

Hosea 2

The Covenant Love of God and the Idolatry of His people

I. Introduction

- A. Review Introduction and Chapter 1
 - 1. Major events leading up to Hosea
 - 2. Significant dates
 - 3. Chapter 1 - Three children

II. 2:1-13 - Marriage Metaphor applied to Israel

- A. As we work our way through Hosea there are three essential components we will be keeping in mind: **accusation, judgment, and blessing**. Hosea will show the evidence for Israel's sin and the imminent judgment that awaits them for their idolatry. In the midst of this he will provide hope of future blessing (6:1-3, 11:1-11, 14:1-9)

B. 1-5 — Evidence of Israel's whoredom

- 1. **1** — This is a transitional verse that is best seen tied tightly to the previous section. From 1:10-11 we saw a reversal of the judgment that God promised Israel in the names of Hosea's children. This is completed in 2:1.
- 2. **2** — Yahweh not only commands the children to call one another by the positive version of their name (verse 1), but now with two imperatives, calls them to plead with their mother. Garrett adds this observation: "The children of Israel were not a righteous remnant, but Hosea called on his audience to become a righteous remnant by rejecting their own perverse society."¹ It is important to realize that the "children" (or the people) now have the chance to correct the direction of their "mother" (the nation). Furthermore, it seems as though Yahweh no longer views Israel as His wife, yet there are indications throughout this (as will become increasingly clear) section that there is a future hope of the relationship being restored.²
- 3. **3** — If Israel does not turn back the result is that she will be shamed. In her pursuit of prosperity Israel will find herself with nothing.³ Instead of remaining in the land, the reality is that Yahweh was likely referring to their future exile through which they would be taken away captive to Assyria (they were often taken away naked).⁴ Being taken away into captivity is a result of her sin of idolatry. We saw this last week in 2 Kings 17:7ff. This is also part of the covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28:64ff.

¹ Garrett, 76.

² Garrett has a good statement about this. He writes, "One does not divorce a wife and then in the same breath call on her to abandon her waywardness and return, as this verse does" (76).

³ Ray Ortlund, 56.

⁴ Ibid, 77.

4. **4** — Consider what is taking place here. We just read that the child, “no mercy” will be shown mercy. Now we see that they are going to have no mercy. What is going on?

What we need to understand is that there is an ongoing tension throughout this book. This involves the imminent judgment and the future blessing. **There will be judgment and there will be future blessing**...we just see it worked out in this back and forth manner. Though, we would like it if he thought in linear terms so that we could more easily understand his point. However, it does seem as though there is a deliberate point to this in the structure. *Garrett says, “It is a rhetorical strategy — a strategy similar to that found in Wisdom Literature—that forces the reader to reckon with the full impact of every word.”*⁵

5. **5** — **What is the error in her thinking?** Highlighted by the double use of “for,” it becomes clear why Yahweh is bringing judgment against Israel. Not only has she played the whore by going after other gods, but she believes those gods are the source of her prosperity. We also discover that instead of her being pursued by her lovers, she goes after them. Why? The reason seems to be that she believes they will provide her with what she wants in life.⁶

C. **6-13 - Yahweh responds with judgment toward restoration**

1. **6-8** — **What is God doing in this passage and what is His purpose?** In light of the understanding that verse 5 brings, that Israel believed the Baals had provided their food and sustenance, Yahweh hedges their way and restricts her movements. The result is that she will eventually recognize that Yahweh, her first husband, was truly good to her.
2. All along, Yahweh had been providing her with all her needs, yet she had been wrongly attributing it to her lovers (her gods). Consider this for a moment. **How do we see this in similar ways today in our culture?**
 - a) On one level we see this in all our culture. People in general forget that God has provided them with life and the necessities of life.
 - b) How about the church?
 - (1) At times, believing that we have provided our own salvation. Any time that we believe we are justified before God because of us. Or, believing that we have the ability to go through life on our own strength, rather than Gods. When we do this we follow the Galatians by believing we begin by the Spirit but end by the flesh (Gal 3:1-5).
3. **9-13 - This section reveals the future judgment.** In their exile, the people of Israel will lose much of what they had enjoyed before.
 - a) **9-10** — Yahweh will take back what was rightfully His. Israel will face shame for their actions. This is their future exile, future destitution, and public shaming.⁷ **The one who is truly in control of all that she owns is now able to demonstrate it by taking it away.** Yahweh is

⁵ Ibid, 30.

⁶ Ortlund, 58.

