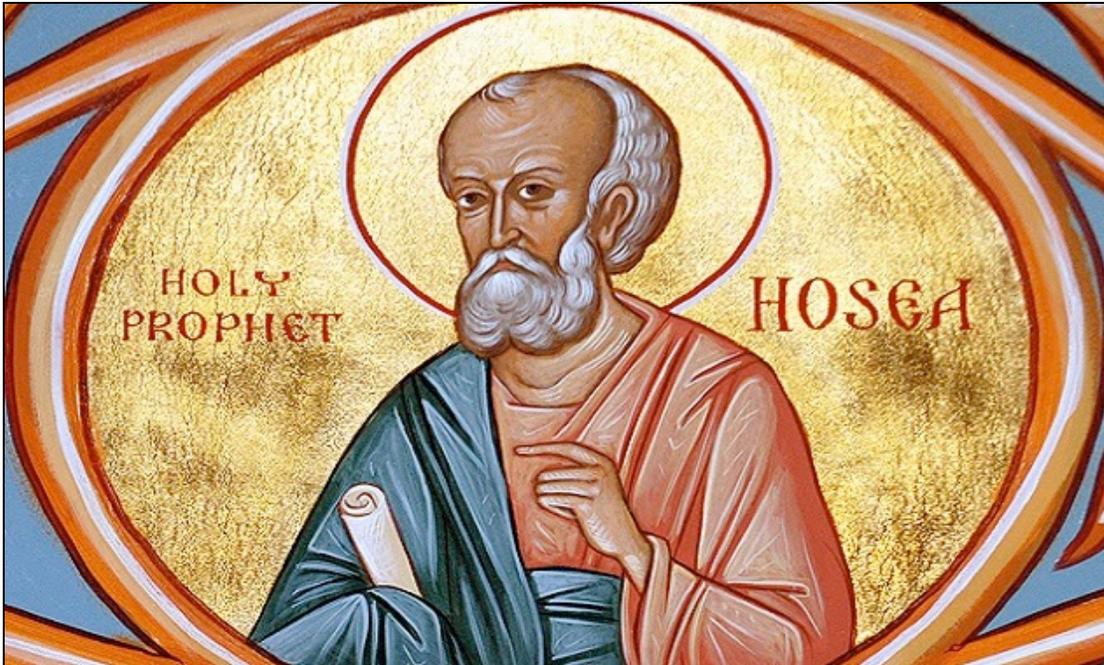


HOSEA 2, 3: THE PROPHET'S COMMISSION



T. M. MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Hosea 2, 3: The Prophet's Commission
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Hosea 2, 3: The Prophet's Commission

Hosea's preparation for ministry continues in chapters 2 and 3, as God provides an overview, with dramatic emphasis, of the message He intends the prophet to bring to the people of Israel.

The nation has turned from God to worship and serve the false gods of paganism. And the people have adopted all the practices those gods sanctioned, practices abominable in the eyes of God. Further, they have despised the grace, goodness, and faithfulness of God by attributing to their false lovers the benefits they enjoyed from Him.

By thus turning away from the Lord, the people have chosen to come under the promised judgment of His covenant (cf. Deut. 28). Israel is not faithful to God, but God will be faithful to His Word. So faithful, in fact, that He promises, when judgment has passed, that He will restore His people to Himself. A day of mercy and covenant renewal is coming, but only after the Lord has disciplined His people and they have turned from their wicked ways.

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We hope you find this study of Hosea instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 An Adulterous People

Week 3, Monday: God's charge against Israel

The nation of Israel was unfaithful to God and His covenant from the beginning. Each successive king made matters worse, building on the rebellion and shame of Jeroboam I and leading the nation to worship false gods and to embrace the lifestyle those pagan deities condoned. All this was done to preserve political power and the perks of rule, although the people were certainly willing and compliant in this rebellion.

Now God's patience had reached its limit. His Word required that He bring judgment against His people, and Hosea needed to be clear about the reasons for God's wrath and what it would entail. Israel was unfaithful to God's covenant, but God would not allow His Word to fail.

