

# GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL PROPHETS AND KINGS GOD THE PURSUER *God Pursues Israel*

As we continue our study, we move from God the Revealer to God the Pursuer. Today's lesson takes us to about 30 years before Assyria's destruction of Israel. Hosea served as one of God's prophets who proclaimed the Word of the LORD to the corrupt and idolatrous Northern Kingdom of Israel during the last decades of its existence. What a time to be serving the LORD! Murder, idolatry, and immorality were rampant in the land, and nobody seemed to be interested in hearing the Word of the LORD! But as always, God's true prophets stood firm!

Hosea's story is a unique one. His undying love for his unfaithful wife is a beautiful portrait of the LORD's undying love for us no matter what we do or how far we stray from Him. In some ways it is hard for us to understand why the LORD would actually call Hosea to marry a woman who would live such an adulterous lifestyle. However, Hosea's God ordained marriage to Gomer, should not be used as a biblical example that it is 'okay' to marry outside our faith.

Hosea's reaction of showing faithful love for the unfaithful Gomer would serve as an Old Testament picture of God's love for Israel even in the midst of their repeatedly choosing a relationship with Baal and the other false gods of Canaan instead of Almighty God. What happened between this faithful prophet and his unfaithful wife is heartbreaking. This sad love story serves as a painful reminder of how our own sin breaks the heart of Almighty God still today.

In the book of Hosea and other Old Testament passages, the imagery of the bride is descriptive of the adulterous people of God. The bride imagery continues over into the New Testament as it pictures the church and her relationship to Christ. The bride belongs to Christ, who is the Bridegroom. God pursues us though we are an unfaithful Bride.

**Read Hosea 1:2-5 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> *When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD."* <sup>3</sup> *So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.* <sup>4</sup> *And the LORD said to him, "Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel."* <sup>5</sup> *And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel."*

Few events in the Bible have been debated as strongly as Hosea's marriage. The command for a prophet of God to actually marry a harlot or whore is so startling that Bible interpreters sometimes feel inclined to offer

“explanations.” Some suggest that Hosea’s love story is an allegory meaning the characters are fictional instead of being a real life event. I personally believe Hosea’s story really occurred. His love and heartbreak for his unfaithful wife was real. Others like to debate ‘when’ Gomer became a prostitute – was it before or after the marriage. There seem to be good points on both sides but this is really irrelevant. What is relevant is Hosea loved Gomer – she was unfaithful and he continued to love her anyway picturing not only how God loved the unfaithful Israel but how our Bridegroom loves us – loved us to the point of dying for us!

The prophet Hosea named his first son Jezreel meaning ‘God scatters.’ The LORD gave Hosea the reason for choosing this name: *I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.* Jehu was the Israelite king anointed by Elisha the prophet. I always enjoyed the story of how Jehu killed the wicked Queen Jezebel but in reality Jehu himself was himself a bloodthirsty king. He was so fanatical to purge the land of King Ahab's evil descendants that he murdered far more people than the LORD commanded, including Ahaziah King of Judah and 42 of his relatives. The naming of Hosea’s son, Jezreel was a prophecy regarding what was soon to happen to the house of Jehu. Jehu's dynasty would be punished in the Valley of Jezreel, the very place where Jehu had carried out the massacre of Ahab's family. God says He will *break the bow of Israel*, God’s promise to put an end to Israel as an independent kingdom came true 25 years later when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom and carried the people into captivity.

Yes, Jehu shed blood at Jezreel but he has not been alone in that effort. Throughout history, the Valley of Jezreel has been a major battlefield of nations. It will be the location of the final battle to end all battles known as Armageddon.

**Read Hosea 1:6-9 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all.”* <sup>7</sup> *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.”* <sup>8</sup> *When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son.* <sup>9</sup> *And the LORD said, “Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.”*

Hosea doesn't tell us whether these last two were his own blood children or not. Since his wife continually lived the adulterous lifestyle, it is likely he did not know. There was no DNA testing in those days. But, like Jezreel, their names show what harlotry, or forsaking the LORD would cause.

