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Hosea Chapter 2

So last week we started a new study in the book of Hosea and I gave you the background and introduction and we also made our way through the entire first chapter. And so tonight we're going to be in chapter 2 and again this is the story about a prophet and a prostitute. And here God has instructed Hosea to marry a woman who God knows will be an unfaithful wife to Hosea.

And if we would question God's motive, He doesn't leave us with no answer in this particular case. God doesn't always let us in on the reason why He does certain things, but in this case, He does.

In verse 2 of chapter one we're told this,

2 When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry And children of harlotry,

And then He gives Hosea the reason. He says,

For the land has committed great harlotry By departing from the Lord."

And so God is going to use the life of Hosea and his marriage to Gomer and her unfaithfulness as a wife, as a picture or a symbol if you will, of Israel's relationship to God during this time period.

Hosea, in this story will represent God and Gomer, his wife will represent Israel.

And so God is represented by the faithful husband, and Israel is represented by the harlot or prostitute or unfaithful wife.

Now, on many occasions in the New Testament, the institution of marriage was used to describe the spiritual relationship between Jesus and the church. And in many places in the New Testament, the church is referred to as the bride of Christ.

Ephesians chapter 5 is one of those places. And here's what the Apostle Paul writes in verse 25.

Ephesians 5:25, Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

And here, of course Christ represents the bride groom and the church represents the bride.

Now, to fully understand this relationship, we have to also understand how a marriage was consummated during Biblical times.

Back in Jesus day, there was a period of time between what we would call the engagement period and the actual marriage ceremony, which is called the betrothal period. In other words, the betrothal period was the time between the formal agreement to marry and the actual marriage.

Now, legally they were considered to be married. In other words, when that formal commitment was made it was done deal. No such thing as cold feet, or backing out for no reason. Unless one of the parties was unfaithful or maybe some new information, not known about previously came to light,

the commitment to marry someone was as binding as the marriage ceremony itself.

But now physically they lived apart, at least for a time. And that time often would last for a year or so.

And the delay, if you will, was to give the husband time to prepare physically and monetarily for his bride to come live with him. Often during this time the groom would return to the home of his parents, and they would build on to their existing house a room for the couple to live in. And when that was prepared, then he would return to his bride and they would have a formal ceremony and celebration and then he would take her home where their marriage would be consummated.

And of course the bride's responsibility during this betrothal period was just to be faithful.

2 Corinthians 11:2, For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

And by the way, the church, who is the bride of Christ, is living in the betrothal period.

The bridegroom has gone away and we're awaiting His return. And in John chapter 14, Jesus tells us where He has gone.

John 14:2, In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

And so Christ after His death and resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven and He's there now sitting at the right hand of the Father awaiting the time in which He will return to get His bride.

And that will happen, of course, when Jesus comes back for His church at the rapture, and at that time, we will be caught up, or snatched out of this world, and we rise to meet Jesus in the air and the "wedding ceremony" or the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" will take place and we'll forever be with the Lord.

And so as members of the church, we're in the betrothal period and our responsibility is to remain faithful.

But now, what about the Old Testament?

Well, in the Old Testament, marriage was just as sacred. And marriage in the Old Testament was just the same when it came to men and women. It was meant to be between one man and one woman. But the picture of marriage between God and His children was different.

This was before the church. During the church age the idea of marriage is between Jesus and the church. But in the Old Testament, it was between God and Israel. And there are several scriptures that speak to that end.

Jeremiah 3:14, "Return, O backsliding children," says the Lord; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Isaiah 54:6 For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused," Says your God.

And so when God refers to marriage in the Old Testament in a spiritual sense, it's between God, and Israel and Judah and the Jewish people.

And so this would have been the spiritual relationship in the book of Hosea.

Hosea is representing the love and mercy and pursuing grace of God; and Gomer, the unfaithful wife, is representing the people of Israel.

And so in chapter one, we learned how God had instructed Hosea to marry Gomer.

Now, like I explained last week, when Hosea first formerly committed to marry Gomer, I don't believe he knew what she was going to become. Some Bible teachers teach that different and that's understandable, but I personally don't believe Hosea knew. And truth is, she probably didn't know. But God knew, because God knows all things. And just the same; we don't know what's going to happen with people, or even with ourselves at some point and time in the future, but God knows.

