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# The Book of Hosea

*Part 2 by: Ronald L. Dart*

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I have always said that whenever you see a prophet coming down the road, it is almost certainly bad news. God doesn't send us a prophet to tell us how well we are doing. You don't need an "at a boy," when all you're doing is, what you're supposed to be doing in the first place, but that is not entirely fair to the prophets. They did have good news in the end, but the problem is, it was a long way off and a long time coming.

When I think about it, it would really be a downer if a prophet came and said, "Forget it, God is through with you people, He has had it with you people, it's over." I think if God really felt that way, He probably wouldn't bother sending a prophet. He would just go and get himself another people, maybe even, in another Galaxy.

## **God Has To Keep His Promises**

The problem is, God had some promises hanging out there concerning Israel, and someday He had to come through on them. He had to keep His word. So, all the prophets come with their warnings and calls for repentance and almost to a man, they looked way off into the future to a better time. The problem is, the generation that heard the prophecy in the first place will be long dead before that comes to pass. Their only hope is to repent, right here, right now, and they can for a while avoid what God has said is coming upon them.

It's like the Israelites, in a way, that rebelled in the wilderness on their way out of Egypt. Everyone who was 20 years old and older, would die off in the wilderness, only their children would actually enter and inherit the land. Because, they rebelled, they were hardnosed, and they would not believe God. They didn't trust Him, and they wouldn't do what He wanted them to do so He said; "OK, you people will die out here but your kids, whom you said would die out here, they are all going to live and inherit the land."

## **Some Prophets Had To Act Out the Truth**

Now when it comes to the Minor Prophets, the picture is about the same. The prophets were often called, not merely to speak, but to act out the truth. Ezekiel for example once had to lie on his side one day for every year of Israel's sin, and then God had him flip over and lie one day on the other side for Judah's sin. He must have gotten very tired of lying down.

In Hosea's case, he had to take an adulterous wife. The woman apparently was an adulteress before he married her, and who would turn out to be an adulteress after he married her as well. Why did he have to do that? Well to underline what God had put up with, in His relationship with Israel, to underline and illustrate and to picture, that Israel was an adulterous people. That is to say, they were covenant breakers.

There were children born to Hosea and his wife Gomer. The first was a boy, and he was named Jezreel, because Jehu shed so much blood in the valley of Jezreel that God had to avenge it, and because God was going to bring captivity on the house of Israel. The second child was a girl and they named her Loruhamah, which meant "no more mercy," kind of a shocking thing to hear. The third was a boy named Loammi which means "not my people."

### **Jeroboam Changed the Worship of God**

You know God's patience runs for a very long time, it would be some 200 years from the beginning of the house of Israel that God would finally declare that Israel was not His people and would send them off into captivity. Some 200 years, considerably more, in fact and not all that far off I suppose from the age of our country right here, right now. Israel started down the wrong road with their first king, Jeroboam, who began to change the worship of God.

### **God Reaffirms His Promise to the Children of Israel and Judah**

Then Hosea having made his statement comes to this, Verse 10 of chapter 1. "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered."

This was really the promise God made to Abraham way back when, and He's basically now saying, "I'm going to go through with it," "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said to them, you are not my people, there it shall be said to them, you are the sons of the living God."

Now this is really striking because what He is saying is, that "We're going to go down a very, very hard road. I'm telling you that you are not my people, but the time will come that in the same place, I will say, You are the sons of the living God."

"Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, appoint themselves one head and they will come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel."

And I guess the place He must be talking about is where He says in the same place where you were told you are not my people, in Jezreel, you will be called my people.

### **In the words of Paul and the Prophecy of Ezekiel**

I think the apostle Paul may have had this last verse in mind when he wrote the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Romans, he said in that Chapter, "All Israel shall be saved." But even more apropos than that, is a prophecy from Ezekiel that deals with this same subject,

In Ezekiel Chapter 34 Verse 22. It says, "I will save my flock and they will no longer be plundered, I will judge between one sheep and another, {23} I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David and he will tend them, he will tend them and be their shepherd, {24} I the LORD will be their God and my servant David will be prince among them, I the LORD have spoken."

