

## II. *The Gospel According to Hosea*

14-Dec-03            Hosea 1:2-2:1; 3:1-5   Bentley Chapters 2&5

*Theme:* Hosea's marriage to an unfaithful wife pictures God's relationship with His people; Hosea's action in redeeming his wife from slavery demonstrates God's love for His people through Jesus Christ.

*Key Verses:* Hosea 1:10-2:1 – <sup>10</sup>Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.' <sup>11</sup>Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel! <sup>1</sup>Say to your brethren, 'My people,' and to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.'

### Review

Last week we began our study of the Hosea with a historical background into the life and times of Hosea. Remember, Hosea is a prophet of God in the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, serving the northern kingdom of Israel, also called Samaria after its capital city, or Ephraim after its chief tribe. At the start of Hosea's ministry, the kingdom of Israel is nearing the end of a "golden age" – an age of peace and prosperity under the long reign of King Jeroboam II. It was a time of ease, a time of material prosperity, a time of religious laxity. The true worship of Yahweh was corrupt, and fertility shrines were common throughout the land. In many ways, 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC Israel could be considered a "post-Christian" society – a culture which had "matured" beyond its religious roots and was no longer in fellowship with God but was constantly pursuing other gods. In many ways, the culture of that day was not significantly different than our own.

And yet, that society was fragile and balanced on the edge of a knife. After the death of Jeroboam II, the country fell apart. They had six kings in 30 years, four of them the assassins who killed their predecessors. The "Pax Jeroboam" was over. Assyria was looming on the horizon like a ravenous wolf, gobbling up chunks of territory. After a half-century of prosperity, 30 years of political instability ended in 722 BC when Samaria fell and the northern kingdom of Israel was no more.

And so Hosea comes to remind the people of Samaria, and the people of our own day, that God is a jealous Husband and He does not take the infidelity of His people lightly. Hosea calls Israel to repent and return to God, return to their Husband, return to their Father. The overarching theme of Hosea can be summarized simply as: Return to your loving Husband. Hosea is a wake-up call for the modern church, a return to the basics: of loving God, of worshiping Him correctly, of standing firm against the culture of the world that strives to either assimilate us or eliminate us. "Be like us," they say. "Do what we do. Water down your principles, so that you are unrecognizable from the world. And if you don't, then we will drive you out. No prayer in school; no Ten Commandments; no Creationism; no references to God at all – Christians and the Christian God are no longer welcome here." And so it goes. Hosea teaches us that we need to stand firm as Christians living in a post-Christian world.

## Minor Prophets: Hosea

### Introduction

Today, we are going to look at two related passages in Hosea: 1:2-2:1 and 3:1-5. These are the two biographical sections of Hosea. But as we will see, they are much more than biographical; they are a representation of the good news of the Gospel. The Gospel is that all mankind are sinners, separated from God, deserving judgment and death for our sins; but God loved us with such a great love that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die in our place, taking upon Himself the judgment for our sins, to reconcile sinners to God and give them eternal life. This is the call to return to our loving Husband. James Boice calls Hosea “the second greatest story in the Bible,” after, of course, the story of Jesus Christ. In fact, Boice calls Hosea 3 “the greatest chapter in the Bible, because it portrays the greatest story in the Bible—the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for His people—in the most concise and poignant form to be found anywhere.” This is the Gospel message, and today we are going to study the Gospel According to Hosea.

### Exposition

As we begin in chapter 1, we will be focusing on the four people in Hosea’s life: his wife Gomer and the three children that Gomer bears. As we will see, each one of these figures teaches us something important about ourselves and about our God.

#### **A. Unfaithfulness (1:2-9)**

##### *1. Gomer (1:2-3)*

What an amazing command God gives to Hosea. He is to “go, take yourself a wife of harlotry.” Obviously, this was not Hosea’s first choice! But unlike Jonah who ran in the opposite direction, we see that Hosea is faithful to the Lord’s command, and he marries Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim.

*Boice:* God said to Hosea, “I want you to marry a woman who is going to prove unfaithful to you but to whom you are nevertheless going to be faithful. You will love her, but she will disgrace your love. I am asking you to do this because we are to present a pageant to Israel by your marriage. It is going to be symbolic, an object lesson. You are going to play the part of God. The woman is going to play the part of My people. The reason she is going to run away and be unfaithful is that this is the way My people act in the spiritual marriage that I have established with them. You are going to be faithful, because I am faithful to Israel even though she dishonors My name.”