And God knew even before He ever created this world what kind of persons we would be. He knew every sin we would ever commit, before He ever chose to save us. Even before He lay down His life on the cross of Calvary, He knew how the very people he would die for, would beat Him and torture Him and eventually murder Him. But He hung there voluntarily because He loved us that much.

And so God instructs Hosea to marry Gomer knowing beforehand what she's going to do.

Also in chapter one we learn about the children who would be born to Gomer his wife.

Jezreel was the name of their first born son; and his name means "God will scatter." And the message that God is sending through this child and his name is that God is going to scatter the northern kingdom. And we know from the history that we're given back 2 Kings and in other places,

that they would be taken captive, and that they would be scattered by the Assyrians. And that actually began in 733 BC and by 721 BC. they had been completely taken over as a nation.

And then Gomer conceived again and this time it was a baby girl and God named her Lo-Ruhamah, which meant "not loved" or "no mercy". And the message this time from God to Israel was this; "I will no longer have mercy on you."

In other words, you've crossed that imaginary line and judgment is going to come.

And by the way, chances are, this little girl was probably conceived by another man other than Hosea, and was therefore illegitimate.

And then Gomer got pregnant again and this time she had another son. And God named him Lo-Ammi, which means "not my people" or "not my child".

And this child was definitely illegitimate. And so God here, in no uncertain terms is telling the nation Israel, **"You're not my people, and I will not be your God."**

And He's using this illegitimate child as an illustration of Israel's relationship to Him.

Now, again, like I told you last week, this promise that Israel would not be God's people or receive mercy, this judgement would not last forever. This was a judgment that would come in the near future as a consequence of their unfaithfulness, and though it would be harsh, and though it would last for a very long time, it would not be permanent.

And in the last two verses of chapter 1, we have four promises to Israel from God. He says that they will experience a great increase in population. He says, that the nation will experience a great revival and great turning to

God. And then thirdly, He says that the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom will be reunited and all twelve of the tribes of Israel will once again form a single nation. And then fourthly that they will appoint for themselves one head, who will of course be the Messiah.

And in chapter 2 and verse 1, which really should go with chapter one, God says.

1 Say to your brethren, ‘My people,’ And to your sisters, ‘Mercy is shown.’

In other words, those names of derision and difficulty will one day be turned around and they will take on a positive connotation.

And what God is saying to the nation of Israel is that there’s coming a day, when God once again is going to say, “You are My people” and I will have mercy on you, and I’m not through with you. And God as we know is not through with the nation Israel.

He will restore them one day and He will redeem at least a remnant in the end.

And then in verse 2 He says,

2 “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.

Now, this is an interesting statement that God is making through Hosea for the northern kingdom of Israel. Because you'll notice He says, “Bring charges against your mother or Plead with your mother,” which is

speaking of Israel, “that she would put away her harlotry, lest I bring about all of these judgments.”

Well, God has already said He's going to do that. He's already said the marriage has been broken and He's going to bring judgment.

And so why would God now speak in a way as to say, “Plead with your mother to repent, lest these things happen.”? Because He already knows they're going to happen. He knows that judgment is right around the corner. And so why is He pleading?

Well, because there are still people in the nation of Israel, individuals that is, who are still willing to turn back to Him. You have to understand that although God deals with Israel on a community level and He speaks to them as a nation. He also speaks to them as individuals. And many, many people who were in the northern kingdom of Israel would eventually heed that message.

And though it wouldn't be the majority, there would be a remnant. And some would actually pick up and move into the southern kingdom because they believed that there was still a certain amount of faithfulness still going on there. And so they moved their families, they abandoned their family property that was given to them by inheritance, and they went south to go live in the land of Judah, because they knew that Israel had gone too far.

And this is what happens many times, even though God continues to speak to Israel as a nation, there are still individual lives to be saved. And He never stops giving those who are willing to repent the opportunity.

And then He says,

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.’

In other words, if you don't heed God's warning, not only is judgment going to come upon you, but it will also come upon your children, because you've given your false gods and your idols all this credit for your prosperity.

In other words, all the things I've blessed you with, you've said have come from these false gods.

And then in verse 6 he says,

6 “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.’

So God says, I'm not going to sit by idly, I'm going to put up some roadblocks and put some obstructions in your way, and I'm going to cut off your supply until you come to your senses.

