

The Prophet & The Prostitute

Hosea 1:2-2:1

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Hosea 1:2-2:1 (NIV)

² When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.”³ So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.⁴ Then the Lord said to Hosea, “Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel.⁵ In that day I will break Israel’s bow in the Valley of Jezreel.”⁶ Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, “Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means “not loved”), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them.⁷ Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the Lord their God, will save them.”⁸ After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son.⁹ Then the Lord said, “Call him Lo-Ammi (which means “not my people”), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.¹⁰ “Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘children of the living God.’¹¹ The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel. “Say of your brothers, ‘My people,’ and of your sisters, ‘My loved one.’”

v2 – What did God command Hosea to do?

The word God had for Hosea wasn’t easy. Hosea was told to take a prostitute for a wife.

- Why? Because Israel had committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD.

What was symbolized by Hosea taking a harlot for a wife?

The picture is the LORD as the husband of Israel, and their attraction for idols was like the lust of an adulterer. His people were as unfaithful as a prostitute was.

What is the application of this to us today?

In this vivid picture, we see how our idolatry and rejection of the LORD feels to God. When we put anything in front of the LORD, it hurts Him like unfaithfulness hurts the victim of an adulterous marriage.

- By commanding Hosea to take a wife of harlotry, God will put him in the place where he feels what God feels — and it didn’t feel good.

What does it tell us that God grieves the same way we grieve?

We are made in His image so naturally we will respond similar to the way He does.

- Our grieving is not be exactly the same as God’s because He controls all things and always works them out in accordance with His own good pleasure.

v3 – What does it tell us about Hosea that he obeyed God’s unpleasant command?

We can assume that Hosea would never marry a prostitute except by the commandment of the LORD. It showed a lot of faithfulness for him to actually carry out this difficult command.

Do you think Hosea was hopeful that Gomer would become faithful to him?

Probably, but as will be made clear, she did not give up her career as a prostitute. It wasn’t that Hosea found a fallen woman and through love and kindness restored her to virtue.

- When Hosea and Gomer first married, she probably promised eternal love and devotion. But after a while, and in difficult circumstances, she fell back into prostitution.
- Perhaps it was out of boredom, a feeling of neglect or some sense of need.
- Sadly, we share the same inexcusable reasons for our idolatry, preferring another god to the Lord.

How could God command one of His people do something that is wrong such as marry a prostitute?

If Hosea’s story is made up because ‘God could not ask a man to marry an unfaithful woman’, then neither is the story of salvation real, because that is precisely what Christ has done for us.

v4 – What do we learn from the name of Hosea’s firstborn?

The name Jezreel spoke of two things:

- First, Jezreel means “Scattered,” and Israel would soon be scattered in exile by the Assyrian army.
- Second, Jezreel refers to the Valley of Jezreel, where Jehu, the founder of the dynasty that put Jeroboam II on the throne, massacred all the descendants of Ahab (2 Kings 10:11).

God directed Hosea to name his son Jezreel to confirm His promise to avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel by judging the house of Jehu.

What did the name given Israel’s prophet’s son say to the king?

This was not good news to Jeroboam II. It said that his dynasty was coming to an end.

- In fact, after the death of Jeroboam II in 752 B.C. his son Zechariah barely reigned only six months before being assassinated (2 Kings 15:8-10).
- Before the prophetic ministry of Hosea was finished, Israel would be defeated, destroyed, and taken captive by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:20-23).

v5 – What does it mean that God *will break Israel’s bow*?

The bow was a symbol of power in a day when it was the critical instrument of warfare. Thus, a broken bow symbolized the loss of power.

v6 – What message did the name of Hosea’s daughter convey to Israel?

The name Lo-Ruhamah means “No Mercy.” Every call to this child with the unfortunate name would remind Hosea and everyone else of coming judgment and exile.

- It was a proclamation of doom for Israel.

v7 – On whom would God have mercy?

The house of Judah... The army of Assyria that destroyed Israel also attacked Judah, but they did not conquer them.

How did God deal with the Assyrian army threatening Jerusalem?