*Boice:* Some commentators have felt that Hosea married one of the temple prostitutes. No doubt Hosea married a woman who was pure at the time— though he knew the outcome of God’s prediction. It has been objected by some that it is utterly inconceivable that God should ask one of His children, Hosea, to marry a woman who was to prove unfaithful to Him. These believe that the story must not be a real story. Rather it is something more in the nature of an allegory. The fact is that the story of Hosea’s marriage is told as a real story and rings true.

*Boice:* The point of this enacted parable is this: we are Gomer, and God is Hosea. He married us when we were unclean. He knew that we would prove unfaithful again and again. He knew that we would forsake Him. Still He loved us and purchased us to Himself through Christ’s atonement. If Hosea’s story cannot be real (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.

## Minor Prophets: Hosea

So right here at the start, we have an important reminder: Hosea's marriage to Gomer reminds us who we are. We are undeserving, faithless people. We are sinners. We are fallen. We are unworthy. But more importantly, Hosea's marriage to Gomer reminds us who God is. He is the Faithful One – the One that will pursue His people.

### 2. Jezreel (1:3-5)

Hosea and Gomer have a son. How proud Hosea must have been. Maybe Hosea wanted to name his first-born Beeri, after his father. But God had other plans. God intervenes and names the child for Hosea. "Call his name Jezreel." "Jezreel," sounds like and is in fact a word-play on the name "Israel." "Jezreel" means "God scatters", but that translation can have two interpretations, depending on context. In the context of these verses, it means that God scatters as one may scatter chaff or other undesirable litter, and thus it means "to destroy." On the other hand, it can also mean that God scatters as one may scatter seed in a plowed field for planting, and thus mean "to plant" or "to restore." What a strange name. What an ominous name. For here we have the first of three living oracles of judgment upon God's people. Not exactly the type of name you'd like to have. No one wants to be a "scatter-brain." But God goes on to fill up Jezreel's name with much more serious news.

*Boice:* This was a word of judgment, and God was revealing that He was soon to scatter Israel throughout the world for her unfaithfulness. There are three areas to which this prophecy applies. First, there is a political application to the house of Jehu. And to understand this aspect of the sign of Jezreel, we are going to have to review a little Israelite history and geography.

*Bentley:* Jezreel (1:4) was the name of a well-known town and also a valley in the northern kingdom. The location of Jezreel in a valley-plain between the mountains of Samaria and Galilee, and its close proximity to the valley of Megiddo, mark it as one of the prominent battle sites in Palestine. It was here that Gideon had defeated the Midianites (Jdg. 6:33). It was at Jezreel that King Jehu had inflicted a terrible massacre on the household of Ahab and the former kings of Israel (2 Kings 9). It is true that he killed these people at God's command; in fact, the Lord commended him for his obedience (2 Kings 10:30). If God commended Jehu, why did he tell Hosea that he would "punish the house of Jehu for this massacre"? (Hosea 1:4). It was because Jehu had reveled in this bloodshed. He took great pleasure in killing hundreds of people. While he did destroy the altars of Baal, he allowed the idolatrous worship of Yahweh to continue (2 Kings 10:29-31). Therefore, every time the people of Israel looked at young Jezreel they would have been reminded that he was named after a place of terrible bloodshed.

God had told Jehu that because he had obeyed Him in destroying the house of Ahab that four generations of his line would rule Israel (2 Kings 10:30). And yet, it seems that this dynasty was limited to only four generations (one of the longest in Israel) because of Jehu's sin. The prophecies of 2 Kings 10:30 and Hosea 1:4 were literally fulfilled. Six months after the death of his father, Jeroboam II, King Zechariah was assassinated by Shallum and the line of Jehu was cut off. 2 Kings 15:12 gives us this somber assessment: "This was the word of the Lord which He spoke to Jehu, saying, 'Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.' And so it was."

