

Lesson 9

When we ended last week we were looking at Hosea 1:10–11, and we had three questions: what is this wonderful thing being described here in these verses, and when and where will or did this wonderful thing happen?

We had answered the first two questions: the wonderful thing in verses 10–11 is the gospel of Christ, and that wonderful thing appeared in the first century.

As for the third question, we had looked at the “place” in verse 10 and determined that it was Jerusalem. The gospel was proclaimed first in Jerusalem.

And the “land” in Hosea 1:11? Where is that land? I think we have two likely options, and both options may be intended.

The first option is that the land in verse 11 is the same as the place in verse 10, and both are describing the proclamation of the gospel beginning from Jerusalem.

But a second option is that going up from the land in verse 11 refers to a resurrection. Not a physical resurrection of the body, but rather the spiritual resurrection experienced by those who hear and obey the gospel.

Daniel 12:2 – And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to

everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Luke 2:34 – And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel...”

Romans 6:4 – We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

And if that second view of the “land” in verse 11 seems a bit far-fetched in the context of Hosea 1, we need to consider two more pieces of evidence.

First, think again about the name Jezreel, which we see again at the end of verse 11. As we said before, the Hebrew word Jezreel means “God scatters.” And we said that the name Jezreel thus included a judgment – God would scatter the people of Israel.

But that same Hebrew word meaning “God scatters” can also be seen as a blessing – it can mean instead that “God sows” or “God plants.”

And what do we see at the end of verse 11? Do we see Jezreel used as a curse or as a blessing? We see it used as a blessing! “And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.”

I think that word “Jezreel” provides support for the notion that verse 11 is talking about a resurrection. And the context tells us that it

is a spiritual resurrection – the point at which we, who were previously not a people, became the people of God.

And the second piece of evidence? That comes from Ezekiel, who spoke not to Israel before their deportation, but to Judah after their deportation. And what did Ezekiel tell them? He told them much the same that we see here in Hosea 1:10-11.

In Hosea 1:11, Hosea said that Judah and Israel will be gathered together. What did Ezekiel say?

Ezekiel 37:19 – Say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand.

In Hosea 1:11, Hosea said the people would have one head. What did Ezekiel say?

Ezekiel 37:22 – And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.

And what else do we see in Ezekiel 37? We see a great resurrection in the valley of dry bones!

Ezekiel 37:11-14 – Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And

you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

When did Judah and Israel once again become one kingdom? When did Judah and Israel once again have one king over them all? When did Judah and Israel experience a spiritual resurrection?

That all happened in the first century with the gospel of Christ. And it still happens to day. Those who are in the kingdom of Christ are united in one body, have one king, and have been raised to walk in newness of life. Hosea 1:10–11 is describing the gospel of Christ and the wonderful blessings that Jesus brought to the entire world.

One final question about verse 11 – that verse says that “they shall **appoint** for themselves one head.” If, as we have said, Jesus is that “one head,” then what does it mean when the text says that Jesus was **appointed**?

I think what we see with that word is an idiom describing the selection of a king. We see the same language elsewhere.

Deuteronomy 17:15 – You may indeed **set a king over you** whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers **you shall set as king over you**. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

1 Samuel 8:5 – And said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now

appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.”

We did not appoint Jesus king anymore than the Jews appointed their earthly kings. We know that God chose their first king (Saul) in 1 Samuel 9:16 as well as their second king (David) in 1 Samuel 16:1. And, likewise, it was God (not us) who crowned Jesus king (Hebrews 1:8–9; Hebrews 2:7–9).

Here in verse 11 the word “appointment” points us back to the crowning of Saul and the crowning of David, and it looks forward to the crowning of Christ to reign forever on the throne of David. Each was crowned **by God**, and the people then recognized that person as their king.

Here in verse 11 the promise is that all the people would recognize this one leader as their one king. In the days of Hosea, that had not been the case in the divided kingdom for centuries. But the promise of verse 11 is that in the future the people would once again be united under one king.

Jeremiah 23:5–6 – Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’

That king and that righteous Branch of Jeremiah 23 is the one head of Hosea 1:11. That king is Christ, and the wonderful blessing of Hosea

1:10-11 is the gospel of Christ and the salvation enjoyed by all in the kingdom of Christ.

Hosea 2:1-2

1 Say to your brothers, "You are my people," and to your sisters, "You have received mercy." 2 "Plead with your mother, plead-- for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband-- that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts;

Verse 1 is a transition verse. It is linked to the end of chapter 1 by its optimism, and it is linked to the verses that follow by the imperatives that are used - "say" in verse 1 and "plead" in verse 2.

Our first question about verse 1 is this: who are these brothers and sisters? As far as we have been told, we have two brothers and one sister among the three children of Gomer. Also, the word "say" here is plural, so to which group is this command addressed?