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.

The reason Israel was so unfaithful is because the people didn't recognize God as the source of their prosperity. And how familiar does that sound? It seems sometimes, that the more successful a person is, the more they tend to believe they're somehow responsible for their own prosperity.

And it's only when that source is taken away, that they start to question that lie of Satan. When things are going real well, that's when people tend to drift away from God. It's only when trouble comes, or when sickness comes, or when death comes along, that we draw closer to God.

And that was the case here with Israel. They were living in the good times. The Assyrians hadn't come on the scene yet. The people were doing okay living in the world and indulging in their sin and they were happy and content, but that was all about to change.

9 “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.

Because of Israel's sin and idolatry, God would punish them by taking away the grain and the wine and the wool and the linen. And now, all the things they had previously taken for granted were gone or scarce at best. They would lack the basics of life. They would lack food and water and clothing, due probably to a famine and drought.

10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, And no one shall deliver her from My hand.

As for the land of Israel, they would suffer tremendously because God would withhold His provision for the land. Just like the harlot's "lovers" would come to despise her, and not want anything to do with her, because she had become undesirable physically. The life she was leading was taking a toll on her looks and she was no longer desirable to the men she was trying to do business with.

And sin will do that to you. Sin will make you look and feel older than you really are.

Kind of like that reporter who was doing an interview with these old men sitting on a park bench. They were all three all wrinkled up and bent over.

And so she asked them what their secret was to a long life.

The first old man said, “Well, I never drank alcohol, I never smoked tobacco and I’ve been married to the same woman for fifty years.”

“Well, that’s remarkable!” said the reporter, “And how old are you?”

“He said, I’m 93,”.

She asked the second man same question. What’s your secret to a long life.

He said, “Well, I’ll be honest, I did drink on occasion, and I did smoke occasionally and I’ve been divorced a time or two. He said, but I’m married now”

And she said, Well, how old are you?”

And he said, “I’m 91,”

She said well, that’s awesome.

And then she moved to the third old man, and she asked him his secret to a long life.

He said, Well, I drink everything I can get my hands on, and I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day, and I go out with every woman I can find.”

The reporter said, wow, that’s amazing! “And how old are you?” He said, “I’m 27”.

And we’ve all seen folks like that, have we not? That look a lot older than they really are, because of the lifestyle they’ve led.

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 through Hosea, told the people that all their celebrations, all their religious holidays would cease. And their grapevines and their fig trees, they would be taken over by the forests. Their land would become desolate as would their worship, and all this would be their punishment for turning back to idolatry and to the worship of the false gods of Baal.

And of course that punishment again would come when the Assyrian army invaded the northern kingdom of Israel and destroyed everything in its sight and then took those who survived off to a foreign land. And that judgment would come just a few years later during Hosea’s lifetime.

And then verse 14 says,

14 “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her.

After inflicting all these judgments upon Israel, God says, I’m going to restore you again. And He’s going to deal with the nation of Israel just like a very loving and compassionate and affectionate husband would do to an unfaithful wife. And instead of making her a public example, he takes her to a private place to talk to her and to reason with her; and He promises to forgive her and restore her, if she’ll repent and return.

And then He says,

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.

If you remember back in Joshua chapter 6-7, after Israel crossed over the Jordan, God gave them that miraculous victory at Jericho. Remember when the walls fell, and the city was taken—but after that victory God gave them a very specific command:

He said, everything here that was connected to this victory belongs to Me. In other words, all the souvenirs and all the plunder belonged to the Lord. And they weren't to take anything with them when they left.

And Joshua made God's command crystal clear to the people: Don't take anything devoted to the Lord, or you'll bring trouble on the whole camp.

But one man, by the name of Achan, saw something he liked. Under the rubble he spotted: a beautiful Babylonian garment, and some silver and a wedge of gold. And then he did what sin so often encourages us to do: He took it, and he hid it, and then he said nothing.

And what was so ironic, is that he buried those things he had taken under his tent, right in the middle of the camp—trying to hide them from an all-seeing God, while living among God's people.

Well, their next battle was in the small town of Ai. And compared to Jericho, Ai looked like an easy foe. And so Joshua only sends a small force. And they get routed. And many men died. And the army fled. And their morale collapsed. And Joshua, not understanding what had happened fell on his face before the Lord. And he was confused and grieving.

