

Hosea 3

The Covenant Love of God and the Idolatry of His People

I. Introduction

A. 2 Timothy 3:15-17

B. Review

1. Message of the book: The Covenant Love of God and the Idolatry of His People
2. Key dates — 722BC and 922BC
3. Review chapter 1
4. Review chapter 2

II. 3:1-5 — Hosea retrieves and restores his wife

A. 1 — Yahweh commands Hosea to get his wife

1. Is this Gomer or another woman? How do we work through a decision like this?

- a) **Notice the word change from whoredom (1:2) to adulteress.** In chapter 1, prior to marriage, Gomer is identified as a prostitute, or whore. In 3:1 Yahweh tells Hosea to go get an adulteress. This helps us understand that this is Gomer
- b) **She is unnamed.** The responsibility is on those who argue this is someone other than Gomer. It is easier to assume it is referring to Gomer, than to say it refers to some other random women.
- c) If Yahweh was telling Hosea to marry another woman, and this one was an adulteress, then wouldn't that be very close to saying that he should go commit adultery? Again, Gomer makes the best sense.¹
- d) We need to also keep in mind the metaphor that is being pictured. **Did Yahweh pursue a different people after Israel played the whore and went after idols?** No. That's what's remarkable about this picture that is being painted for us. Yahweh remained faithful, and despite Israel's idolatry, continued to show covenant love toward them. As Chisholm writes, "He [Hosea] was also to follow the Lord's example of love by initiating the restoration of the relationship."²

2. Is this parallel with chapter 1, or subsequent to it? Some argue that this passage is not a further explanation of what happened after chapter 1, but is a parallel account, just providing another perspective to chapter 1. What are your thoughts?

- a) The insertion of the word "again," provides some basis to argue that this is subsequent to chapter 1. In this case we see some chronology.

3. "...who is loved by another man" — Some suggest that this is her husband, so it should be translated, "who is loved by her husband" (The NASB for example). Though the term on its own does not mean husband, some like Chisholm argue that the parallel with Yahweh in the second half would show it is. Yet, the term has nothing to do with husband, so I would suggest we don't take it as different than "another man."

¹ Garrett, 99.

² Chisholm, 28.

4. Why, cakes of raisins?

- a) There isn't a lot of hard data here...other than that they seem to be directly connected to pagan worship. Garrett suggests that they may have had an aphrodisiac quality to them.³
- b) Despite their love for paganism, Yahweh still pursues them.

B. 2-3 — Hosea retrieves Gomer as an illustration/metaphor

1. 2 —This almost seems insignificant, but notice what Hosea is doing here. He is following the command of Yahweh exactly. Yahweh says, “go,” Hosea goes. Yahweh says, “love,” Hosea loves. What we see again is that Hosea is a faithful and obedient follower of Yahweh.
2. Gomer has abandoned Hosea, pursued other lovers, and has given herself over to them sexually. Now, here comes Hosea ready to buy her back. **Why? In our culture we are so willing to turn away from someone who wrongs us, with little effort to remain committed even though it's hard.** Let this be a lesson to each of you of the importance of faithfulness in marriage.
3. **What is the significance of the items he used to purchase her? Was it a lot or little?**
 - a) Garrett observes that this term for “bought” includes the idea of haggle. This makes lots of sense in the context when Hosea is providing a gift that is a combination of money and grain.⁴
 - b) We should begin by asking ourselves, what is the value of a slave? The exact value of this combination is very difficult to ascertain. Exodus 21:32, “If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master **thirty shekels of silver**, and the ox shall be stoned.” Additionally, Leviticus 27:4, “If the person is a female, the valuation shall be **thirty shekels.**”
 - c) The grain might total around 300 liters...or 80 gallons
 - d) There are two interesting pieces to this purchasing. First, as we saw, Hosea needed to haggle the price. Second, it was not the full price of a normal slave. We have to be careful what implications we draw from these facts. However, we can't deny that this verse is here, and that Hosea thought it was significant. **It could imply the efforts by which he went to buy back Gomer.**
4. **Why did he have to buy her? Who did Hosea buy her from?** Again, there is not much to go on. Chisholm suggests she may have served as a slave or concubine.⁵ Garrett adds that she could have been a temple prostitute. We don't know though. It is clear, that her pursuit of her lovers lead her to the place of enslavement of some kind.

Just like Gomer, we might think our pursuit of sin is a decision to enjoy the freedom we have. However, this type of freedom is not true freedom, for it always leads to enslavement.

5. **3 — Gomer is now in Hosea's possession.** He tells her that she will not be given freedom to seek after other men. She was to be isolated from her old lovers for “many days.” The isolation doesn't just pertain to these lovers, but reaches Hosea himself. This is evident in the phrase “another man” which seems to apply to Hosea as well.