Although we previously raised the possibility that Gomer had children before she married Hosea, I think the better view for verse 1 is that the focus has shifted from the children of Gomer to the people represented by those children. I think the command in verse 1 is directed to the people of Israel, and they are, in effect, being told to say these things to each other.

And what are they told to say to themselves? "You are my people." "You have received mercy."

But how can that be? How can God tell “Not Mine” that “you are my people”? How can God tell “Not Loved” that “you have received mercy”?

The answer is what we saw at the end of Chapter 1. The answer is the gospel of Christ. That is how people who are not God’s people can become God’s people. That is how people who are not loved with a special parental bond can receive mercy as a father shows to his children. That is what Paul told us in Romans 9, and that is what Peter told us in 1 Peter 2.

But what about the present tense (“you are my people”) and the past tense (“you have received mercy”)?

At the end of chapter 1, we were seeing these promised blessings in the future tense (“it shall be said to them” and “they shall go up”). That in the very next verse we see those same blessings in both the present tense and the past tense just shows how certain they are. God was going to bless the entire world through Jesus Christ, and that blessing was so certain the tense of the verb did not matter. Here in just two verses (1:11 and 2:1) we see those blessings described in the future tense, the present tense, and the past tense.

That explains how verse 1 is a transition from the preceding verses. But how is verse 1 a transition to the verses that follow it? That is a tougher question. Look again at verse 2.

“Plead with your mother, plead -- for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband -- that she

put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts.”

The first word in verse 2 in the ESV is “plead.” The ASV uses the word “contend,” and the NIV uses the word “rebuke.” I think a better translation than any of those is to use the word “renounce.”

Verse 2 is a warning to the children. Yes, they are in bad situation now, and yes, they are promised a restored situation later. But what comes in between? The answer is found in verse 2. These children must set themselves apart from their mother. They must denounce what she has done.

Why? Why must they denounce her? The remainder of verse 2 answers that question. They must renounce their mother because “she is not my wife, and I am not her husband.” And that reason confirms that this is not Hosea speaking about Gomer but rather is God speaking about Israel. Hosea and Gomer were still husband and wife, but this verse tells us that God and Israel were not.

In chapter 1 we saw a break in the parental bond between God and Israel. Here in verse 2 of chapter 2 we see break in the marriage bond between God and Israel. “She is not my wife, and I am not her husband.”

And so what is happening here? What is happening is that the marriage has broken up, and the children are being asked to choose a side. God is telling them to denounce their mother.

As we have said, Hosea is using two different metaphors here for Israel – Israel is a mother in

verse 2, and Israel is the children of that mother in verse 1. What that means is that Israel is being told here to denounce Israel! I think we finally need to figure out what those two different metaphors are describing.

So here are our questions: what aspect of Israel is represented here by Gomer, and what aspect of Israel is represented here by the children of Gomer?

To answer those questions, let's look again at verse 2, where the children were told to denounce their mother. What did God want the Israelites to denounce? Wasn't it their current culture and everything about it? And what do we mean by culture? Doesn't their culture include their governmental institutions and leaders and their religious institutions and leaders? And weren't their kings evil cutthroats, and weren't their religious leaders followers of Baal?

Everything about their culture was opposed to God, and these people – like children – had been reared and influenced by that evil culture. And God wanted them to denounce it all! God wanted them to reject the spiritual adultery of that evil culture – or, as verse 2, says, “that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts.”

I think the children represent Israel as the ordinary people of Israel, and the mother of those children represents Israel as the degenerate culture that raised those children.

That explains how, in verse 2, Israel is being told to denounce Israel. It explains why these children were being told to denounce their mother. God wanted them to renounce the evil culture in which they lived and of which they were a part.

And that is not just a command for this ancient people in the days of Hosea. We see the same command for us in the New Testament, along with the same promise.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 – Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, **and they shall be my people.** Therefore go out from their midst, **and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing;** then I will welcome you, and **I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me,** says the Lord Almighty.”

What fellowship has light with darkness? We must choose one or the other. And that is what God is commanding his people to do in verse 2 – denounce your mother!

Whose children were they? We have said before that there is some question in our mind (and likely in Hosea’s mind) about whether all of his children are really his children. But here, these children are being asked to choose – whose children are they? Children of the living God? Or

children of their own evil culture? How they respond to the command in verse 2 will answer that question.

What is meant by the phrase “that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts”?

Putting promiscuity away from her face may refer to characteristic tattoos or cosmetics that denoted a prostitute. And putting away adultery from her breasts may denote pieces of jewelry or trinkets that likewise denoted a prostitute at that time.

The meaning is clear – the people must denounce their mother by telling her to abandon her old ways and everything that went along with her old ways.

And what if that does not happen? Keep reading.

Hosea 2:3

3 lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and make her like a parched land, and kill her with thirst.

Verse 3 is describing what would happen if the children did not denounce their mother and her ways. Verse 3 is describing what would happen if the people chose their mother over God. Verse 3 is describing what would happen if their mother did not heed her children and change her ways. And sadly, verse 3 is describing what actually happened to Israel in the days of Hosea. They

rejected God, and so God rejected them, and Assyria conquered and scattered them.

