

2. Punished and restored

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According to the territory of the kingdom of Israel, the area of Hosea and Gomer's hometown would have been a hill country of Ephraim which was the northern kingdom Israel.

Some 700 years later, another couple in the hill country of northern territory faced the similar situation. It was Joseph and Mary who betrothed to marry. When Joseph found out that Mary was with a Child, he being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But he was informed by a heavenly messenger angel to take Mary as his wife and raised the Baby as his own.

Marriage is sacred, because it was instituted by God Himself at the creation of the mankind. More and more people including born-again Christians don't think that the wedding vows they made at the wedding ceremony seriously. They consider it as another promise that can be broken. Christian divorce rate is as bad as the secular people's. It is now heading for 60% of the married couples either divorced or will go through divorce.

The Book of Hosea is not about a wife going haywire and committing adultery and a godly faithful husband restore her back in their marriage. It is much more than that. God was using Hosea's life as an object lesson and visual guide for the people of Israel and us to see our relationship with Him. What God is telling us through this Book is that idolatry is a spiritual adultery.

Yet our God is incredibly patient and merciful to us. When we cry out to Him for His forgiveness and mercy, as a great loving father, He forgives us and restores us.

Psalm 103:10-12 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

In next two chapters, we find our God punishes His wayward bride Israel, but in His infinite love He restores her back to Himself.

A. UNFAITHFULNESS OF ISRAEL

Hosea 2:2-5 Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; For she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, And her adulteries from between her breasts; 3 Lest I strip her naked And expose her, as in the day she was born, And make her like a wilderness, And set her like a dry land, And slay her with thirst. 4 "I will not have mercy on her children, For they are the children of harlotry. 5 For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my linen, My oil and my drink.'

God paints Israel as an adulterous wife, who is no longer worthy to be compared to a wife. Israel willingly and continuously offered herself to other gods, in the way that a woman offers herself to lovers.

I firmly believe that the one of the main reasons why people do what they do even though they know it is wrong and goes against God is that they don't have fear of Him in their hearts. They come up with excuses and say something like this: "God will forgive me. He is full of grace and mercy." But they still continue their wrong doings. Yes, God is the God who forgives and merciful beyond our expectation. But when the heart of the sinner is callous enough to pursue his or her wrong doings and not repenting, God loves them too much to leave them alone. He will put them into the place where they really have to make a final choice between God and themselves through chastisement.

Please note in v5 that Israel is giving credit of all the good things to their idols instead of God. That is an extremely dangerous place to be in.

God has provided all of the material things for us. He is the One who gave us intelligence. He is the One who gave us a measure of health and strength, and He is the One who provided the job for us. In fact, He is the One who created this earth with a well-stocked earth and oceans and with clean air and clean water and sunshine. And yet we often are ungrateful. We can't sin much worse than that. It is true that we live in a day when terrible crimes are being committed – stealing, lying, murdering – but the worst sins are being committed by the children of God who are ungrateful and ignoring Him.

B. GOD'S JUDGEMENT

Hosea 2:6-8 "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, And wall her in, So that she cannot find her paths. 7 She will chase her lovers, But not overtake them; Yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, For then it was better for me than now.' 8 For she did not know That I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, And multiplied her silver and gold-- Which they prepared for Baal.

To bring Israel to repentance, God promised to set a hedge of thorns on the sides of her path, so that it would hurt whenever Israel went off the correct path, and so the wrong paths would be hard to find.

When God hedges our way with thorns, we don't like it. We sometimes think God is mean and against us when the thorns hurt us and we can't find the wrong paths. But it is really one of the sweetest expressions of God's love to guide our way with thorns and to wall us in for our own protection.

When God allows the passing pleasures of sin to pass, we often then see how good it was to follow the Lord. In a marriage sometimes the grass can seem greener on the other side of the fence even with the best spouse. In our walk with the Lord our idols seem attractive until God exposes them.

Even when Israel went after other gods, the Lord still provided for her. This showed His great and unselfish love to Israel. Even though Israel took what God provided and prepared it for Baal, He still loved them.

I asked you guys to underline "*which they prepared for Baal*" the v8. This principle shows how offensive idolatry really is to God.

God gave to man the trees of the forest and the iron in the ground. He gave man the brains to make an axe and nails from the iron, and the energy to cut down the

tree, the skill to fashion the wood into beams. God gave man the cleverness to make a handle from the wood, and head from the iron, and combine it into an effective hammer and chisel. With those tools, man carves an image that looked like himself and started to worship it as his god even though it could not hear him, could not do anything for him.

Then man took the beams, the nails, and the hammer and he nailed God to the cross – where God willingly stretched out His arms, dying on the cross to take the guilt and penalty man’s sin deserved – and to make an new, restored relationship between God and man possible.

