price seems to reflect that she is discounted to half price in silver with a little more added in feed for the animals. The total price for a slave was supposed to be 30 shekels (Exodus 21:32, Leviticus 27:4) of silver. Technically, Hosea is redeeming Gomer from her slavery. He has ransomed her.

Hosea now owns his wife. This is a change from before. Now she has a legal obligation to do what he demands of her. He owns her.

Hosea 3:3

“Then I said to her, “You shall live with me for many days. You shall not play the prostitute, nor shall you have another man; so I will also be toward you.”” (NASB 2020)

Life has changed for Gomer. Her previous behavior is now at an end. She has been grounded and will not have any more lovers. We don't pick up any response from Gomer other than she now is the property of Hosea and he is insistent or her lifestyle changes becoming permanent and her becoming a faithful wife to him.

Gomer is going to encounter enforced sexual abstinence and a resulting moral purification. She will experience discipline and Hosea will refrain from having any relations with her for a period as well thus ensuring purity. Once that period is completed, then Hosea promises faithfulness to her, and she will now be faithful to him. This is a picture as well for what will take place in Israel.

Those habits of disloyalty must be broken permanently. There will also be the assurance that there will be no more babies coming into the relationship from other fathers. This will ensure that.

During this period of time, Hosea will take care of Gomer, but she is to sit still in the house and learn what faithfulness truly means. The promiscuity is to be eliminated as well as all other behaviors that led to unfaithfulness. This would possibly mean Hosea telling lovers who come to the door from elsewhere that she is no longer in the business.

Those in the local community would know that Hosea owns her, controls her and is intentionally working to change her behavior, because he loves her. This is a picture for Israel too.

The disciplinary period in the marriage is a prophetic action designed to symbolize a time of chastening and deprivation through which Israel is to pass. (Hubbard 1989, 101)

As the wife of the prophet was to continue for a long time in a state of separation equally from paramours and from her husband, and he was likewise to form no connexion with any other woman, so the Israelites should long live without serving either false gods or Jehovah; while, on his part, he would enter into no national relationship to any other people. (Henderson 1845, 17)

This is also a picture of what happens when we come to Christ. There is a period of time that we just need to sit and wait.

Many new Christians sometimes wonder why they are not immediately put on the stage and paraded around as examples of God's grace. I have seen that take place with celebrities who repent, and it has never been the best thing for the new believer to have happen to them. There has been more than one person who was recently saved that has told me they are called to the ministry. That may be the case, but let's see some growth and fruit first.

Paul alluded to that in some instructions he gave Timothy about leadership and spiritual growth.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

“This saying is trustworthy: “If someone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a good work.” The overseer then must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable,



hospitable, an able teacher, not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not contentious, free from the love of money. He must manage his own household well and keep his children in control without losing his dignity. But if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for the church of God? He must not be a recent convert or he may become arrogant and fall into the punishment that the devil will exact. And he must be well thought of by those outside the faith, so that he may not fall into disgrace and be caught by the devil's trap." (NET)

New converts need to have time to grow up and mature some in the Lord. The time frames is different for each person, but it is something we must be aware of. Because someone who has just had their life turned around by Jesus is excited about the new life and what God has just done for them. Paul was like that.

Even Paul was relegated to learning to be faithful after his conversion on the road to Damascus. "For about ten years from his arrival back in Tarsus only the scantiest information has been preserved about Paul's movements and experiences. He himself makes it clear that he spent those years in evangelization: this was the period during which the Judaeian churches heard reports of how their former persecutor was "now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy" (Galatians 1:23). If, by his own account (Galatians 1:22), he was personally unknown to those churches—from which the church of Jerusalem cannot be excluded—that was because his former persecution had been directed more particularly against the Hellenistic disciples, few of whom now remained in Judaea. (Bruce 1977, 127)

As new believers, the change is sudden and the love is genuine. That first love is something we all need.

They rapidly become eager evangelists as, highly motivated by new-found faith, they seek to convert all around them to their own experience. They cannot conceive that others might not share the experience that they have. But they are also the most vulnerable to the collapse of that belief when they come up against anything unexpected or unfamiliar. This decline is described in several ways—lack of depth, shortage of experience, or needing time to consolidate belief. (Carr 2008, 16)

Whenever we see someone new to the faith, it is our responsibility as the body of Christ to come alongside and help them to grow and protect them from the predatory wolves who are there to attack the new believer. They are new in the faith, and they ask questions. Lots of questions. Everything they now see in the word or hear is new. There is no background anymore. Do not assume they grew up in church, odds are they didn't.

The temptation is to roll the eyes when the questions hit, don't do it. There is no such thing as a dumb question. I answer questions all the time, many are the same and some seem to be, on the face, dumb...they aren't.

They are questions from someone who our Lord paid for on the cross and we are to love them and disciple them. They are never a disturbance.

The key is to learn how to listen, love and answer in such a way that helps with the discovery of the new life and truth they are now seeing in the word. "Some new converts grow rapidly, some take longer, but the exciting thing is that growth takes place. Involvement in a church becomes a natural part of the process—not forced or coerced. Eventually even if it means enduring the ridicule of former friends who mock his becoming a "religious fanatic" as he backs his car out of the garage on Sunday mornings he becomes less disturbed by it." (Zuck 1998, 169)

We come alongside and disciple them. New believers, just like children, make mistakes. As long as there is someone there to talk to and help them along, they will grow.