How is all of that described here? In two ways – as an adulterous woman being stripped naked by her husband, and as her land being turned into a desert.

Before we look at these two punishments, let's ask an initial question: is any or all of this autobiographical? That is, is Hosea describing here in chapter 2 his own life with Gomer and her children? Did he ask his own children to say to Gomer the things we looked at in verse 2? Is Hosea here in verse 3 threatening to strip Gomer naked. Later in verse 10, will Hosea display Gomer naked in front of her lovers?

Although the commentaries differ on this question, my opinion is that the answer is no. I think when we started chapter 2 we moved to the relation between God and Israel. Yes, that marriage is depicted as a sign by the marriage between Hosea and Gomer, but I don't think we have to conclude that all of the details here in chapter 2 also applied to Hosea and Gomer.

But, with all of that said, we can't be completely certain on that question. It may be that Gomer and Hosea experienced some of what we read in chapter 2, or perhaps much or all of it. We will have more to say on that question when we get to chapter 3.

But whether any or all of chapter 2 applied to Hosea and Gomer, the primary point of the chapter is that it all applied to God and Israel. The

book of Hosea is not intended to teach us about Hosea and his relationship with Gomer. Instead, the book of Hosea is intended to teach us about God and his relationship with Israel.

So now let's go back and look at the two punishments we see in verse 3: an adulterous woman being stripped naked by her husband, and her land being turned into a desert.

Some commentaries argue that public exposure was used as a punishment for adultery, and perhaps it was, but I'm not sure they have made their case. Much of their evidence comes from the prophets such as Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Jeremiah 13:26 – Therefore will I also uncover thy skirts upon thy face, and thy shame shall appear.

Ezekiel 16:37 – Therefore behold, I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them against thee on every side, and will uncover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

It's hard to know from those verses whether public exposure was an Israelite divorce practice or was instead just a common depiction of shame used by the prophets.

As for the punishment for adultery, the Law of Moses proscribed something else.

Leviticus 20:10 – And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife,

the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

So what does the public nakedness denote? Most likely it points toward the exile that was coming for Israel due to her spiritual adultery. In the ancient world captives were often taken away naked, and ancient art work routinely depicted departing exiles as naked.

I think this view is strengthened by verse 10 (which we will get to later).

Hosea 2:10 – And now will I uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of my hand.

With Israel, her lovers were the foreign nations Israel trusted and the foreign gods Israel worshipped. Assyria was one such nation, and it was Assyria that led Israel away naked in her exile. As one commentary described it:

“Israel once voluntarily committed adultery through reliance on foreign powers and their gods, but now she would be forcibly stripped by these same powers in conquest.”

And what about the second punishment – the parched land?

The parched land works with the nakedness to complete the picture of someone who has been humiliated and abandoned to her fate with nothing to protect her.

The two metaphors come together when the woman dies of thirst in the desert. The point is that Israel will be humiliated and lose everything,

the land will be emptied, and the people will go into exile.

Hosea 2:4

4 Upon her children also I will have no mercy, because they are children of whoredom.

Verse 4 continues the description of what would happen if the children did not denounce their mother and her ways, and if their mother did not heed her children and change her ways.

And what does verse 4 tell us would happen? One again we see that God would have no mercy on them. As we saw with the birth of Gomer's second child, the parental bond between God and Israel would be broken.

Why? Because by their actions they would have shown that they were children of whoredom. That is, they would have chosen Israel their mother over God their father.

But how do we reconcile this with what we saw in verse 1?

"Say to your brothers, "You are my people," and to your sisters, "You have received mercy."

The answer is simple. Verse 1, as we said, is showing the great future blessing that awaited Israel, and verse 4 is showing their present grim reality if they refused to change their ways.

Hosea 2:4 is simply repeating what we saw in Hosea 1:6 - "Call her name No Mercy, for I will

no more have mercy on the house of Israel.” And also what we saw in Hosea 1:2 – “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD.”

But why? Why do we see these statements repeated, some times saying that there is no mercy and other times saying that there is mercy?

- **Hosea 1:6** – Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel.
- **Hosea 2:1** – Say ... to your sisters, “You have received mercy.”
- **Hosea 2:4** – Upon her children also I will have no mercy.
- **Hosea 2:23** – And I will have mercy on No Mercy.

So which is it? Mercy or no mercy? The answer is that it is both, but not at the same time. In their immediate future, Israel would find no mercy. In their latter future, Israel would find mercy – along with everyone else when Jesus came to bless the entire world – both Jew and Gentile.

Titus 2:11 – For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

But why do we see the back and forth in Hosea? Why no mercy, then mercy, then no mercy, then mercy?

I think the answer is simple. Each time God gives Israel the bad news, he almost immediately gives them the good news! I think this repeated back

and forth that we see in Hosea is just more evidence of God's love.