*Boice:* A second, fuller application of the prophecy is to Israel herself. Hosea is forecasting the scattering of the Jewish people. God's people were going to be defeated in that same Valley of Jezreel where so many had met their end in the past. This was going to take place when the Assyrian army invaded the land with evil intent. Everything came to pass just as God said it

## Minor Prophets: Hosea

would. In 733 BC, an Assyrian army fought its way into this valley and lopped off the northern territories of Israel, marching their inhabitants off to Assyria (see 2 Kings 15:29). This scattering of Israel continued through the destruction of Samaria in 722 BC and then continued through successive disasters and deportations in the south, all the way to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

*Boice:* Third, this is an application to others than the Jewish people. The principle involved here is that when you reject God you get into trouble. God is faithful, but one expression of His faithfulness is that when we run away from Him things will not go well. God guarantees that they will not go well. He will scatter our dreams in our faces.

So, we see that God will scatter or destroy those who sin against him, whether the house of Jehu, the nation of Israel, or you and I if we are unfaithful.

### 3. Lo-Ruhamah (1:6-7)

And so we proceed to child number two – a daughter. But notice something different in the introduction of child number 2 (and 3): the paternity is not mentioned. Some commentators suggest that the paternity of Hosea is implied by parallelism from verse 3, but most commentators agree that this appears to be the first sign of infidelity on Gomer's part. Remember, Hosea is to take for himself both a "wife of harlotry and children of harlotry." It appears as if this is coming to pass.

The daughter's name is Lo-Ruhamah. This is a compound name. The first part, "Lo" means "no" or "not." The second part of the name, "Ruhamah" means "mercy," "pity," or "love." For example, Psalm 103:13 – "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him;" and Psalm 100:5 – "For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations" (cp. also Ps. 136). So, the daughter's name, Lo-Ruhamah, means "not loved," "not pitied," or "no mercy." What a terrible name for a little girl! Can you imagine Hosea showing her off to his friends, "Here is my little girl 'Unloved!'"

*Kidner:* Lo-Ruhamah is an even more terrifying name of judgment than Jezreel. While it is shattering enough to lose a war and a kingdom (Jezreel), it is still more desperate to lose the mercy and compassion of God. In contrast, the house of Judah would continue to feel God's mercy or *Ruhamah* long after Israel was gone. God's *pity on the house of Judah* would take the form of a miraculous deliverance, the rescue of Jerusalem after Hezekiah had spread the Assyrian ultimatum before the Lord (Is. 37:14, 33ff.). There would be no such reprieve for an impenitent Samaria.

*Boice:* God is merciful. He is long-suffering. His love does endure forever. But when we insist on our own way and persevere in our sin, the time comes when the daily mercies of the Lord are withdrawn from us and we are abandoned to our folly so that we might learn to turn back to Him.

### 4. Lo-Ammi (1:8-9)

Our final family figure is another son, also with no paternity mentioned. His name is Lo-Ammi. Again, the "Lo" means "not", and the "Ammi" means "my people." So the third child's name of Lo-Ammi means "not my people." God was rejecting Israel. "Not my people" – that's bad. But it gets even worse: "And I am not your God." "You are not My people, and I will not be your God." This is the opposite statement of what I call the Immanuel Principle: "You will be my people, and I will be your God." It is the heart of the covenant relationship. And here in Hosea, God appears to be annulling the covenant and casting out His faithless people.

## Minor Prophets: Hosea

*Eaton:* Time and time again God had heard the cries of people when they brought trouble upon themselves by their own sinfulness. But there may come a time when God says ‘Enough is enough’. Israel as a nation had reached this point and Judah would reach it a century later.

What a somber warning for us. Let us be diligent not to reach the point in our rejection of God where he says the same of us: “You are not my people, and I am not your God.”

### B. Hope (1:10-2:1)

So, verses 2-9 of Hosea 1 relate the first part of the Gospel: we are sinners – faithless, scattered, unloved, disowned. What a sorry condition! What an absolute honest portrait of the unbeliever – a picture of how we all are before Christ comes into our lives. It is a hopeless situation. Until God gives us hope. And that is what these next three little verses are about: giving us hope to be gathered, loved, and adopted – made into the people of God.

God gives a seven-fold oracle of hope and restoration for the people of God and is couched in words that are reminiscent of God’s past covenantal dealings.