And then God responded with this. He said, “Israel has sinned.” He didn’t say, “Achan has sinned”. He said, “Israel has sinned.”

And then God instructed Joshua to bring Israel tribe by tribe, family by family, and one by one they were eliminated by God. Until only Achan was left standing.

And finally Achan confessed. He said, “I saw... I coveted... and I took.”

It was a rerun from Genesis: I saw, I desired, I took and I hid.

Well, you know the story I think. They recovered the items exactly where Achan said they would be and Achan and his entire family were taken to that place that would forever carry that name: The Valley of Achor—which means “valley of trouble.”

Because it was there, that judgment fell. But it was also there that the sin that brought trouble into Israel was removed. And only after the judgement did it say that **“The Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger.”**

And so it’s no accident that God brings up this story here, because this story still matters. It’s not just a story about the spoils of ancient warfare or the harsh justice for sin. It’s a warning wrapped in grace: that says God cares about holiness; and hidden sin is never truly hidden; and one man’s disobedience can affect many.

And now here in Hosea centuries later, the prophet Hosea is telling us that God is going to one day turn “the Valley of Achor” into a door of hope.

And then in verse 16

16 “And it shall be, in that day,” Says the Lord, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ (In the KJV it says, Ishi which is the Hebrew word for husband.” **And no longer call Me ‘My Master,’** (Again, in the KJV it says Baali, which is Hebrew for master)

And what God is saying that your relationship to me will no longer be that of a master/slave type relationship, but more like a husband/wife type relationship. In other words, it's going to be a closer and more intimate relationship; not one of rule keeping and formality and traditions. And then He says

17 For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more.

In other words, there will be no more false gods, no more idolatry. Because in the day! Look at verse 18. What does He mean by "in that day".

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.

What day is He talking about?

He's talking about the Millennial Kingdom. He's talking about that one thousand year period after Christ returns and sets up His Kingdom here on this earth, when there will be total and complete and perfect peace.

When the lions will lay down with the lamb. When the children will play with vipers and not be harmed. That's the day, that's the time period He's talking about. And not until that day will there be peace in the Middle East.

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.

This word for betroth is a wedding term and we talked about that earlier when we talked about the betrothal period. It's a commitment or a

covenant between the bridegroom and the bride or the husband and the wife.

There's something else that I found that's rather interesting about these two verses. These two verses, verses 19 & 20 are quoted, even today by the Hasidic Jews or Orthodox Jews every time they go to strap their phylacteries to their arms and foreheads.

And if you're not familiar with the term phylacteries, they're two small black boxes and they containing passages of scripture from the Torah; and they strap these boxes by leather straps onto their arm (near their heart) and on their head (just above their forehead) during their weekday morning prayers. And it's to be a reminder to them to keep the commandments of the Torah.

And every time they strap them on, they recite these two verses.

21 “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!’ ”

So in verses 21 & 22 Hosea is promising his adulterous wife that he's going to do all he can to meet her needs once they're reunited, and he's going to do all he can to make her life fulfilling and meaningful.

And the Lord, through Hosea's experience, is promising Israel a brighter future as well. And it too is going include a life of renewed

blessings. And in that glorious day, God is going to meet every need of His dear people. And when God's people eventually call on Him, in that day He's going to respond immediately. And never again will God's people go lacking. Not a single person will ever suffer, or die from hunger, or thirst, or lack shelter.

And then in verse 23 Hosea promised his adulterous wife a renewed love and intimacy. He promised to have mercy on her, and forgive her and bring her back home, and he promised to love her again. And no longer would he reject her or have nothing to do with her. But rather he would show her mercy, forgive her, and renew their life of love and intimacy. And together, they would build a brand new life in the LORD.

And the Lord, through Hosea's experience, He's also promised His people a renewed life of love and intimacy. And in that glorious day, the Lord has promised to restore His people to the promised land where three things will happen:

First, He will have mercy and pour out His love on the one He called "unpitied, or not loved" in chapter 1:6.

Two, He will say to those He called "not My people," "you are My people".

And then three, He will hear the people confess, "you are My God."

And so through this wonderful promise, God is guaranteeing a complete reversal of life for Israel and His people. A bright and glorious future lies ahead for those who truly believe and follow the LORD, both Jew and Gentile.