It certainly wasn’t Judah’s army that defeated them... God miraculously fought on behalf of Judah when the angel of the LORD killed 185,000 soldiers in the camp of Assyria in one night (2 Kings 19:35).

What does it tell us that God had no mercy for Israel and had mercy towards Judah?

Judah and her kings were more faithful to the Lord during these years, as exemplified by King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-8).

Was it unfair that God did not show mercy to Israel?

If one deserves leniency, then leniency is a matter of justice, not mercy. Mercy is only shown to the guilty

- It is within the wise and loving heart of God to show mercy to whom He will show mercy (Romans 9:15). No one is ever unfair for not showing mercy.

v8-9 – What message did the name of Hosea’s third child convey to Israel?

The name Lo-Ammi means “Not My People.”

- Every call to this unfortunately named child reminded Hosea and everyone else that the people of Israel had pushed away the Lord God, and should no longer be considered His people.

Since Gomer did not give up her prostitution, what might have been the irony in the name Lo-Ammi?

Perhaps this son really was not the son of Hosea, but of another man.

- The message God had to deliver to Israel through Hosea was hard enough, but God also made Hosea have to live it.

Was God declaring Israel to not be His people a sentence or a penalty for their unfaithfulness?

It was more of a simple stating of fact. It wasn’t as if the people really wanted to be the people of God. Instead, the people of Israel rejected God, and here the LORD simply recognized that fact.

- He would not play “let’s pretend”: “You pretend to be My people and I will pretend to be your God.” The time for those games was over.

v10 – What encouragement would there be for Israel?

Though God promised judgment, the days of judgment won’t last forever. After judgment, there will come a time of prosperity, increase, and blessing.

- One day Israel will return to the LORD, and once again be called sons of the living God.

How would Israel be as the sand of the sea?

God would bless Israel even in the “First Diaspora” where ever they go as exiles from the land of Israel following the Assyrian and later the Babylonian invasions.

Josephus (Jewish historian): by his lifetime, the population of Israel had expanded so greatly in the Parthian Empire that they were too numerous to count.

v11 – What is promised here?

God promised a restoration so complete that the division caused by the civil war of Rehoboam and Jeroboam I — a division that stood for 170 years — would one day be erased.

When will the promise of restoration be fulfilled?

After the Babylonian exile, all the tribes reunited in the land of Israel.

- **After the Assyrian invasion:** Many of the Jews who remained in the land after the Assyrian conquest reunited with Judah in the south (2 Chronicles 34:6–9).
- **After the Babylonian invasion:** Assyria was later conquered by Babylon, who deported the inhabitants of Judah (2 Kings 25:21). The northern tribes would have thus mixed with Judah & Benjamin in Babylon.
 - See v 11: *“they shall come up out of the land”*
- **During Persian rule:** Seventy years later, when King Cyrus allowed the Israelites to return to Israel (Ezra 1), many (from all twelve tribes) returned to Israel to rebuild.
 - Not all of the reunited Jews returned to the land of Israel but migrated to other places (“First Diaspora”)

After the Diaspora: Ultimately this promise would be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom because Israel has been trampled on by the Gentiles since the time of Babylon.

Ezekiel 37:21-22 – Thus says the Lord God: “Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.

What will make the name Jezreel great?

The first child of Hosea and Gomer was named Jezreel as a sign of judgment. But God promised a restoration so complete that Jezreel would once again be a name of greatness, not judgment.

Jeremiah 16:14-15 – behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.

The return from the Diaspora will be more remembered that their deliverance from Egypt.

v2:1 – How is God’s mercy shown to Israel?

The time is coming when God’s redemption of Israel will be complete. The child named Jezreel had his name redeemed, and then the next two children (Lo-Ruhamah, “No Mercy” and Lo-Ammi, “Not My People”) had their names redeemed as well: Israel would once again be regarded as “My People” unto the LORD and “Mercy is shown” unto them.

- What was a sign of judgment would become evidence of redemption.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- Our unfaithfulness grieves God; don’t go there.
- God limits His discipline; but it’s best not to give Him cause.
- God will fulfill His promises, trust in it!