

HOSEA SESSION 3

Review: Last week we went through chapter 2. Hosea Chapter 2 uses the heartbreaking reality of Hosea's broken marriage as an intense, extended metaphor for God's fractured relationship with Israel. In this chapter, God alternates between fierce judgment against Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness and a deeply tender promise of future reconciliation. God commands the children of the family to plead with their mother (symbolizing Israel as a corporate nation) to stop her "whoredoms." To stop her destructive behavior, God promises to hedge up her path with thorns and build a wall so she cannot find her lovers. When she chases them and gets left empty-handed, she will finally say, *"I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now."* Because Israel failed to realize that it was the Lord—not Baal—who gave her the grain, wine, oil, silver, and gold, God declares He will confiscate these gifts. In a dramatic shift from wrath to mercy, God says He will allure Israel into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. He promises to betroth Israel to Him forever in righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness. The chapter ends with God establishing a new covenant of peace with creation (removing wild beasts and war from the land) and reversing the tragic names of Hosea's children. He promises to show mercy to *"No Mercy"* (Lo-Ruhamah) and tell *"Not My People"* (Lo-Ammi), *"You are my people,"* to which they will answer, *"You are my God."*

Hosea Chapter 3 is a brief but powerful five-verse chapter that serves as a living object lesson of God's redeeming and unconditional love for an unfaithful Israel.

Hosea 3:1-5 Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. So I bought her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and *for* an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for *another* man: so *will* I also *be* for thee. 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: 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.

- **Hosea buys back Gomer** – God instructs the prophet Hosea to go and show love to his wife, Gomer, once again, even though she is currently living in adultery with another man. This intentional choice to love mirrors how the Lord continues to love the people of Israel despite their spiritual adultery—worshipping false gods and indulging in pagan rituals.

- **Redemption** - Hosea obeys God and buys Gomer back from what was likely a state of debt-slavery or prostitution. He pays 15 pieces of silver and about a homer and a half of barley—a relatively low price that underscores her desperate, degraded condition. In the Bible, redemption means buying back or paying a price to set a slave or captive free. When God redeems people, He rescues them from bondage and brings them back into His family as His own possession.
- **Promise of faithfulness** – Hosea tells her that she must be faithful to him, and he promises to be faithful to her.
- **Period of isolation** - God explains that Gomer's period of waiting represents what will happen to Israel. The nation will endure a long period ("many days") completely stripped of their identity and security. They will live without political leadership (no king or prince), without true spiritual worship (no sacrifices or priestly ephods), and without their false pagan comforts (no sacred pillars or idols).
- **Ultimate restoration** - Finally, the chapter ends with a prophecy of hope. Afterward, the people of Israel will turn back and seek the Lord their God and David their king. In the "latter days," they will return in awe to the Lord and receive His abundant goodness. In prophetic literature, "David" is a title for the **Messiah (Jesus)**, who is the ultimate descendant of David. It predicts that a unified, restored people will submit to the spiritual leadership of the Messiah. Verse 5 reveals that God's ultimate goal is never destruction. He breaks Israel's reliance on false things so that they can experience a voluntary, affectionate, and awe-filled relationship with Him under the leadership of the Messiah.

Hosea Chapter 4 marks a major transition in the book. The personal story of Hosea's marriage fades into the background, and God pronounces the charges against Israel and her leaders.

Hosea 4:1-5 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people *are* as they that strive with the priest. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

- **The indictment** - God summons the citizens to court. He levels a staggering three-part charge against the land: there is no truth, no mercy, and no knowledge of God.

Because the knowledge of God is gone, society has collapsed into moral anarchy. God lists a wave of crimes breaking the Ten Commandments: swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery. The moral decay is so toxic that it physically breaks the land. God declares that the ground will mourn, and the beasts, birds, and even the fish of the sea will languish and die. In the Bible, the phrase **the knowledge of God** means an intimate, personal, and life-changing relationship with God rather than just knowing cold facts about Him.

