

Lesson 8

When we ended last week, we were about to look at the final phrase of Hosea 1:7.

7 But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen."

That second phrase is a bit ambiguous and can have two different meanings.

On one hand, it can mean (as in the ESV) that God will not save Judah by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen; that is, God will not save Judah by its own military might.

But that same phrase in the Hebrew can also mean that God will not save Judah from bow or from sword or from war or from horses or from horsemen.

So which is correct? By or from? I think the context strongly favors the usual translation of "by" that we find in the ESV. The immediately preceding phrase ("I will save them **by** the LORD their God") uses the same word, and there the word certainly does not mean "from."

But I like what one commentary said on this point: "In a text as disorienting as this, it is easy to suppose that the ambiguity is deliberate." And perhaps it is; it certainly made us stop and think.

Another reason I think that the ESV translation is correct is that Hosea 1:7 reminds us of a beautiful prophesy from Zechariah that we studied in an earlier class.

Zechariah 4:6 – Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.”

Zerubbabel (as we recall) was a descendant of King David – a vital link in the chain from David to Christ. (We find Zerubbabel’s name both in Matthew 1:13 and in Luke 3:27.)

Hosea 1:7 and Zechariah 4:6 are each saying the same thing – the coming salvation would not arise from the might of man, but would come from the might of God. Daniel also told us that.

Daniel 2:44–45 – And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain **by no human hand**, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold.

So what is God saying in verse 7? He is saying, I will not save Judah by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen – but I will save Judah! I will save them by the LORD their God!

Jeremiah told us about this great salvation, and he also told us when it would happen.

Jeremiah 33:14–16 – Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing

which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. **In those days, and at that time**, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. **In those days shall Judah be saved**, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

Oh, but I thought Judah was going to be saved when all the Jews were gathered together in Palestine at the end of the world when Jesus reigns for 1000 years in Jerusalem... Is that what Jeremiah just told us? No. Jeremiah said that Judah would be saved when God caused the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David – that is, when Jesus came into this world. That is a first century event that has already happened, not a final century event that hasn't happened.

Paul also told us about this salvation and also gave us the timing.

Romans 11:26–27 – And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

When was all Israel saved? When the Deliverer came out of Zion. Again, that was a first century event. And this great salvation was the gift of God; it did not arise by the power of man.

Ephesians 2:8–9 – For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Or, as Hosea tells us, not by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen! But by the Lord their God!

Does God have a plan of salvation for the Jews? Absolutely he does. And it is the same plan that God has for everyone. It is the only plan; it is the gospel of Christ that was proclaimed in Acts 2 and is still being proclaimed today. And that gospel has not changed at all during those 2000 years.

So far we have met two of Gomer's three children – Jezreel and Not Loved. Let's now meet their little brother, Not Mine.

Hosea 1:8–9

8 When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. 9 And the LORD said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."

In verses 8–9, Jezreel and Not Loved welcome a little brother into their family, and he is given the name Lo-Ammi, which means "Not Mine"!

Verse 8 tells us that Not Mine was born after Not Loved had been weaned. Two questions: how long was that time, and why are we told this?

As for the length of time, one commentary says it could have been three years because (it says) "children nursed longer in the ancient world than today." If that is correct, then what can we say about the three year period between the birth of

Not Loved and the birth of Not Mine? Why are we provided that detail?

Some commentaries try to make that time period part of the metaphor, and talk, for example, about the patience of God. Perhaps – but I think that may be stretching things a bit too far. Later, when we get to chapter 3, we will discuss some events that may have happened in this three year time period.

I think a better explanation for why we have this detail is that it confirms what we said earlier – these are real people! This was a real marriage! These are real children! And this real child was born about three years after his sister and was given the very real name of Not Mine!

Perhaps God saved the worst name for last – Not Mine! What a name to give your child! There is an English word that carries the same meaning – and it is a word that we find in the Bible, at least in the KJV.

Deuteronomy 23:2 – A **bastard** shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

The Hebrew words are different, but the meanings are the same. If we did today what Hosea was commanded to do here the command would be to name our child that word we just read from Deuteronomy 23:2! This child was given a name that announced to all that he had been disowned by his father.

