

Hosea's ministry was to the nation of Israel and in our focal verses he describes the LORD's relationship with Israel as being like a marriage. Because of Israel's unfaithfulness, the LORD declares that He will not show mercy to them and that they are not His people. However, the LORD promises that He will draw Israel back to Himself and show them mercy as He reclaims them as His people in the future kingdom.

Hosea 1

1 The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Hosea introduces his writings as being the word that he had received from the LORD. He identifies himself by name and by his father's name, a common practice in that day since many people might share the same name. Hosea also identifies the time period in which he wrote by listing the kings that reigned in both Judah and Israel during his ministry. This list of kings tells us that he was a contemporary of the prophets Isaiah and Micah.

2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, *departing* from the LORD.

“The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea” – Hosea formally introduces the word of the LORD given to him.

“And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms” – The first word of the LORD Hosea records is an instruction for him to take a prostitute as a wife. Some commentators see this as a prediction that Hosea's wife would become a prostitute later and that she was not one when they married. They base this on the fact that Hosea's marriage to a prostitute served as a picture of the LORD's relationship with Israel, who these commentators say was not initially unfaithful.

However, Israel always had a tendency to be unfaithful, as illustrated when they made a golden calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai (Ex. 32).

“for the land hath committed great whoredom [prostitution], departing from the LORD” – The purpose of Hosea's marriage to a prostitute was to illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness to the LORD by “selling” herself to other gods.

Verses 3-9: Hosea obeys and marries a woman named Gomer. They had three children, the first of which the LORD names “Jezreel” with means “God will scatter” to illustrate how God would scatter Israel in punishment for their sins. The LORD names the second child “Lo-ru-hamah” which means “no mercy” to illustrate that He would not show mercy to Israel. The third child is named “Lo-ammi,” which means “not my people” to declare that Israel's sins had caused Him to no longer consider them to be His people.

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God.

Despite the LORD declaring that He would show no mercy by scattering Israel and that they were no longer His people, He promises that He would eventually prosper and multiply them. He would no longer disown them but would reclaim and restore them as His children once again. This will happen during the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

Hosea 2

6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. 7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now.

“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths” – Verses 1-5 describe of Israel as a prostitute with children fathered by other men. Verse 5 pictures Israel seeking for her lovers, expecting them to feed her and meet her other needs. Here the LORD states that He will block her paths as she goes in search of her lovers.

“And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*” – The LORD will prevent her from finding her lovers (the false gods she has been worshiping).

“then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now” – The intention is that by cutting off Israel's access to her false gods, she will come to the realization that her blessings came when she sought the LORD.

8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal. 9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness.

Israel was ignorant of the fact that her blessings of prosperity came from the LORD and she used those God-given blessings to worship the false god Baal. Since Israel did not appreciate the source of their blessings, the LORD states that He will take away the things that He gave to Israel to meet her needs. Verses 10-12 continue to describe what the LORD would do to Israel as punishment for their unfaithfulness.

13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

“Baalim” is plural for “Baal” and refers to the various Baal gods worshiped by Israel and the surrounding heathen nations. Israel was acting like an unfaithful wife by pursuing other gods and the LORD will punish them for celebrating the various Baal-related holidays in which they worshiped these gods. She had forgotten that she was “married” to the LORD.

14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. 15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

The LORD looks forward to the future when Christ will establish His millennial kingdom on earth. The expressions “allure” and “speak comfortably” were used to describe a man attempting to woo a woman. The LORD says that He will win Israel back like a husband winning his wife’s affection, giving her gifts and being good to her. The LORD wants Israel’s affection for Him to return to what it was when she came out of Egypt.

16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, *that* thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. 17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

“And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, *that* thou shalt call me Ishi [husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [lord]” – The name “Baal” (the name of the false god) means “lord” but that is not the type of relationship that the LORD wanted with His people. Here He is emphasizing the love relationship He desires to have with Israel. They would no longer be in a master/servant relationship as they had been under the Mosaic Law, but in a husband/wife relationship. This relationship will become a reality in Christ’s kingdom.

“For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name” – Israel will no longer worship the various Baal gods, nor will they remember or mention their names. Just as they had forgotten Him and worshiped false gods (v. 13), in the kingdom they will forget their false gods and worship the LORD alone.

18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and *with* the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

In Christ’s millennial kingdom, wild animals will not be a threat nor will Israel have to be concerned about military threats from other nations (Isa. 11:6-9).

19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. 20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

“And I will betroth thee unto me for ever” – The LORD will have a new type of relationship with Israel. It will be permanent because it will depend on the LORD’s faithfulness instead of Israel’s. The LORD is referring to the experience of new-birth that will be the norm in the kingdom of God.

“yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment [justice], and in lovingkindness, and in mercies” – This relationship with the LORD will be based on His righteousness, justice, kindness and mercy toward His people.

“I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD” – Israel’s history reveals that they were more unfaithful than faithful, but the LORD’s faithfulness will insure the permanency of their relationship. The LORD and His ways will not be foreign to Israel, because they will know Him intimately.

23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God.

“And I will sow her unto me in the earth” – The imagery of sowing implies sowing seed that will take root and grow so that it eventually can produce fruit. The LORD will do the same with His people.

“and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy” – This refers back to Hosea 1:6 where the LORD has Hosea name his second child “Lo-ru-hamah” which means “no mercy.” The LORD will once again have mercy on His people.

“and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God” – This refers to Hosea’s third child that was named “Lo-ammi” (“not my people”). The LORD will once again claim Israel as His own people in the future kingdom and they will claim Him as their God.

Hosea 3

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without* teraphim:

This verse may be prophetically speaking of the current time period where Israel has been without a king from the Davidic line since the Babylonian captivity, without a “prince” (a leader, which was true for centuries until 1948), and without a religion. The words “image” and “teraphim” refers to idols, so they would not be worshiping the LORD or false gods. For a high percentage of Jews today, Judaism is more of a cultural practice than a genuine belief in God.

5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

This passage is apparently referring to Christ’s kingdom on earth when Israel will have returned to the LORD. After Christ’s return, Israel will again seek the LORD and embrace Christ (the Son of David) as their king as they enjoy His goodness. **Rom. 11:26-27** “*And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*”