*Based on Eaton:* i) First there is *numerical increase* in v. 10a. God promises that the “the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea.” This promise is framed in words that take us back to the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 13:16; 22:17). (ii) Second, there is a *restoration of relationship* in v. 10b. Those who are Lo-Ammi – not My people – are now called the sons of the living God. They are returned to a covenant relationship with God. (iii) Third, there is a *new unity* in v. 11ab. The two nations – Israel and Judah – will be gathered together, the opposite of the scattering of Jezreel. The prediction would be fulfilled in stages. In the days of Hezekiah (729-687/6) some northerners joined Judah (2 Chr. 30:11, 18). After the Babylonian exile (that is, after 538), the restoration of the nation was regarded as a time of restoration for believers from *both* kingdoms. But a much richer fulfillment came. Paul regarded the coming in of the Gentiles into the Church as an extension of Hosea’s predictions (Rom. 9:24-26).

(iv) Fourth, there is *new headship* in v. 11c. The two nations “shall be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one head.” Harmony arises by the two parts of the kingdom under a single Head. The “head” is a reference to a coming “Son of David” (cp. Hosea 3:5) and remind us of the covenant with David. From our point of view it is a reference to Jesus. (v) Fifth, there is a *new exodus* in v. 11d. The words “and they shall come up out of the land” take us back to the Mosaic covenant when the people of Israel left the bondage of Israel to serve the Lord at Sinai. After Pentecost, the remnant of Israel “went up” out of bondage as never before. In the “latter day glory” all the patterns of “exodus” and “restoration” will be fulfilled again. Even that will not be the end of it, for the day of Jesus’ return will be an “Exodus” from this world of sin and a “going up from the land.”

(vi) Sixth, there is a *new starting point* in v. 11e. A new meaning would be given to the word “Jezreel.” Once it was associated with Jehu’s murderous slaughter, but the blood of Jesus will speak better things than the blood of Jezreel. What God scattered in judgment he would be ready to plant again. (vii) Finally, there are *new names* given in 2:1. The “Lo” portions of the names of second and third children are dropped. They go from “no mercy” to “mercy” and from “not My people” to “My people.” We also have a new name given to us – “Christian” – to show that we are no longer our own but belong to Christ.

## Minor Prophets: Hosea

So, God speaks in covenantal language, taking us back to Abraham, and Moses, and David, to tell the people of God that there was still hope. Why was there still hope? Was it because of anything in them? Could they restore the relationship they had destroyed by their infidelity? Of course not. Notice how all these promises are fulfilled by God and extend to us. Both Paul in Romans 9:24-26 and Peter in 1 Peter 1:9-10 specifically applies these promises given to OT Israel to the NT church composed of both Jews but also Gentiles. Hosea is speaking to us teaching us that our God is a God of hope and restoration. If you are a Christian, then you have been gathered, loved, and adopted into the family of God. You have experienced Jezreel, Ruhamah, and Ammi. We “who once were not a people are now the people of God;” we “who had not obtained mercy now have obtained mercy.”

### C. Redemption (3:1-5)

The final piece of the puzzle we look at today in Hosea 3 shows God’s love in action. This is the heart of the Gospel. We’ve seen the condition we’re in, and the hope of restoration that we have in Christ, but Hosea chapter 3 shows us how we achieve that hope. We are slaves to sin, unable to free ourselves, until a redeemer comes and rescues us from that bondage. Jesus Christ is that Redeemer. Hosea 3 shows us God’s work of redemption—the work by which the Lord Jesus Christ delivered us from sin’s bondage at the cost of His own life—portrayed in Hosea’s purchase of his fallen wife from slavery.

#### 1. Command (3:1)

The events of Hosea chapter 3 take place sometime after the events of chapter 1. Obviously Gomer’s situation has changed. She appears to have fallen into slavery. We have some hint of how this has happened from chapter 2 – it seems Gomer had left Hosea to pursue a promiscuous lifestyle, supported by her many lovers. But eventually, she was abandoned by her rich paramour, and unable to provide for even her basic needs, she had fallen into a state of slavery. It is at this point that the command of God comes to Hosea: “Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery.”