The second child, a daughter was to be named in the Hebrew Lo-ruhamah which the ESV translates as No Mercy – most translators use Not Pitied. One thing about this passage we should remember is that God named this child – not Hosea. The name expressed God’s reaction to the spiritual adultery of Israel. Hosea most certainly must have understood God’s sorrow towards Israel because his relationship with his own daughter was marred by the suspected adultery of his wife. God had loved His people and proved it in many ways, but through Hosea’s prophecy the LORD was warning that He was about to withdraw that love and no longer show mercy. God’s love is unconditional, but our enjoyment of that love is conditional and depends on our faith and obedience. **Deuteronomy 7:9-10 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> *Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who*

*keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,<sup>10</sup> and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face.*

God would allow the Assyrians to swallow up the Northern Kingdom. However, in verse 7, we see Hosea's prophecy expanding to cover the Southern Kingdom of Judah which He would protect from the invading Assyrians. Last week, we studied God's miraculous protection of Judah under the leadership of King Hezekiah who had repented and led the nation into a revival. As we think of how our own nation has strayed so far from the LORD in our lifetimes, let's pray the psalmist's prayer. **Psalm 85:6 (ESV)**<sup>6</sup> *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?*

When the third child of Gomer was born, Hosea knew the child was not his own blood. The LORD named the child Not My People – in the Hebrew Lo-Ammi. God through the life of His prophet Hosea made His relationship plain with the children of Israel – *you are not my people, and I am not your God.*

God promises He loves us forever. He makes this clear in several 'I will' statements.

**Read Hosea 2:14-15 (ESV)**<sup>14</sup> *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.<sup>15</sup> And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.*

**I will allure** – God does not force people to love Him. Instead, He allures or woos them as a lover woos his beloved. Just as He led His beloved through the wilderness when they came out of Egypt, so God will meet His beloved in the wilderness in the last days and lead her into her land and her glorious kingdom.

**I will give** – The Lord promises a return to their land and a restoration of their prosperity. The Valley of Achor (trouble) was the place where Achan stole from God and brought shameful defeat to Israel's army under Joshua's leadership. The valley is promised to become a *door of hope* through which Israel will enter into a new life.

**Read Hosea 2:17 (ESV)**<sup>17</sup> *For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.*

**I will remove** – God declares an end to idolatry among His people. They would have a new vocabulary and the "baals" would never be named again. **Philippians 2:10 (ESV)**<sup>10</sup> *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

**Read Hosea 2:19-20 (ESV)**<sup>19</sup> *And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.<sup>20</sup> I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.*

***I will betroth*** – God's wooing of Israel will result in her yielding to Him and entering into a covenant relationship that will never end.

***Read Hosea 2:21-23 (ESV)*** <sup>21</sup> “*And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth,*” <sup>22</sup> *and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel,* <sup>23</sup> *and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”*

***I will answer*** – *In that day* is an expression which refers to the last days as they pertain to the nation Israel, the Great Tribulation period, and the coming of Christ to set up His Kingdom on earth. This is Hosea’s prophecy picture of a restored universe where sin and death no longer reign

***I will sow*** – Hosea had named his son Jezreel meaning God scatters. Now instead of scattering His children we see the picture of God sowing His children in their land the way a farmer sows seed. ***Psalm 126:6 (ESV)*** <sup>6</sup> *He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.*

Recall Hosea’s daughter and second son (Lo-ruhamah – No Mercy and Lo-Ammi – Not My People). In the Hebrew, changing both of these names to the opposite meaning was done by dropping the “Lo” at the beginning of each name. God promised to one day change their names to Mercy and My People. In scripture a change of names is often evidence of God’s gracious working in people's lives. Abram became Abraham, and Sarai was renamed Sarah. Simon became Peter, and Saul of Tarsus became known as Paul.

God purchases us out of slavery.

***Read Hosea 3:1-5 (ESV)*** <sup>1</sup> *And the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel...”* <sup>2</sup> *So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and... barley.* <sup>3</sup> *And I said to her, “You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you.”* <sup>4</sup> *For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods.* <sup>5</sup> *Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.*

Hosea went after his straying wife who was living in adultery and brought her home picturing the way Israel had continually treated the LORD. Hosea purchased her for 15 pieces of silver and about ten bushels of barley. The LORD paid the price to purchase us. ***1 Peter 1:18-19 (ESV)*** <sup>18</sup> *...you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,* <sup>19</sup> *but with the precious blood of Christ...* This is Hosea's message: Return to the Lord.... That prayer is good for any sinner, Israelite or Gentile. In our Valley of Trouble, He is the Door of Hope!