Now this, in a way, sheds some light on Hosea in that the one head is the leader of the house of David. But this is kind of shocking in a way because David was long dead when Ezekiel wrote these words on paper. There is really only two ways you can understand what he is saying here. One, that this is far off in the future after the general resurrection and David has been raised from the dead, and David is back, and he is ruling over the people. Second, he is speaking of one who is of the house of David, which is just about as big a deal. Bear in mind that Jesus is of the house of David and it was in the prophecy of his birth to rule over the children of Israel, and this is the way most Christian commentators see this particular verse. How the Jews see this verse I'm not entirely sure.

Ezekiel goes on, he says in verse 26, "I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill, I will send down showers in season, there will be showers of blessings. {27}"The trees of the field will yield their fruit, the ground will yield its crops, the people will be secure in their land, they will know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and rescue them from the hands of those who enslave them. {28} They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them. They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid. {29} I'll provide for them a land renowned for its crops, they will no longer be victims of famine in the land and they will no longer bear the scorn of the nations. {30} Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them and they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Sovereign LORD."

### **Israel Today**

Now it's hard to say that Israel has come to this place, isn't it? When you look at Israel as it is today, a lot of people saw the restoration that took place back in the 40's when they were granted, by the United Nations, the right to be a people and the nation of Israel was established. From that time to this, they have made the land bloom like a rose, but they have certainly not lived in safety.

They have lived there in that land in fear and they have been made afraid continually by rockets being fired in from across their borders. Nations everywhere look down on them and it's a strange thing to talk about but that's the way it is. It's hard to say but Israel really has not fulfilled this prophecy. They are a long way from living in safety, so I think this prophecy is focused on a point still in the future.

### **House of Israel**

There is some ambiguity by the way about the expression the house of Israel. In the days of Amos and Hosea, it referred to the kingdom of 10 tribes whose capital came to be in Samaria and its first king was one Jeroboam. The house of Israel was a nation separate from the house of

Judah. By the time Ezekiel wrote this, the house of Israel had been long gone over some 120 years or more before Ezekiel's day and yet he speaks of them. Some think the house of Israel has become synonymous with the whole of the children of Israel, in other words ethnic Israel, but there's a fly in the ointment and I'll point it out to you.

### **Ezekiel's Prophecy of the Two Sticks**

It's later in Ezekiel chapter 37 beginning in Verse 15, "The word of the LORD came again to me and said this: {16} "Son of man take a stick, one stick, and write upon it for Judah and for the children of Israel his companions, then take another stick and write upon it for Joseph the stick of Israel and all the house of Israel and his companions {17} And join them one to another into one stick and they shall become one in your hand." {18} Now the people are going to see you doing this and they are going to say, "Will you not show us what this means?" {19} You shall answer them, "Thus saith the Lord God. Behold I will take the stick of Joseph, in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribe of Israel his fellows, and I will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah and make them one stick and they shall be one in my hand {20} And the sticks that were on your right shall be in your hand before their eyes."

Now one school of commentators consider that this was all fulfilled in the return from Babylon, but I don't think that's the sense of what Ezekiel is saying. When Jerusalem fell, and Judah was carried away into captivity into Babylon there were ethnic Israelites of all the tribes who went with them. They may have been refugees from before the Assyrian invasion that took place some years before and they came down there for safety. In any case, they were ethnic Israelites, but they were citizens of Judah thus they were a part of the house of Judah. That's why in the Ezekiel prophecy it is spoken of as the house of Judah and their companions of the children of Israel, as well was the same for the house of Joseph in the north.

So, we see this development. So, like we have today, ethnic Italians who are American citizens, they had ethnic Israelites who were of the house of Judah. It's a political entity not an ethnic identification. And the same thing seems to be true of the term house of Israel. Thus, those ethnic Israelites who returned from the land of Babylon had been of the house of Judah going and coming. They were not the house of Israel at all. And that of course leaves us with some interesting problems.

### **Ezekiel continues his Prophecy**

As it happens, Ezekiel is not finished with this prophecy. He goes on to say; in Ezekiel 37 and verse 21, "You tell them this, thus saith the LORD God behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, from where they have gone, I will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land."

