

The Book of Hosea

Chapter 2

Please begin this study by reading the second chapter of Hosea.

2:2-3

God brings a case against Israel in which the children are to accuse their mother.

The mother referred to represents all the Israelites, who were the old covenant church of God. The Israelites had not yet repented.

The day of her birth refers to the time when the Israelites were brought out of Egypt. If the Lord had not supported them miraculously during their forty years in the wilderness, they would have perished from hunger and thirst.

The Israelites wanted to blame God, but God shows that they were justly rejected. The people were shameless and had hardened themselves in their contempt of God.

God calls all men everywhere to repent and be reconciled to God. If repentance does not take place, the unfaithful wife (Gomer/Israel) will be publicly exposed and left destitute. Such were the normal punishments for an adulteress (Ezek. 16:37-39; Nah. 3:5-7), but less than the death penalty (Deut. 22:22).

2:4-5

Having spoken of the mother's divorce, he now says that the children, born of adultery, were not his. God's love and mercy (1:6) will also be withdrawn from his children who, like their mother, are charged with promiscuity.

The Israelites' spiritual adultery was premeditated. They willfully departed from God. The unfaithful mother (Israel) looked to Canaanite fertility religion, not to the Lord (v. 8), to provide the staples of life.

The majority of the Israelites boasted that they were the children of Abraham, yet their lives told a different story. They lived unholy, ungodly lives. They perverted the true worship of God and refused to submit to God, they refused to submit to God's Word and His holy laws, and they refused to submit to His true church.

The Israelites professed to be followers of God, yet they were entirely alienated from Him. Through syncretism, they no longer worshipped the one, true God. They no longer kept His law. In fact, they rejected the law and every yoke.

God demands spiritual chastity, spiritual faithfulness from His people. He requires us to be holy, just as He is holy. He requires us to obey His law.

Jesus said in John 14:21: "Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him."

2:6-7

God here declares that He will punish the very ones who profess to be His disciples. He will deprive them of their pleasures and remove their sources of pride and joy.

“She will follow her lovers and shall not overtake them.” The woman represents all Israel. God says He will frustrate them that they may know that their worship is in vain; in vain they eagerly follow after superstition and practices that are not found in God’s Word.

“She will then say, I will go and return to my former husband.” Here we find the first glimmers of hope in chapter 2. The prophet gives us hope that the people will repent. Hosea teaches us that God’s corrections and discipline, though we may hate them at the time, are for our ultimate good and for our salvation and sanctification. At first, we may groan and become angry at God. Why, O God, are you angry with me? Why do you afflict me? Yet, God’s discipline and chastisement is meant to bring us to repentance, to bring us to our knees. The Holy Spirit wants to change our minds, that we would repent of our sin and turn to Christ. God calls us to follow Christ’s way, not our way; to obey Christ’s holy laws, not our substitutes.

Repentance is a change of mind. It entails making a 180 degree turn around. To repent, we must confess ourselves to be guilty sinners, unworthy of God’s grace and worthy of His punishment. We must ask God to be merciful to us and then sincerely turn to Him and obey Him.

2:8-9

The people were extremely ungrateful. Instead of acknowledging God as the source of all their many blessings and prosperity, the Lord’s agricultural and commercial gifts were credited to Baal, the pagan god of rain and fertility (Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 28:1-12).

Superstitiously, the people ascribed to their idols what rightly belongs to God alone. They deprived God of His honor, refusing to acknowledge that He is the giver of all things. God’s Word was clear that all good things flow from God, as was evidenced in the books of Moses and in the land of Canaan itself, the promised land that flowed with milk and honey. Yet, the people hardened their hearts against God.

God says that in response He will judge them and take away their gifts, take away their fruitfulness, take away their prosperity.

We ought likewise to fear God’s punishment. Many of the meteorologists on television and many in our culture attribute to “Mother Nature” or “Mother Earth” what rightly belongs to God. “Mother Nature has sent us a drought. Mother Nature has sent us rain.” God is not amused. God is angry with our land; He calls us also to repent!

2:10-12 God punishes Israel for her unfaithfulness.

“Now will I uncover her before the eyes of her lovers.” The Prophet, no doubt, speaks of false gods, and of all those devices by which the Israelites had corrupted the pure worship of God.

“Her feast days, her appointed feasts.” The festivals had become occasions for religious syncretism, in which the worship of the Lord and Baal were intermingled. The true

worship commanded in God's Word was combined with superstition, fables, and cultural traditions. God was not pleased with this combining of the true worship set forth in His Word with the inventions of men.

Hosea declares that the people would be deprived of their sacrifices and feast-days and all their external displays of religion. They will lack food and all the abundance they once enjoyed. Their sacrifices will cease. Their festivals and celebrations will cease. God will take away their material prosperity.