Notice that Hosea is commanded to love his adulterous wife, despite what she has done and how she has treated her husband. For this is how God loves His people. Hosea is commanded to love “just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel.” While the Lord is loving Israel, what is Israel loving? Raisin cakes! In Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:19 we read that God’s people offered cakes of bread to a Babylonian deity called ‘the Queen of Heaven’. It seems therefore, that the Israelites found the sacred raisin cakes that were offered to the Baals more palatable than the spiritual food which the Lord God Almighty gave to them.

What a powerful message this is! *Bentley*: Despite all their bad behavior, God loved them and cared for them. He not only loved them, he wanted them back. God forgave the wickedness of Israel. He showed his love to them once again. There is such a great emphasis on the fact that God loved his people again and again that we can only stand back and marvel at the greatness of His everlasting grace towards ungrateful, undeserving sinners.

#### 2. Action (3:2)

God says, “I will love an unlovable people. I will show ‘Ruhamah’ on ‘Ammi.’” But God’s love is not some kind of mushy, romantic love, it is not simply a feeling or an emotion. No, God’s love is manifested in concrete action. And so the command comes to “Go again and

## Minor Prophets: Hosea

love.” And it is at this point that the command to love is translated into concrete action. How does Hosea “go again and love” Gomer? He redeems her from her slavery. He pays a price.

*Boice:* If any thing is central to the picture of redemption provided by Hosea’s story, it is the matter of cost—redemption by the payment of a price (*cf.* Luke 24:17-21). The matter of cost is an Old Testament idea. There are the words *gaal* (“redeem”) and *goel* (usually translated as “kinsman-redeemer”). We must retain the idea of a price in discussing redemption because the key New Testament texts all refer to it (Mt. 20:28; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19). It is precisely this idea of redemption by payment of a price that is dramatized by the climactic moment in the story of Hosea. Gomer had left Hosea, and she had sunk lower and lower in the social scale of the day. Now, at the last, she became a slave and was sold in the capital city of Samaria. God told Hosea to buy his wife back. Hosea won the slave auction. “Sold to Hosea for fifteen pieces of silver and a bushel and a half of barley.”

*Bentley:* From Ex. 21:32 it is generally concluded that thirty shekels of silver was the price of a slave. Here Hosea pays half of the amount in silver, and the other half in goods.

*Boice:* Does God love like that? Yes, God loves like that! God steps into the marketplace of sin and buys us out of sin’s bondage by the death of Christ (John 3:16). When we see Hosea standing in the market place under orders from God to purchase his wife, who had become an adulteress and a slave, we recognize that this is the measure of God’s love. We are Gomer. We are the slaves sold on the auction block of sin (*cp.* Rom. 5:6, 10). The world bids for us. The world bids fame, wealth, prestige, influence, power—all those things that are the world’s currency. But when all seemed lost God sent the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, into the market place to buy us at the cost of His life.

### 3. *Result (3:3-5)*

Finally, let’s look at the end of the story, and see what requirements are put upon Gomer after her redemption, what requirements God puts upon us after we are redeemed.

*Bentley:* Even though Hosea was kind to Gomer, it did not mean that he was soft towards her. He made certain stipulations with regard to her return (3:3). She was to ‘live with’ him. In other words, she must not live in a loose way as she had done previously. She had to turn her back upon her old way of life. Just as formerly she had left Hosea, so now she was to leave behind her immoral lifestyle. She had to be taught a lesson, and she had to prove to him that she had truly left behind her promiscuous ways. She had to be faithful to Hosea. When we become Christians we are required to turn our backs upon our old, sinful way of life. We are to live a new life — one that is in strict obedience to God and his Word, the Bible (*cp.* 1 John 5:3).

*Bentley:* Hosea went on to compare the testing of his wife with the tribulations that Israel would shortly have to undergo, when the Assyrians came to take them away out of their land (3:4). Just as Gomer was to be deprived of intercourse, so Israel would exist without king or prince. They were going to be captured and deported by the cruel Assyrians. There they would have no rulers of their own. Not only that — the worship of God, represented by the temple sacrifices, was going to be taken away from them, along with sacred stones, ephod and idols.