Whatever name the child had been given, with a mother like Gomer, you can be sure people would

have wondered about his parentage. But with a name like this was anybody wondering whether this boy was Hosea's actual son?

When a father names his son "Not Mine," I think it is safe to say that everyone (including, and perhaps especially, the son) will immediately conclude that Hosea was not the boy's father. But was that true? Was Hosea not the boy's actual father?

The short answer (again) is that we don't know – and likely neither did Hosea, despite the seeming certainty reflected by the child's name.

And (again) that Hosea gave his son the name "Not Mine" does not tell us how Hosea himself felt about this child. Hosea gave his son that strange name because he was commanded by God to give his son that name. The name was intended as a sign for Israel, not as a sign for Hosea.

And what was the sign for Israel conveyed by the name of this little boy? It was the worst sign that they could have ever imagined. It was a sign that God was declaring his covenant with Israel to be null and void. It was a sign that God would consider Israel as God considered the Gentile world – not mine!

Earlier in their history the people had heard the **opposite** of what we see here in verse 9:

Exodus 6:7 – I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Leviticus 26:12 – And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

And now? What were they hearing now? “You are **not** my people, and I am **not** your God.”

Israel could not have fallen any further away from God than that. God had disowned them, and God was announcing that fact to the world. You are not my people! I am not your God!

Yes, it was a shocking thing to hear, but, of course, the people should not have been shocked at all. Long before, God had told them exactly what would happen if they rejected him. Deuteronomy 28 details the curses that would come upon them if they turned away from God, as they had now done.

Deuteronomy 28:33 – A nation that you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually, so that you are driven mad by the sights that your eyes see.

Deuteronomy 28:62 – Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 28:64 – And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.

Those curses from Deuteronomy 28 form the backdrop of the book of Hosea. God had told the people at the beginning of their history what would happen if they disobeyed him, and Hosea has

now shown up at the end of their history to say, "I told you so!"

And what do we see from God? Do we see any satisfaction with that "I told you so" from his prophet? No. What we see from God is heartbreak.

What we see is the heartbreak of a parent toward a child who it seems has been irretrievably lost. What we see is the heartbreak of a father about a relationship with his child that will seemingly never again be the same.

In his book *Bodies in Motion and at Rest*, the author Thomas Lynch wrote about looking at his son, passed out on the couch, after a string of arrests and drunk tanks and hospitalizations. And here is what he wrote:

"I want to remember him the way he was, that bright and beaming boy with the blue eyes and the freckles in the photos, holding the walleye on his grandfather's dock, or dressed in his first suit for his sister's grade-school graduation, or sucking his thumb while drawing at the kitchen counter, or playing his first guitar, or posing with the brothers from down the block on his first day of school."

Heartbreaking. And that is the same heartbreak we see from God in the book of Hosea. And some of the verses in Hosea are among the most heartbreaking verses found anywhere in the Bible or anywhere period.

Hosea 11:3 – Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them.

I taught my son to walk! I took him up by his arms! But he did not know.

There is no other way to see this book of Hosea other than as the anguish of a father about the sad state of his wayward children.

But is there no hope? Will the child never return? Will the great blessings that God had planned for his children never be enjoyed? Never be claimed? Will the son never arise from that couch free of that terrible burden? Let's keep reading.

Hosea 1:10-11

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." 11 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

What is the most beautiful word in the Bible? I suppose we could list many candidates, but at the top of my list would be two words – the words “yet” and “but.”

How many times in the Bible does everything look hopeless until we reach a verse that begins with “yet” or “but”? I think of Romans 3, for example.

Romans 3:10-22 – As it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside;

together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. **But** now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

We see another example here in verses 10 and 11 of Hosea 1.

At the end of verse 9 everything looks about as bad as it can possibly be. At the end of verse 9 it looks like all hope is lost. And then we read verse 10, and the first word we read is “Yet!”