Read Hosea 2

Meditate on Hosea 2.1-5

1. Quickly read through Deuteronomy 28. Here God summarizes the blessings and curses of His covenant. Remember: These people had been slaves in Egypt when God, remembering His promise to their forefathers, powerfully and graciously redeemed them and set them free. Summarize: What does God *promise* His redeemed people when they are faithful to Him? What does He *promise* when they fail to obey?
2. God uses the husband/wife metaphor to illustrate His charge against Israel. Why is this a good metaphor? How was Israel's rejection of God and idolatry with pagan deities similar to a woman's being unfaithful to her husband?
3. Meditate on Hebrews 12.3-11. The images of Hosea 2.3 are of utter shame and desolation. Is it unloving of God to threaten such discipline against His "wife"? Explain.
4. Perhaps the greatest sin of the nation of Israel is brought to light in the last part of verse 5. Why would this be such a terrible offense? How many of the blessings we enjoy each day are the result of God's goodness and faithfulness? Do we acknowledge Him for these as we should?
5. The sins of the generations compounded upon themselves, as is suggested in verses 4 and 5. The children of one generation became more wicked than the generation that gave birth to them. How does this lead us to think about the power of sin, as it becomes rooted in a society or culture? Do we see any evidence of this in our day? Must this situation *always* end in judgment?

Summary

When people fail to acknowledge the goodness of God, and to rejoice in and give thanks for His faithfulness and provision, they will turn away from Him and look for other "gods" to worship and serve. The kings, prophets, and priests of Israel led the people into idolatry and spiritual adultery, but the pagan gods to which they turned were really only a mask for the god of political power which Israel's leaders loved above all. That false deity remains afoot in the world today, and the temptation to trust in it is very great. How can you see this, even among the followers of Christ?

Closing Prayer

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,

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Because of Your truth.
Why should the Gentiles say,
“So where *is* their God?”
But our God *is* in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.
Their idols *are* silver and gold,
The work of men’s hands.
They have mouths, but they do not speak;
Eyes they have, but they do not see;
They have ears, but they do not hear;
Noses they have, but they do not smell;
They have hands, but they do not handle;
Feet they have, but they do not walk;
Nor do they mutter through their throat.
Those who make them are like them;
So is everyone who trusts in them.
O Israel, trust in the LORD;
He *is* their help and their shield.

Psalm 115.1-9

Observations, notes, questions:

2 Divine Intervention

Week 3, Tuesday: God will intervene against Israel

God had been patient with the people of Israel, but now His patience had run out. He was coming to judge the nation, and He would send Hosea to reproach and reprove them. At the same time, Hosea will call the people to return to the Lord and be restored in Him when judgment has run its course.

Read Hosea 2

Meditate on Hosea 2.6-8

1. It's interesting to contemplate the verbs God uses in announcing the judgment that is coming upon His people. How should we understand each of the following?
 - "hedge up your way with thorns":
 - "wall her in":
 - "cannot find her paths":
 - "chase" "but not overtake":
 - "seek, but not find":
2. What do these various verbs imply? What is God going to do? What kind of "national mood" would these actions have been likely to bring about? How would you describe the "national mood" of our nation today?
3. In verse 8, God says that His people took the daily blessings He provided for them (recall Deut. 28.1-14) and made them offerings ("prepared") for Baal. What did He mean by that, or what did Israel actually do with God's blessings?
4. How could it be that Israel "did not know" (v. 8) that her daily blessings came from the Lord? Whose fault was that? How does it come about that a people forgets to thank God for His many blessings?
5. According to the last part of verse 7, what would be the effect of God's judgment on Israel? Compare the language of this part of verse 7 with that of the middle of verse 5. How can you tell that Israel's motivation in this is not quite what it should be? How can we tell when our own motivations are of this nature?

Summary

God's judgment does not always come in violent ways. Violence was certainly the last stage of the judgment of God against Israel, but the verbs in verses 6 and 7 suggest a drawn-out process that involved frustration, disappointment, disillusionment, uncertainty, setback, and so forth. In fact, God's judgment can be kicking in even as He continues to bless His people. What does this suggest about the discipline of the Lord, and how should we apply this to ourselves?

Closing Prayer

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And let my cry come to You.
Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble;
Incline Your ear to me;
In the day that I call, answer me speedily.

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For my days are consumed like smoke,
And my bones are burned like a hearth.
My heart is stricken and withered like grass,
So that I forget to eat my bread.
Because of the sound of my groaning
My bones cling to my skin.
I am like a pelican of the wilderness;
I am like an owl of the desert.
I lie awake,
And am like a sparrow alone on the housetop.
My enemies reproach me all day long;
Those who deride me swear an oath against me.
For I have eaten ashes like bread,
And mingled my drink with weeping,
Because of Your indignation and Your wrath;
For You have lifted me up and cast me away.
My days *are* like a shadow that lengthens,
And I wither away like grass.
But You, O LORD, shall endure forever,
And the remembrance of Your name to all generations.