For a time, like any other couple that needs to restore their relationship, they abstain from sexual activity. Yet in the end they would both remain faithful to one another. The time frame for isolation, did not mean that later she could return to her older lovers, but that when she did

³ Garrett, 100.

⁴ Garrett, 101.

⁵ Chisholm, 28.

return, it would be in complete faithfulness to Hosea. This type of isolation from her lovers, parallels the isolation that Israel would face (v. 4 and 2:6-7).

6. What we can walk away with from this passage is that it is right to say that Hosea is the tenderest of prophets “the prophet of grace and love.”⁶ Consider again what Hosea has done here. Gomer completely wronged him, yet he comes and purchases her back. When Yahweh tells him to go back and get her, Hosea doesn’t complain to Yahweh about how badly she’s wronged him. He just goes. The reality, is that in every one of your relationships there is going to be sin against another, since you and the other person are sinners. You are going to wrong one another. The question is, will you follow the example of Hosea and show compassion? Greater still, will you follow the example of Yahweh who did no wrong, but was wronged, and still show love?

C. 4-5⁷ — Metaphor applied to Yahweh and Israel

1. The passage transitions now. Yahweh made it clear from verse 1, that Hosea and Gomer were supposed to be a continued metaphor of Yahweh and Israel. What took place in verses 2-3 is applied in verse 4.
2. Just like Gomer who was to be isolated for a time, so too Israel would be isolated from the many good and bad things that they have had in the land.
3. 4 — Israel will face a time of isolation from her “lovers.” This represents the time of exile that is about to occur for Israel. In 2:6-7, we saw how Yahweh was going to hedge her in, keep her from running after her “lovers.” We’ve read about the desolation that is going to come. All this will take place beginning in 722 BC when Assyria takes them away in to captivity.
 - a) Most of these items are generally not bad things. However, they are things that can easily be twisted for selfish and wrongful purposes.⁸ Idolatry is clearly the heart issue in Israel. That there will be an absence of sacrifice and ephod demonstrates that there is an absence of priests and the temple in this period.
4. 5 — Following this time of isolation, Israel will return to Yahweh. They will seek him and they will fear him. When does this take place? “...in the latter days.” It is incredible that from verse 4 to verse 5 there is a period of several thousand years! We don’t know when Jesus will take his throne in the eschaton and be the head of his people, but we do know that it will happen.

III. Conclusion⁹

A. What do Yahweh’s actions with Israel teach us about marriage and relationships?

1. **He acts first.** Though He is the party wronged, He goes out of His way to restore his bride. We see this in a very clear way with Jesus. Jesus came to earth to save sinners. No one sought Him, and even when He came He was rejected. Yet, He loves us all.

⁶ Barrett, 14.

⁷ Note: One would expect that for the parallel to work perfectly Yahweh would buy back Israel. Maybe there is another text that makes such an idea more clear. In so many ways, Yahweh buys His people back (Jews and Gentiles) through Christ’s death.

⁸ Garrett, 103.

⁹ Barrett writes, “Indeed, a good marriage that fulfills all the requirements of love and loyalty becomes a never-ending living sermon of the gospel itself” (5).

- a) If Yahweh expresses such clear love for His people, as one who has not done any wrong to them, then how much more should we express that same kind of love knowing that God has shown the same to us.
 - b) “God’s love is totally of grace. The reason and motive of God’s gracious electing love is within Himself, not within the objects of His choice. That is what makes grace amazing. God chose Israel in spite of what they were, not because of what they were. He knew their sin, their weakness, their bent to evil. This fits so well with the suggested interpretation of Hosea’s marriage. God’s love for Israel was not “blind” and neither was Hosea’s love for Gomer. He knew from the beginning her weakness and inner propensity to sin, but nonetheless he loved her with love according to that of the Lord’s.”¹⁰
2. If are going to follow Christ’s example, we have to remember that there is no wrong that is too great to keep us from being restored to another person.

B. What do Yahweh’s actions teach us about the seriousness of idolatry?

1. **How does the marriage metaphor change the way we view idolatry?** Raymond Ortlund says it this way, “But true religion is marital in nature. What sort of husband would look at his wayward wife and dismiss her adulteries by mumbling, ‘As long as she and her lovers don’t shake the bed and make too much noise, as long as I can get my sleep, what’s the big deal? It’s only marriage!?’ No-one but a knave would own such a sentiment. So how can we trivialize our covenant with God? The covenant is a marriage. It is the marriage.”¹¹
2. When we consider the metaphor that has been given to us in these first 3 chapters, we must not excuse even the smallest of idols in our hearts. Each idol, no matter how small or large is an offense to God. We must begin by confessing our sin, and then asking God to help us treasure Him more than any of these idols.

¹⁰ Barrett.

¹¹ Ortlund, 174.