Gomer is now being given the time to recognize who she was and who she is expected to be. Israel will be given the same time, although it will be years, centuries, in length for them.

### Hosea 3:4–5

“For the sons of Israel will live for many days without a king or leader, without sacrifice or memorial stone, and without ephod or household idols. Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.” (NASB 2020)

Hosea turns to providing interpretation now for his friends and neighbors who having been watching him. This has all been an object lesson for Israel. In the very near future, some events will be taking place that will change everything and for an indefinite period of time.

The Assyrian empire is about to invade Israel and take them away into exile. At the point of Hosea’s ministry, this is still in the near future, but it is going to take place.

The first time Assyria comes through Israel is in 734 BC under Tiglath-Pileser, who was invited to do so after being paid off by King Ahaz of Judah. (2 Kings 16:10). In 727 BC Shalmaneser become the Assyrian King and he attacked Israel (2 Kings 17:5). Finally, in 722 BC under Sargon, Israel is defeated and taken into exile (2 Kings 17:6).

The nations who worshipped the very gods Israel committed adultery with will be the ones who will invade and destroy the nation of Israel. Then the jealousy of God will finally be spent for, as the Book of Deuteronomy declared, the punishment of Israel would be a result of God’s jealousy for His wife. However, all this punishment has a specific aim. The aim of this punishment is not so God can be vengeful and get His revenge upon Israel, but rather to cause her to stop sinning and to stop her adulteries (Ezekiel 16:42 – 43). (Fruchtenbaum 1994, 833)

### 2 Kings 17:7–12

“And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this.”” (ESV)

What is the impact of what it is Hosea prophesied here in chapter 3?

Verse 4 outlines a few of the things that will no longer be enjoyed by the Northern Kingdom for a period yet to be determined. Once Assyria takes them into exile those who led them astray are gone. But we already know restoration is coming.

### Coming Soon

- The end of the nation
  - No King
  - No leader to mislead
- The end of Temple worship
  - No sacrifices
  - No pagan worship either
- The end of the priesthood
  - No more Aaronic priests
  - No more gods

Hosea is telling Israel that their days as a nation are numbered and soon to end. Even though at present, if they wanted to participate in Temple worship, they would have to travel to Jerusalem, those days are also about to end. In fact, the distorted Judaism of Israel which included idol worship...is done. No more priests, and no more household gods.

Everything that Israel had set their reliance on, was about to be taken from them. They are going to be left with nothing, just like Gomer.

How long?

This is a description that continues into today. This has been the condition for the northern 10 tribes since Assyria took them into exile. "During this interval between her purchase and her full restoration to her Husband (from the cross of Christ to the Second Advent of Christ), Israel has been without a king, a price, a sacrifice, an image (an idol statue or pillar), an ephod (used for divining), and teraphim (images representing the primitive household gods of the Semitic peoples). God has kept her from all these things, things associated with her former idolatry, and will keep her from them until she, after she has gone through her great time of trouble, Jer. 30:7; Matt. 24:21, 22, seeks His face and expresses her desire to have intimate relations again with her Husband. (Gingrich 2004, 14)

We know there is a future for His people. Gomer is the example of that. Verse 5 confirms it for us.

Hosea 3:5

"Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days." (NASB 2020)

Here we see prophecy that is in the process of being fulfilled today, and yet to be fulfilled in the future. The Bible clearly teaches that Israel will return to the land, first in unbelief in preparation for judgement, and then at the end of the Tribulation, in belief in preparation for blessings. We talked about the return and the blessings at the end of chapter 2.

Ezekiel 20:33–38

"As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out I will be king over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord GOD. I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD." (ESV)

This regathering in unbelief occurs after wrath has been poured out on the people. It is no accident that out of the fires of the Nazi Holocaust, the State of Israel was born. Once this gathering has taken place, God will enter into judgment with His people, namely the Tribulation judgments. (Fruchtenbaum 1994, 717)

We also see this in Ezekiel 36:22 – 24. But in Isaiah 11:11 – 12, we see a regathering taking place after the end of the Tribulation.

Isaiah 11:11–12

"In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." (ESV)

Hosea is also talking about that return in belief. When they return they will be seeking the Lord. Just as we learned in chapter 2, as they return to the land at the end of the Tribulation, they are believers. They will be one nation, just as we see currently in unbelief, but they will have King Jesus of the tribe of Judah and the line of David over the planet as well as King David ruling the nation.

In 1:11 it is predicted that in the future Israel and Judah will appoint “one head” for themselves. Such a reconstituted political future is behind the reference to David their king in 3:5. (Dearman 2010, 140)

Just as we ended chapter 2 with restoration coming, we also see the same here in chapter 3. “The eschatological fulfillment of all this is in the “last days.” This phrase is better translated “at the end of the days.” The “end” (‘aḥārīt) is the time of fulfillment, when the final outcome of God’s program is realized. The word creates a distance between the age of fulfillment and the age of the prophet himself and is often associated with hope. It implies that the people of God must live in expectation of redemption and vindication.” (Garrett 1997, 104)

By the way, that is the end of our story about Hosea and Gomer. As we pick up chapter 4, the tone changes.

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