Psalm 102.1-12

Observations, notes, questions:

3 Blessings Withdrawn

Week 3, Wednesday: Judgment reaches as far as sin

Israel had taken all the good gifts of God and devoted them to the false gods of the surrounding pagan nations. They continued in this for many generations, finally provoking the wrath of God, precisely as He had promised. In pronouncing judgment against His people, God announces that His wrath will reach as far as all their sins. He is sovereign, and His people, who refused to acknowledge this with gratitude and praise, will have to learn it the hard way.

Read Hosea 2

Meditate on Hosea 2.9-13

1. How many different aspects of Israel's life would be affected by the judgment of God? What does this reveal to us about the sovereignty of God? About what He is looking for in the life of faith?
2. Israel "forgot" the Lord (v. 13) But, as we shall see, the people claimed to "know" the Lord (cf. Hos. 8.2). How could they "know" the Lord and yet "forget" Him at the same time?
3. Review 1 Kings 12.15-33. At this time in Israel's history, the people were still "worshiping" God. But how can you tell that this probably wasn't going to last? If you'd been an advisor to Jeroboam I, what might you have said to him?
4. The message is clear: *Compromise* with God's Word leads to *capitulation* to false gods, *corruption* of life and culture, and *calamity* by the hands of God's wrath. The calamity doesn't always come right away, and capitulation and corruption can sometimes take a while. But compromise should be easy enough to recognize and redress. How could you tell if you or your church were compromising God's Word in any ways (cf. Acts 17.11)?
5. God's judgment sometimes takes a while, as He begins withdrawing (v. 9) the blessings His people have abused. What might be some warning signs suggesting that you or your church had entered the process of God's judgment?

Summary

We owe everything to God – our lives, our wellbeing, our possessions, work, families, freedoms, daily bread, and everything else. When we take our blessings for granted, we will also begin to take God for granted. This is when we begin to drift from Him into the false gods of our secular age. What would you suggest as an effective way of checking this tendency?

Closing Prayer

As for me, I will call upon God,
And the LORD shall save me.
Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice.
He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me,
For there were many against me.

Psalm 55.16-18

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Observations, notes, questions:

4 Word of Comfort

Week 3, Thursday: God's promise and presence

God's people can despise and reject His covenant, ignore His Word, and rebel against Him. But He can never deny Himself. His is an eternal covenant (Heb. 13.20), and He will never back away from it. Judgment may fall at a particular time on a particular generation of His people, but the promise of mercy and restoration will come with that judgment, providing His people with hope.

Read Hosea 2

Meditate on Hosea 2.14, 15

1. The word "wilderness" in verse 14 intends to cue up memories of Israel's 40-year sojourn toward the land of promise. Why was that sojourn necessary? What happened during that time? What happened after it? How would even the use of this word help to ensure God's people that, though judgment was coming, hope was not lost?
2. Like the people of Numbers 14, Israel in Hosea's day – and for many years prior to that – had repudiated the promises of God and were living a way that seemed right to them (Prov. 14.12). Meditate on Romans 15.4. How did God "comfort" His people and give them hope during the wilderness sojourn? How should any faithful people in Israel expect to be comforted by God during the judgment that was coming upon them? How should we expect to know the comfort of the Lord today?
3. The Valley of Achor was a place fraught with significance for Israel, the very mention of which would send shivers down the spines of people, but also fill them with hope. Meditate on Joshua 7.24-26. What does the word "achor" mean? Note the use of this term in Joshua 15.7. Why would "door of hope" (Hos. 2.15) be an apt way of thinking about this place? It's possible that Isaiah could have been preaching in Judah at the same time Hosea was preaching in Israel. Was Hosea pointing to the preaching of Isaiah by using this term (cf. Is. 65.10)? Can you glean a principle of Biblical interpretation from Hosea's use of this phrase (cf. 1 Cor. 2.12, 13)?
4. Shivers of fear, tears of hope: Thus God intends to manifest His glory among His wayward people, and to woo and bring them back to Himself. What is the glory of God, and why is it appropriate that His people should respond to His glory with these opposite affections?
5. Verse 15 shows us a repentant people, restored to the favor and blessings of the Lord. How would Israel express the return of hope? Of what would that remind her, and why is it important to connect with this event? Should the history of what God has done with His people in the past – both in Scripture and afterwards – have any meaning for believers today? Explain.

Summary

Even in the midst of judgment, the love God has for His people is palpable. He "allures" them, wooing them in the midst of His wrath to rest in His comfort and hope. He renews their perspective and His promises, in order to bring them to repentance and renewal in His covenant. He never stops being God, although we, at times, may act like we are not His people. How does this lead you to sing with rejoicing to the Lord (v. 15)?