Now the language of this just doesn't work for the return from Babylon. I mean Ezekiel is in Babylon and I would have thought the language would have been; "I'm going to take the children of Israel from where they are among the heathen in Babylon and take them back straight into the land, but this is a gathering from every side." It sounds like from every direction and it's not merely the house of Judah that we are talking about, it's the children of Israel, all of them.

Verse 22, "And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."

Now Ezekiel along with all the other prophets envisions an end to the time of the divided kingdoms. I get the feeling frankly from the prophets that they really hated all that period of time when Israel was split into two peoples. It was something that probably would have been reconciled a long time before this and probably peacefully, if it hadn't been for king Jeroboam, who was the first king of the northern kingdom who decided to set things up, so the people would not go to Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles or Passover or Pentecost to worship God.

The Holy Days and the Temple, and the centralized worship there was a major factor in the unity of the people and it was a factor that had been destroyed by Jeroboam.

Now as a generalization, when Ezekiel uses the term, 'house of Israel,' I think he's talking about the nation that had gone into captivity into Assyria as distinct from the 'house of Judah,' the nation, that was carried into Babylon because at that time there were two nations not one.

Thus, the prophecy of the restoration of a united kingdom of Israel is something that is still ahead of us today. It's been well over 120 years when Ezekiel is talking since Hosea passed from the scene, but Ezekiel is still holding on to that hope.

### **Returning to Hosea's Prophecy**

Returning now to Hosea's prophecy, Chapter 2: "Say to your brothers, Ammi, to your sisters, Ruhamah. {2} Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts."

Very graphic language here and it appears that Gomer, Hosea's wife, has not changed her former behavior, as of course God knew she would not.

Now it's a terrible painful thing that Hosea had to endure in this situation and the whole idea seems to be that people will be able to visualize more how Hosea would feel so they could in turn understand perhaps how God might feel.

Verse 3, "Now call upon her and tell her to come back lest I strip her naked and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. {4} And I will not have mercy on her children because they are the children of whoredoms. {5} For their mother has played the harlot: she that has conceived them has done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink."

You know I think, reading what I'm reading here, I think she has had more children.

My impression is the first three; the two boys and the girl, were the children of Hosea himself, but when he says, "Plead with your sisters Ruhamah," we are not told about other girls being born but there had been, presumably, from whoredom.

He goes on to say this about her, "I'll go after my lovers who give me my bread, my water, my wool, my flax, my oil, and my drink," the woman was a harlot, and this is what you are when you exchange sex for money.

### **The metaphor of Gomer and the House of Israel**

What you need to know at this point though, is that Gomer is a metaphor, she is a picture. I don't mean to say that she is not real and did not really do these things, what I mean is that in doing so, she pictures the house of Israel in her relationship with God. Israel was, in a manner of speaking, married to God. The prophets use marriage as the image because marriage is a covenant and because Israel was in covenant with God, therefore all the images and pictures of adultery are quite apt.

He then goes on to say in verse 11 of Hosea 2, "I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast day, her new moons, her Sabbaths, her solemn feasts."

Now bear in mind that these are not the festivals of God that are laid out in Leviticus where the Sabbath and all of the seven Holy Days of the year for Israel are laid out, that's not what God is talking about here.

The house of Israel did not keep God's Sabbath and Feast days and had not for generations, what they had been doing was keeping their feast in the 15<sup>th</sup> day in the 8<sup>th</sup> month, whereas the Feast of Tabernacles was the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month. They had a different set of holy days, some even think they had a different Sabbath day by this time. So, God is saying, "it is her Feast days; her new moon, her Sabbaths and all her solemn feasts are going to come to an end." These are the days of Baal which she adopted after Jeroboam had broken with Jerusalem.

Verse 12, "I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she had said, "These are my rewards that my lovers have given me": and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. {13} I will visit on her the days of Baal."

So, if you really want to know what he's talking about here it is: "In this she burned incense to them, and decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD." And that's precisely what she did.

### **Bias Against Christians Today**

Now what bothers me about this, is that in many ways I see us doing the same thing. At least to the extent of being determined to forget God and being determined to move one faith, one religion, out of the public square. Which faith is that? You don't have to ask, do you? You know what is going on in our country today, it is easier to be a Muslim in the public square, than to be a Christian. A pagan would probably be welcome. A Christian, No, no way.