It all reminds me of Matthew 19:26 – “With man this is impossible, **but** with God all things are possible.” And there’s that word again! “**But** with God!”

So, here are our questions about verses 10–11: what is this wonderful thing being described here in these verses, and when and where will or did this wonderful thing happen?

Question #1: What is the wonderful thing described by verses 10 and 11?

First, let’s start with what is **NOT** the answer to that question. Whatever the wonderful thing in

verse 10 is, it is **not** a wonderful thing that would be experienced in the lives of the people who were listening to Hosea.

How do we know that?

First, we know it because Hosea tells us what was in store for Israel in its immediate future – and it was anything but wonderful.

Hosea 13:16 – Samaria shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword; their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open.

Second, we know it because history confirms that nothing wonderful happened to rebellious Israel. Instead, the people lived through a succession of cut-throat kings until Assyria conquered them, killed them, exiled them, and scattered them.

And third, we know it because of the first promise in verse 10 – that “the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.” The people were not hard to number at all in Hosea’s day. In fact, there were only about 60,000 “wealthy men” (likely meaning landholders) around this time.

How do we know that? I’m glad you asked. We know it because of math!

2 Kings 15:19–20 – Pul the king of Assyria came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that he might help him to confirm his hold on the royal power. Menahem exacted the money from Israel, that is,

from all the wealthy men, fifty shekels of silver from every man, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back and did not stay there in the land.

So, if N is the number of landholders, then King Menahem collected $50 \times N$ shekels of silver to pay the tribute of 1000 talents of silver. All we need to calculate N is to know the number of shekels in a talent of silver.

The number of shekels in a talent can be calculated from the account of the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 38.

Exodus 38:25–26 – The silver from those of the congregation who were recorded was a hundred talents and 1,775 shekels, by the shekel of the sanctuary: a beka a head (that is, half a shekel, by the shekel of the sanctuary), for everyone who was listed in the records, from twenty years old and upward, for 603,550 men.

If each of the 603,550 men brought half a shekel of silver, then the total number of shekels of silver was 301,775 shekels. The text tells us this sum was 100 talents and 1775 shekels of silver, which means that 100 talents of silver was 300,000 shekels. Thus, 1 talent of silver was 3,000 shekels silver.

Back to 2 Kings 15, we see that $50 \times N = 3,000,000$ shekels (1000 talents times 3000 shekels per talent). Solving for N , we get 60,000 men!

Sorry for all of that math – but I get so few opportunities!

Going back to the reason we did all of that math, we know that verse 10 cannot be describing current events in Israel because, far from being innumerable, the population at that time was quite easily numbered and was not very large. And it was certainly not large when compared with the quickly expanding Assyrian Empire!

So, for at least those three reasons, we know that verses 10–11 are not describing the immediate future of Israel. What's left? The latter future of Israel.

So does that mean we are looking for a time when the northern kingdom, the nation of Israel, would be like the sand of the sea and would be physically gathered together with Judah, the southern kingdom, under one leader?

Many today would say yes, and they would either point to the formation of Israel in 1948 or to some sort of premillennial kingdom that will be centered in Jerusalem at the end of the world.

There are many, many problems with both of those views, but one of those problems should be a show-stopper for those who hold those views. And what is that show-stopper? **Both Paul and Peter point back to verse 10, and both tell us that it was fulfilled in the first century.** Not 1948. Not the end of the world. But the first century.

Let's look at what Paul and Peter have to say about verse 10.

Paul quotes Hosea 1:10 in his lengthy discourse about the Jews in Romans 9–11.

Romans 9:25–26 – As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’” “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

And Peter alludes to Hosea 1:10 in his first letter:

1 Peter 2:9–10 – But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

What do those verses tell us about Hosea 1:10?

Paul's point in Romans 9 was to convince the Jews that they, like the Gentiles, stood in need of the mercy of God.

Romans 9:16 – So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

And then later we read:

Romans 9:22–24 – What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory – even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

And then in the next verse Paul quotes Hosea 1:10.

There is a dispute about whether Paul has Jews only or both Jews and Gentiles in mind with his quote from Hosea, and arguments can be made for both positions. But I think that dispute misses the point that is being made in Hosea 1:10.