Closing Prayer

For Your servant David's sake,
Do not turn away the face of Your Anointed.

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The LORD has sworn *in* truth to David;
He will not turn from it:
“I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.
If your sons will keep My covenant
And My testimony which I shall teach them,
Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forevermore.”
For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired *it* for His dwelling place:
“This *is* My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
I will abundantly bless her provision;
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
I will also clothe her priests with salvation,
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

Psalm 132.10-16

Observations, notes, questions:

5 Restoration!

Week 3, Friday: The day of restoration is coming

Hosea's message, like the message of all the prophets, will sound ominous, threatening, and terrible. But the Word of judgment is an essential part of God's covenant and thus of the message of His preachers. But God's last Word to His people is the Word of hope, the promise of restoration and renewal in the eternal covenant of the Lord. Here, and in the last part of chapter 2 and all of chapter 3, God makes this message clear and dramatic.

Read Hosea 2

Meditate on Hosea 2.16-18

1. Francis Schaeffer was once asked why it is today that, for so many Christians, their practice of faith just doesn't seem *real*. He explained that the reason for this is "While we say we believe one thing, we allow the spirit of the naturalism of the age to creep into our thinking, unrecognized." Israel in Hosea's day had become so compromised in her religion that she referred even to God by the name, *Baal* (v. 16, "My Master" or *Baali*). Baal, as we've seen, was the pagan fertility god and a primary focus of Israel's religion. Here is a classic example of how the surrounding culture can leach into true religion without being recognized. The forms and terms of false religion are brought into the practice of true religion, corrupting and transforming the latter, while we remain largely unaware of what we're doing. Is there a warning here for today's churches?
2. What is implied by the promise that Israel will once again refer to God as "My Husband"?
3. Notice in verse 17, that God Himself will do a work in His people in order to bring them to restoration. He is going to work on their minds (inner persons) and their speech (outer person), so that they no longer are rebelling against Him. Meditate on Philippians 2.12, 13. How do what God does and what He requires of us work together to bring about restoration?
4. God's covenant with His people is obviously powerful to work in their souls and lives. But according to verse 18, how large is the scope of God's covenant? Meditate on Psalm 119.89-91. What does it mean to say that the creation "serves" God? This chapter began with us seeing the scope of God's sovereignty in judgment (vv. 1-12). How does that compare with how this chapter is ending?
5. Verse 18 relies on several of the psalms for its power. Meditate on Psalms 8, 23, and 46. What does this suggest about the role of the psalms in the life of faith and the hope of restoration?

Summary

God's covenant with His people is as wide as all of life and creation. As His judgment would fall upon Israel in a comprehensive manner, so His covenant would be renewed with them in just the same way. The writer of Hebrews refers to our possessing "so great a salvation" (Heb. 2.3). How was Israel guilty of "neglecting" so great a salvation? How can we tell when we are?

Closing Prayer

You visit the earth and water it,
You greatly enrich it;
The river of God is full of water;
You provide their grain,
For so You have prepared it.

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You water its ridges abundantly,
You settle its furrows;
You make it soft with showers,
You bless its growth.
You crown the year with Your goodness,
And Your paths drip *with* abundance.
They drop *on* the pastures of the wilderness,
And the little hills rejoice on every side.
The pastures are clothed with flocks;
The valleys also are covered with grain;
They shout for joy, they also sing.

Psalm 65.9-13

Observations, notes, questions:

6 Restoration – Full and Eternal

Week 3, Saturday: The promised restoration is forever

In the first part of this restoration promise, God focuses on the immediate result of His wooing and comforting His people. Here the promise takes an eternal turn, as the covenant is extended far beyond Hosea's time and even the nation of Israel, to a full and eternal restoration yet to come.

Read Hosea 2

Meditate on Hosea 2.19-23

1. The word “forever” (v. 19) ratchets the promised restoration to a new plan and fullness. The language of verse 19 sounds a lot like the language of Isaiah 9.6, 7. The “marriage” metaphor is extended and enlarged, toward a horizon more distant than that of Old Testament Israel. What promise does the Lord attach to this period (v. 20; cf. Jer. 31.31-34)? How does this relate to what Jesus prayed about in John 17.3?
2. How could Israel, as we have seen her, be made a bride for the Lord in “righteousness and justice” and “lovingkindness and mercy” and “faithfulness”? Meditate on Deuteronomy 30.1-10 and Ezekiel 36.26, 27 in considering your answer.
3. Israel came under judgment for rejecting God and the worldview and way of life encoded in His Law. Does it seem to you that, in this coming restoration, Israel's obedience to God's Law will be restored as well? Explain.
4. How many different ways does God intend to bring creation and culture into this restored covenant relationship with His people (vv. 21, 22)? How does this help us to think about our calling within this “forever” (Heb. 13.20) covenant?
5. Verse 23 is deliberately open-ended. While it clearly refers to Israel and God's plan to restore His people to Himself again, it also encourages us to think further than ethnic Israel. How can you see that Peter understood this verse in that way (1 Pet. 2.9, 10)? Summarize the scope and character of the “forever” or “new” (Jer. 31.31-34) covenant God is promising here.