2:13

On pagan goddesses, jewelry emphasized erotic areas of the body. Her lovers refers to the Baals. Israel had forgotten the Lord, whom she should have loved (cf. 4:6; 13:4-6). Why did the Israelites lose their temple, their sacrifices, their religious festivals, and all their other outward displays of religion? Because they were being punished by God for having worshipped the Baals instead of the only true God.

When the Israelites abandoned the true worship of God, it was like a wife, who having lived a long time with her husband and been kindly treated by him, afterwards prostitutes herself to adulterers. She no longer cherishes her husband or retains in her heart any love for him. In the same way, the Israelites had forgotten God and had given themselves over to false gods, the creations of their own imaginations.

Holiness is seen not in wearing religious clothing and jewelry and vestments; true holiness is seen in one's obedience to God and His law. The Israelites had replaced true, spiritual holiness with a false, outward holiness. Religious clothing and jewelry, the burning of incense, and the celebration of religious holidays is not what makes a person holy and acceptable to God. What God wants is our hearts, our words, and our lives. He wants us to be living sacrifices.

Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer **your bodies as living sacrifices, holy** and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship." (NIV)

2:14

We now see even more clearly Hosea's message of **hope and comfort**. God will punish His children until they repent, so that they may be saved. Being deprived of all the things they once so cherished—their country, their religion, and their wealth, in the solitude of the wilderness, the Israelites will turn back to God. Facing starvation and death, their hard hearts will return to the Lord.

2:15

The "**Valley of Achor**" is literally the "Valley of Trouble." This area was located near Jericho and was the site of the stoning of Achan (Josh. 7:24-26). Though associated with sin and death, this valley was to be transformed into a "door of hope."

Jesus said, "I am the door" (John 10:9). For Christians, Jesus Christ is our "door of hope"!

The Israelites' repentance will result in a new fruitfulness; vineyards shall appear. As in the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites shall enter a new promised land.

2:16-17

The word here translated “master” is a form of the Hebrew word *Baal*, which may refer to the pagan god Baal. In the future, Israel will be so zealous for the pure worship of God, that they will avoid anything associated with the false worship of Baal. No longer will they give themselves over to superstitions and beliefs that are not found in God’s Word. On the contrary, they will keep God’s Word. They will be faithful to their marital vows. They will cling to Christ alone and to His Word alone. They will seek to worship God according to His Word alone.

God punishes His children so that we will repent, so that we will reform ourselves by God’s Word and let His Spirit conform us—in our beliefs, in our practices, in our worship, in our lives—that we may be like Christ and obey His Word alone.

2:18

As long as we war against God, we should not be surprised if God sends wars and calamities upon us. If we are fighting against God, we should not expect God to fight for us.

Here God promises a new covenant, like that prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34). With the coming of Christ, the Prince of Peace, peace already has entered the world. Yet we await a new heavens and new earth, in which there will be eternal peace, free from the threat of wild animals (Isa. 11:6-9) and war (Ps. 46:9; Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3).

2:19-20

The promises and hope continue to build. Betrothal was the final step in the courtship process and involved paying a bride-price to the bride’s father. God promises His marriage to His faithful remnant, paid through the righteousness, justice, love, mercy, and faithfulness of God.

“I will betroth you” is repeated three times, emphasizing God’s restoring love toward His people. God will not remember Israel’s past unfaithfulness. He will forget her past adulteries and treat her as a pure virgin.

Christ’s righteousness, which is imputed to every true believer, when we trust in Him by faith alone, also covers all our sins. Christ’s righteousness enables God to look on us as pure and holy, even though we are not. Christ redeemed us at the cost of His own blood. In the new covenant, every true Christian knows the Lord intimately (Jer. 31:34). As Christians, we are all the bride of Christ.

2:21-23

When God has restored His people, He will bless them once again. He will show that He, not the storm-god Baal, commands the cycles of nature. He makes the land fertile, and He gives a good harvest. He send rains, and He withholds it.

“Mother Nature” cannot end our droughts, but God can!

If we seek the blessings of an earthly life, material prosperity, and good health, without seeking God, we will never find true happiness. This is why God tells us to “seek first

the kingdom of God” and Christ’s righteousness. True happiness comes from knowing Christ. When God adopts us as His people and wipes out our sins and joins Himself to us by a covenant of marriage, then we have the promise of true happiness.

We only shall be happy when we are reconciled to God, embraced by His love, married to Him by an eternal contract. Only then can we know that God is indeed our Father and Preserver and that we are eternally secure and safe under His protection and defense.

2:23

The promises of restoration come to a climax. Jezreel is redeemed. Lo-Ruhamah is shown God’s love and mercy (1:6), and Lo-Ammi becomes God’s people (1:9).

This is also the purpose of God in our salvation:

Paul writes in Romans 9:23-26 “that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, *even* us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, '*You are not My people,*' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:9-10 “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.