## **Hosea continues with the Metaphor of His Wife Gomer**

So, God says in verse 15 of Hosea 2, "Behold I will allure her, I will bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably to her, {15} I will give her vineyards from there 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."

When you get to this point, it's clear, that this is a metaphor, He is speaking about Israel, not Gomer. One of the most encouraging things about the prophecy is this statement; "I will open for her a door of hope." That is something to look forward to.

Looking forward, Hosea 2 Verse 16: "In that day, declares the LORD, you will call me, my husband, you will no longer call me, my master."

Now this is fascinating because, unless you understand the whole idea of the Biblical covenants, you might lose this.

The governmental relationship of master and servant, in a way, I think is what a lot of people see in Christianity. It is in which Jesus is the master, and indeed He is, but they don't think of themselves as being in a covenant with Him, like a marriage covenant, not that it is a marriage covenant, but it is like a marriage covenant. What God is now saying is, we are going to move beyond this servant master relationship and you are going to call me, "my husband", which means, we are going to be "in covenant" with one another.

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

I'm going to put an end to war. This is the same theme that is developed in Micah and we'll come to it later.

In Micah 4 Verse 3, it says "God will judge among many people, he will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide, they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation will not take up sword against nation; neither will they train for war anymore."

## **A Prophecy Yet to Come**

Now it doesn't take a whole lot of imagination to realize that if this prophecy is ever going to be fulfilled, it's got to be ahead of us now. We aren't there yet.

Verse 19 of Hosea 2, "And I will betroth you unto me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies."

Do you realize what He's talking about here; He's talking about the New Covenant. And the New Covenant is not necessarily what you might think, it's the covenant spoken of in Jeremiah

31:31 and also chapter 8 of Hebrews. It is a New Covenant made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, it's that covenant made when those two sticks become one again, instead of being two nations, now once again they are one.

The LORD says: {19} "I will betroth you unto me forever. I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, in judgment, and lovingkindness, and in mercies. {20} I will betroth you unto me in faithfulness and you shall know the LORD. {21} And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, they shall hear the earth, {22} And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel." That great valley Jezreel, a very fertile one. {23} "I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her who had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them who were not my people, "You are my people;" and they shall say, "You are my God.""

### **Alienation and Reconciliation**

This is a prophecy about alienation from God and then reconciliation to God. It's astonishing in a way to find the Gospel in the prophets but that is exactly what we are reading here. Some people have looked at this particular passage and said; when He says, "I am going to call them my people who were not my people," He is talking about the conversion of the Gentiles, and it would seem that it is so, even though earlier He has been talking about Israel, whom He said, "You are not my people anymore but you will once again be called, my people."

Hosea 3 Verse 1. "Then said the LORD to me, "Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, do this according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine." So, Hosea says, {2} "I bought her unto me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an omer of barley, and half an omer of barley: {3} And I said to her, you shall abide with me for many days; you shall not play the harlot, and you shall not be for another man so will I also be for you."

You know, when you consider the lot of the woman in those days or in almost any day, which is forced to be a harlot and make her living that way, it would have been a wonderful thing to be rescued by a good man who is going to keep you, take care of you and him be for you and you be for him.

Verse 4, "So the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, without a prince, without any sacrifice, there will be no sacrifice at the temple, they won't have any images or ephod and teraphim: {5} And afterward the children of Israel shall return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days."

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*The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit [RLDEA.com](http://RLDEA.com) where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.*



## Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever done a study on all the promises God makes to Israel?
2. If you have, what did you find?
3. Do you think all the promises will be fulfilled in your lifetime?
4. How do you think God will fulfill Paul's statement that "all of Israel will be saved"?
5. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart's point that in the prophesies of the Bible when they say "the house of Israel" it is not talking about all twelve tribes but actually the lost ten?
6. Do you agree with Mr. Dart that Hosea's wife most likely had other children out of wedlock?
7. What can we as Christians learn from Hosea, so that we do not make the same mistakes as Israel?
8. Do you see Hosea as a book of punishments or a book of redemption?
9. Do you agree with Mr. Dart that we "find the Gospel in the prophets"?
10. What is one thing that you have learned so far in Mr. Dart's study on Hosea?