Summary

The restoration God promises to His people is breathtaking in its scope and character. As hard as His judgment will be, greater and more glorious will be the restoration He brings to those who receive the comfort of His Word and wait patiently on Him. How does Hosea lead us to think about the “so great a salvation” God has bestowed upon us in His new and forever covenant?

Closing Prayer

Because Your lovingkindness *is* better than life,
My lips shall praise You.
Thus I will bless You while I live;
I will lift up my hands in Your name.
My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth shall praise *You* with joyful lips.
When I remember You on my bed,

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I meditate on You in the *night* watches.
Because You have been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.
My soul follows close behind You;
Your right hand upholds me.

Psalm 63.3-8

Observations, notes, questions:

7 Restoration Dramatized

Week 3, Sunday: Hosea's marriage and God's

What Hosea is instructed to do in these verses must have been most uncommon. Adultery and fornication were so common in Israel that probably no one thought Gomer's wandering worthy of note. Or was Hosea's persisting in making his marriage "work" as God intended, so extraordinary in his day, that people would have wondered about why he pursued his wayward wife? Either way, the message was larger than Hosea's marriage, though he would know the blessings of God there as well.

Read Hosea 3

Meditate on Hosea 3.1-5

1. Gomer, Hosea's wife, must have fallen into adultery, since she seems to have abandoned Hosea and the children and taken up with another man. Put yourself in Hosea's shoes, who has by this time begun to understand the nature of God's relationship with Israel. How do you suppose he must have felt upon hearing God's command in verse 1?
2. Hosea's bringing Gomer back into his home would have been a demonstration of faithfulness and love to shame even the crudest Israelite. How would the example of Hosea's obedient love complement the message He was preaching to the people of his day?
3. Notice that Hosea had to pay to recover his wayward wife (v. 2). What does this suggest about the condition Gomer must have been in when he finally found her? Does this act of redemption give Hosea the right to insist that Gomer live with him faithfully (v. 3)? Explain. What does he promise her?
4. To what period of Israel's history does verse 4 refer? In the light of God's promised restoration, how do you think this absence of king, prince, temple, ceremonies, or priest would have made faithful Israelites feel?
5. In verse 5, the word "afterward" and the phrase "in the latter days" (Hebrew: *achar, acharith hayomim*) would have cued up, at least for people in Judah, sermons by both Isaiah and Micah (cf. Is. 2.1ff and Mic. 4.1ff). What time period is referred to here? Who is "David" promised by the Lord to rule as "their king"? What will be the response of the people in those days?

Summary

Hosea's preparation comes to an end (chapters 1-3). Both by his life and his words he will bear powerful witness to God's covenant relationship with Israel, and how God is planning to unfold that covenant in the days to come and for the future. What can we learn from Hosea's preparation about what it means to be a witness for the Lord?

Closing Prayer

O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, make haste to help me!
Let them be confounded *and* consumed
Who are adversaries of my life;
Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonor
Who seek my hurt.
But I will hope continually,

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And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

Psalm 71.12-16

Observations, notes, questions:

Questions for discussion

1. Based on what we've seen in Hosea 1-3, how would you define God's covenant? What is it? How broad is it? Of what character? What is its purpose, and what is its standing today?
2. We've said that God must be faithful to His Word. That includes blessing as well as discipline. What is the role of discipline in God's covenant relationship with His people? What forms might we expect that to take in our day? Under what circumstances should we expect God to initiate discipline against His people today?
3. Israel claimed to "know" the Lord, but the Lord said they had forgotten Him. How could both of these be true?
4. Explain the use of the marriage metaphor throughout these chapters. In the New Testament the Lord uses this same image for Christ and His Church. Why?
5. What's the most important idea or lesson you take away from Hosea 2 and 3?

Glory to Glory

As we look into the mirror of Scripture, we want to see God's glory and our own condition before Him. Then, yielding to the Spirit to teach, convict, and transform us, we can grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Did you see yourself in any ways in Hosea 2 and 3?

What do you learn about God and His glory from these two chapters?

What new directions or "next steps" is the Spirit leading you to take?

Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.