⁷ Garrett, 83. Chisholm, 25

making it clear to the people of Israel that He is the one in control, not Baal. **In other words, He is bigger than Baal.**

- b) **11-13 — It is important to keep in mind that Israel looked to Baal as the fertility god.** Yahweh's judgments in this text are meant to demonstrate for the people that Baal is not truly in charge of the earth.
- (1) **11** — Israel was participating in their typical rituals and feasts which was an important component of their life.⁸ Yet, even though they participated they were not drawn back to Yahweh. They could go through the motions of these rituals without ever considering why it is they were doing them, or who it is they were supposed to be worshiping through them. **Consider also the emphasis on the possessive feminine pronoun, “her.” In one sense these rituals have been corrupted because of their Baal worship, so they no longer serve the purpose they were originally intended for.**⁹ As one commentator has mentioned (I can't remember who) if we were to live in this period of Israel's history we would be asking the question, “What's wrong with it?” They cleverly disguised their moral rot with superficial activities.
- (2) **13**¹⁰ — We discover one of the reasons why Israel strayed, they had forgotten Yahweh! This begs the question, why? **How could Israel forget Yahweh?** We will see this more in the book, but it comes down to those spiritual leaders who failed to point the people back to Yahweh. It strikes me that we find the same themes running throughout Hosea that we did in Judges.

III.2:14-23 - The Future Restoration of Israel

- A. **14-15** — We shouldn't have expected this to be the answer. The sentence just before this was that Israel and forgotten Yahweh. Though there was going to be judgment for it as we saw earlier in chapter 2, verse 14 begins with hope of blessing, future blessing. With the use of “behold” that draws our attention to what's going to take place, Yahweh demonstrates that he is going to speak tenderly and allure Israel.
- B. **15** — The valley of Achor takes us back to Joshua 7, where we read of the sin of Achan. Achan took items from Jericho that were intended for destruction, which resulted in Israel losing to Ai in battle and most of all, sinning against Yahweh. They discovered Achan, brought him and his family to the valley of Achor, and there stoned him and his family to death. Achor means trouble, so it become the valley of trouble. Similar to the other reversals (Jezreel, not my people, no mercy) this too would become a reversal. Instead of walking into the valley of trouble and finding trouble, they would discover a door of hope. **This could picture their return to the land after their exile.**
- C. **16-17** — Think of what's taking place here. Yahweh was going to remove the name Baal from their mouth and he would be remembered no more. Israel could easily have played the term, **so that the**

⁸ See Garrett, 84.

⁹ Ortland, 64.

¹⁰ Ortland points out that verse 13 is the evidence that Israel's lovers are the Baals they worship. This is the clearest demonstration of that so far (66).

name Baal (my master/lord) could be used in reference to Yahweh.¹¹ This would have been a way to blend the two together. The goal is that Baal would be entirely forgotten, and that there would be no confusion about who it is they are worshipping, by their calling Yahweh, “My Husband.”

- D. **18-20** — This promise of a new covenant would be given greater clarity in Jeremiah 31. This is the promise of a new covenant. A covenant that is unconditional, forever, and is connected to knowledge of God. We also see that Yahweh is the one initiating the covenant with the repeated, “I will” throughout this verse. He is going to pursue His people, and they will know Him (contra 2:13). This is going to be a new marriage, one that is founded on essential components of righteousness, justice, steadfast love, and mercy. And above all, faithfulness. **This is not a heartless one-sided transaction, but a marriage that is fueled by love.** The marriage metaphor helps to clarify that.¹² This finds its culmination in the final sentence, “And you shall know the LORD.” Hubbard writes, *“Though know is appropriate to the intimacy of marriage (Gen. 4:1), its meaning here is that the bride will make the appropriate response to the Bridegroom by committing herself as fervently and faithfully to the terms of the covenant as he has.”*¹³
- E. **21-23** — That Yahweh answers the heavens, heavens the earth, earth the crops, the crops Jezreel, demonstrate that Israel has called out to God for fertility in the land, and God demonstrates His power by giving them the fertility. Jezreel is Israel. However, rather than being used in a negative sense, as we seen in 1:4, the meaning of the word comes to life in verse 22. Jezreel means “may God sow.” The picture given here is then of Yahweh sowing the people in the land, of his people being shown mercy and being called, “my people” and they calling him “You are my God.” Their response shows a change of heart and disposition to Yahweh. **Now they truly know Yahweh.**

IV. Application -

- A. Why would God spend half of chapter 2 explaining all that He “will do” for Israel? Think about the context. Israel is drawing near to 722 BC and the invasion of the Assyrian Army. What kind of impact should future blessing have on us as we live life in the here and now?

¹¹ Garrett, 91.

¹² Ibid, 93.

¹³ Hubbard, 96.