What did we just see in the preceding verses of Hosea 1? What we saw was that, when it came to Israel, God was breaking the parental bond that a father has for his children. Israel had broken their covenant with God, and so the curses and the warnings from Deuteronomy 28 were now coming to pass.

Deuteronomy 28:62-64 – Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God. And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.

So what did that mean with regard to the northern tribes after they were scattered by the Assyrians? **What it meant was that they would become like Gentiles.**

And, in fact, that is what happened. The Samaritans were a mixture of Jews from the northern kingdom and Gentiles brought in from Assyria.

2 Kings 17:24 – And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava,

and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

2 Kings 17:34 – Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel.

The Samaritans of the New Testament were descendants of these people, and as John 4:9 tells us, “the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”

What does that mean? What it means is that we don't need to spend much time worrying about whether Paul's quote from Hosea refers to just the Jews or to both Jew and Gentile. Why? Because even it refers only to Jews, it still includes people who were **considered** Gentiles.

In fact, isn't that Hosea's point in verse 9? “You are not my people, and I am not your God.” God is speaking to Israel in that verse, and God is telling them that they would become like Gentiles to him, which is exactly what happened as evidenced by the Samaritans in the New Testament.

Yes, in a sense, the Samaritans were neither Jew nor Gentile, but a mixture of the two, but from a practical perspective the Samaritans were treated no differently than Gentiles by the Jews of the first century.

And what was true for those in Israel who were now considered as Gentiles was also true for the actual Gentiles. In fact, it was the inclusion of the Gentiles in the plan of God that provided this hope for those who had once been God's people but who were no longer his people.

The Jews who rebelled against God stood in need of the same mercy as the Gentiles needed – and that was the precise point that Paul was making in Romans 9 when he quoted Hosea.

So what can we say about Hosea 1:10? I think we can say that it has the Gentiles in mind when it talks about those who are not God's people instead becoming the children of the living God.

In the immediate context of Hosea 1, those Gentiles were the Jews from the northern tribes who were scattered and mixed with the Assyrians. But the truth of Hosea 1:10 went beyond that group. That is what Paul tells us in Romans 9 and what Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2.

1 Peter 2:9–10 – But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

So I think we can now answer our first question: what is the wonderful thing described by verses 10 and 11 of Hosea 1?

That wonderful thing is the gospel of Christ! It is the good news. And there cannot be any better

news than to hear that “in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ it shall be said to them, ‘Children of the living God.’” The relationship has been restored!

And is there any other way apart from the gospel that someone who is not a child of God can become a child of God? If not, then the wonderful thing in Hosea 1:10 must be the gospel.

1 John 3:1-2 – See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called **children of God**; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, **we are God's children now**, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

So the answer to the first question is the gospel, and with that first answer I think we also have an answer to our next question.

Question #2: When will or did this wonderful thing happen?

Didn't John just answer that question? “We are God's children **now**,” he wrote in 1 John 3:2.

And didn't Paul answer that question in Romans 9:24? “Even us whom **he has called**, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?”

And didn't Peter answer that question in 1 Peter 2:10? “Once you were not a people, but **now** you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but **now** you have received mercy.”

And don't we all know when the gospel was first proclaimed?

The wonderful blessing of Hosea 1:10 was not a blessing in the immediate future of Israel, but was instead a blessing in the later future of Israel – and it was the same blessing that came to the entire world – both Jew and Gentile – with the coming of Christ and the gospel of Christ in the first century.

Question #3: Where did this wonderful thing happen?

Where? Why are we asking that question? We are asking it because verses 10–11 appear to describe a particular place where this wonderful thing will happen.

Hosea 1:10–11 – And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.” And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

Where is this place? Where is this land?

Let's start first with the place, and I think what we see with that word in verse 10 is the same prophecy that we see elsewhere in the Old Testament – that the gospel of Christ would be proclaimed first in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 2:3 – For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

And we see also see the first century fulfillment of that prophecy.

Luke 24:45-47 – Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.