Hosea 4:6-11 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: *therefore* will I change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

- **Blame placed on corrupt leaders** - God shines a spotlight directly on the spiritual leaders. He blames the priests for the nation's downfall because they have rejected knowledge and forgotten God's law. Consequently, God rejects them and their children. The priests have a corrupt incentive structure. They actually feed on and profit from the sins of the people (likely through a share of the sin offerings). God pronounces a famous judgment: "*Like people, like priest.*" They will eat but never be satisfied.
- **Captive heart** – The heart represents the center of intellect, judgment, intention, and free will. When a person gives themselves over to addictive behaviors or idolatry, their capacity to discern right and wrong is compromised. Wine and new wine represent alcohol and intoxicating drinks. These symbolize the pursuit of instant physical gratification and sensory excess. Whoredom and wine and stolen Israel's heart away from her Husband.
- **The judgment of never being satisfied** – They shall eat but still be hungry. They shall commit whoredom yet not have more children. The pagan cults of Canaan practiced sexual immorality as worship to gain the blessing of children from the gods. The Bible clearly teaches that apart from God, man will always be hungry and always be searching.

Hosea 4:12-14 My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the

hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof *is* good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people *that* doth not understand shall fall.

- **Consulting with pieces of wood** - Wine and luxury have robbed Israel of its understanding. The people are engaging in divination, asking literal wooden staffs for guidance because a "spirit of whoredom" has led them astray. Praying to stumps fashioned into an image....sin makes you stupid!
- **Sacrifices on the hills** - The people are offering pagan sacrifices under the shade of trees on the mountaintops. Because the fathers and husbands are participating in rituals with cult prostitutes, God states He will not punish the young daughters and brides who do the same—the systemic corruption starts at the top.

Hosea 4:15-19 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth. For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place. Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone. Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers *with* shame do love, Give ye. The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

- **The warning to Judah** - God pauses to warn Israel's southern neighbor, Judah. He tells Judah not to join in Israel's guilt or travel to their corrupt worship centers (like Gilgal and Beth-aven).
- **Israel a backsliding heifer** - A heifer is a young female cow—in an ancient agrarian society, it was expected to be trained for work like pulling a plow or carrying a yoke. Young heifers were notoriously headstrong, stubborn, and difficult to manage. The Hebrew word behind "backsliding" means to act like a rebellious animal that digs in its heels, pulls back, and refuses to be guided or yoked. Just as a stubborn cow braces its legs and throws its weight backward to reject the farmer's lead, Israel rejected God's authority, laws, and prophetic warnings, choosing idolatry instead.
- **Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone** – Ephraim is the largest most influential tribe in the northern kingdom of Israel. The name is often used in prophecy to represent the entire northern kingdom. The people were glued, wedded, or completely bound to idol worship (like Baal and Ashtaroth), refusing all correction or wise counsel. A terrifying form of judgment. God steps back and

gives people over to their own rebellious choices, withdrawing His protective hand and leaving them to face the natural consequences of their sin.

- **Her rulers with shame do love, Give ye** - The national leaders, who should have protected and guided the people, instead loved disgrace, bribery, extortion, and perverting justice for personal gain. Instead of being a light to lead the people in the right way, they reveled in their lifestyle because they profited from it.
- **The wind hath bound her up in her wings** - God's sudden, inescapable judgment will violently sweep away the northern kingdom of Israel into exile, leaving them disgraced because their false sacrifices could not save them. This represents the Assyrian army coming swiftly to carry the Israelites away into captivity.
- **They shall be ashamed because of their sacrifice** - The people relied on idols and empty rituals instead of truly knowing God. When the judgment hits, they will feel deep shame because their man-made altars and false worship offer zero protection or help.

How this chapter explains what is happening in America today:

- **The Danger of Ignorance:** Destruction happens not just from doing bad things, but from a deliberate rejection of knowing who God is. **Romans 1:21-22** Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
- **Moral Decay follows Spiritual Decay:** When a society abandons its vertical relationship with God, its horizontal relationships with other human beings immediately fracture. **Romans 1:24-27** Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.
- **The Burden of Leadership:** Spiritual leaders face stricter judgment because their corruption paves the way for everyone else to stumble. **2 Peter 2:1** But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.