Hosea 2:9-13 “Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time And My new wine in its season, And will take back My wool and My linen, Given to cover her nakedness. 10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, And no one shall deliver her from My hand. 11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, Her feast days, Her New Moons, Her Sabbaths-- All her appointed feasts. 12 “And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, Of which she has said, ‘These are my wages that my lovers have given me.’ So I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field shall eat them. 13 I will punish her For the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, And went after her lovers; But Me she forgot,” says the Lord.

God gave grain to Israel, and she gave what He provided in sacrifice to Baal. So God will take away this provision, and as Israel feels her need and deprivation - perhaps she will turn back to the Lord. God will do whatever it takes to bring the children of God to Himself. It can be a quite ugly and difficult.

During the time of Jeroboam II, Israel enjoyed great prosperity. But Israel used her prosperity for idolatry and the pursuit of ungodly pleasures, so God took away her prosperity and put her under the bondage of Assyria.

I think we can apply the same thing to our own nation. We have become so sophisticated and so ungodly in this God-blessed nation that we think homosexuality is normal in our society. American Judicial Systems don’t like to punish criminals as the laws intended anymore. American Civil Liberty Union fights for them tooth and nail. Many liberal Federal Judges create their own laws instead of interpreting the given laws according to the Constitution of America and the conscience they received from God.

God calls murder and homosexuality sin, and when these things become prevalent in a nation, it is a sign that the nation is going down the tube. God will judge America for sure. It is not a matter of ‘if’, but it is a matter of ‘when’.

C. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD

Hosea 2:14-15 “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her. 15 I will give her her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.

Once Israel has felt the discomfort of her deprivation, then she will listen to the voice of God once again.

'Achor' means "trouble," so the Valley of Achor is the "Valley of Trouble." It was a place of trouble, where Achan's sin was discovered and judged from Joshua 7:26. God's restoration is so great that He will transform the "Valley of Trouble" into a door of hope.

When Israel is restored, the passing pleasures of sin are forgotten and the true pleasures of God are restored.

Hosea 2:16-20 "And it shall be, in that day," Says the Lord, "That you will call Me 'My Husband,' And no longer call Me 'My Master,' 17 For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more. 18 In that day I will make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, With the birds of the air, And with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely. 19 "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; 20 I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the Lord.

God looks forward to the day when relationship is genuinely restored with His people. God is not satisfied with a fear-based, obedience-focused relationship with His people where they think of Him primarily as Master. He wants a relationship where they thought of Him primarily as Husband.

Hosea 2:21-23 "It shall come to pass in that day That I will answer," says the Lord; "I will answer the heavens, And they shall answer the earth. 22 The earth shall answer With grain, With new wine, And with oil; They shall answer Jezreel. 23 Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'"

As our God restores the relationship between God and us, our hearts beat in rhythm to His, and we want what He wants. This is the same principle Jesus taught in John 15:7.

John 15:7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

When relationship is where it is supposed to be, God abundantly provides. This is the same principle Jesus taught in Matthew 6:33.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

The name "Jezreel" means "Scattered," and was used in a negative sense as in Hosea 1:4-5. But it was also the word used to describe the good scattering of seed, "Sowing." Here, the Lord promises glorious redemption of the name Jezreel, which was first given as a sober reminder of scattering in judgment. Now it becomes a prophecy of the promise, "I will sow her for Myself in the earth." God will restore His people to abundance and blessing. Scattering will be transformed into sowing.

Which one of the pagan gods of the nations ever wanted the love of their followers? Which of them ever asked, "Do you love me?" False gods don't want our love, they want our fear, our obedience, our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. But the true God, the living God, isn't satisfied with just our fear, our obedience, or even with our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. He wants our love and freely chosen relationship with Him. If we miss this, we miss the heart of God's work in us and for us.

We see complete restoration. All three of Hosea's children, named as marks of judgment, now have their names restored and made into marks of mercy, grace, and restoration. God is that good!

D. TURNING BACK TO THE LORD

Hosea 3:1-5 Then the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans." 2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. 3 And I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man--so, too, will I be toward you." 4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. 5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.

God directs Hosea to go back to his wife, even though she is committing adultery. It isn't in the past. It is in the present. Yet he is commanded to go back to her and to love her. Why did God command Hosea to go back to his still-unfaithful wife? Not only for the sake of Hosea and his wife Gomer, but also so that they would become a living lesson of the Lord's relationship with His people. They were still steeped in spiritual adultery, yet the Lord still loved them.

Hosea didn't really need to "buy" His own wife. She was his wife! But as a display of love and commitment, he goes the "extra mile," beyond what is expected or even reasonable. Hosea also showed her: "I can give you what the others can not and will not."

The point of paying Gomer wasn't just to get her to give up her trade as a prostitute. It was to bring her into relationship with Hosea, her husband. Relationship and living together was the goal as Christ paid the ransom for us with His own sacrifice. Jesus did far more than what Hosea did.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Without the fear of God we, too, will walk away from Him just like any other backslider.

It is a good thing to have the fear of God as well as the love for Him in our hearts.

2) God wants our love and freely chosen relationship with Him. If we miss this, we miss the heart of God's work in us and for us.