*Hubbard:* Gomer is to be deprived of intercourse; Israel of *king, prince, sacrifice, pillar, teraphim* and *ephod*. The *pillars* may originally have been memorials to mark the hallowed sites of Israel’s history like Bethel (Gen. 28:18,22; 35:14) and Shechem (Gen. 33:20; Jos. 24:26) but proved akin to the Canaanite columns that symbolized male deities and were forbidden (Dt.

## Minor Prophets: Hosea

16:21-22); the *ephod* may be connected with the high priestly garment which contained the urim and thummim for divination (Ex. 28:4-40; 35:27; 39:2-30), and may have been an image (cf. Ex. 32:4; Jdg. 8:27), a garment used to adorn idols (2 Ki. 23:7), or a figurine akin to *teraphim* (cf. Jdg. 17:3; 18:14), which were usually small terracotta figures of deities thought to grant protection and guidance (1 Sa. 19:13; 21:21; 2 Ki. 23:24; Ez. 16).

*Bentley:* So many things had been used idolatrously that God was going to take them all away from the people. This punishment was all part of God's work in bringing the Israelites back to himself. Assyria was God's way of leading them into the desert (see 2:14).

*Bentley:* Graciously, Hosea emphasizes the 'afterwards'. For God's people the final chapter of the story is incredibly wonderful (3:5). They are going to 'return' and they are going to 'seek'. These are the blessed words that lead to eternal joy and peace. But these wanderers are not only going to find their God; they are going to find their king as well. Hosea says that one day they will have their great King David reigning over them once again. He is referring to great David's greater Son, King Jesus, the one who will 'reign for ever and ever' (Rev. 11:15).

*Eaton:* Through him the people of Israel — restructured and with Gentiles incorporated — would come trembling in repentance and with an eagerness never to fall again.

*Kidner:* What is striking about this prophecy is first that it threatens the very pillars of life as Israel knew it, and then that it interprets the withdrawal of all these cherished things — good, bad and indifferent alike — as ultimate gain.

*Eaton:* The things that Israel lost would be restored to them in Jesus. Jesus would be their king. Jesus would be Israel's sacrifice. Jesus would be their pillar — the One who endlessly reminded them of what God had done for them. Jesus would be their ephod, their Guide, their means of knowing God's will. Jesus would even be their 'image' of God, for he is indeed 'the image of the invisible God'.

So, God loves us, He redeems us, and He requires us to live according to His commands, in order that we may return and seek and fear and live in His goodness forever.

### Conclusion

Hosea 1:2-9 reminds us that we are sinners. We are faithless like Gomer, scattered like Jezreel, unloved like Lo-Ruhamah, and disowned like Lo-Ammi. This is the status of the natural man. It is not a good position to be in.

But God speaks a word of compassion, of hope, and restoration in Hosea 1:10-2:1. God renews His covenant with His people and reverses the curses implied in the names of the three children. God takes His faithless people and makes them faithful. Instead of scattering, He gathers His people (Jezreel again). Instead of being unloved, He now shows mercy (Ruhamah). And instead of disowning them, He uses covenant language to declare them "My people" (Ammi). Gathered, loved, adopted. This was the promise to Israel. And this is the promise for you and me today if you trust in Jesus Christ.

For Jesus Christ is the one who actually accomplishes this reversal. He is the Redeemer, the action figure, the Greater One to whom Hosea chapter 3 points. We were like Gomer, slaves to our sin, until Christ came and redeemed us from under the law and rescued us from slavery. We need a new exodus. Christ is the new Moses to redeem us from our sin. We need a new head, a

## **Minor Prophets: Hosea**

new king. Christ is our greater King David. In Christ, the promises made to Abraham are made real.

*Eaton:* The overall point of the story is the greatness of God's love. God was deeply committed to His people. Just as Hosea knew from the beginning what sort of woman He was getting, so God knows what sort of people He is taking when he takes us, his 'Israel'.

That's why Boice calls Hosea's story the second greatest story in the Bible, because it points to the greatest story in the Bible – the love of God displayed towards sinners through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. It is this love of Christ that enables us to return to our loving Husband. And that's the Gospel according to Hosea.

Next week: Lesson 3 – “A Door of Hope” – Hosea 2:2-23 – Bentley Chapters 3-4

Close in Prayer.