

Hosea 1-3 • A Marriage that Illustrates the Life of Israel

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We are going to start a new book study tonight, so grab your Bibles and open them up to the book of Hosea. We're moving on here. We go through the Old Testament on Wednesday night, and the next book in order is the book of Hosea. So let's go there.

Hosea chapter one. Kind of interesting you know, when you go through these Old Testament prophets and we're now embarking onto what is referred to as the Minor Prophets. They're not listed that way because they are minor in importance. They're just shorter, and that's the only reason for that name.

But there's a story behind all of them, you know. I mean there, there's a story behind what is going on in the book of Isaiah— or here in Hosea and it's an interesting one. Let me just give you a little bit of introduction as we kind of get into this book because I think it'll help you understand what's going on.

First of all, you need to remember that after the days of King David, in fact during the days of his grandson, the nation of Israel suffered a political and geographical split. They literally had, like a civil war if you will, and the one nation of Israel became two kingdoms.

And if you don't understand that reading in the Old Testament, you're going to get lost because it plays into it so, so, so much. There was a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom, and the northern kingdom retained the name of Israel, but it had, as its capital city, the city of Samaria.

The southern kingdom was called Judah, and it was named after the largest of the tribes in that southern region. And it had as its capital city, Jerusalem. And interestingly enough Hosea comes along at a time just before the fall of the northern kingdom. In fact, Hosea himself is the only one of the writing prophets, not the only one of the prophets, but the only one of the writing prophets, to actually come from the northern kingdom and write primarily about the northern kingdom of Israel.

But what's interesting is that he dates his writings by the reigns of the southern kings, in the southern kingdom. I, we're not really sure why. But here's also some background that you may need to know. The northern kingdom of Israel had just come through a long time of peace and prosperity. And you know what happens when God's people go through a period of peace and prosperity, don't you?

We get sloppy. And when we get sloppy, we start taking things for granted. And that's what was happening. And the people of the northern kingdom of Israel began to embrace quickly, the idolatry of the pagan nations around them. And they began to worship those pagan idols, and they began to literally believe that it was these pagan gods who were providing what they needed for their daily sustenance rather than the provision of the LORD their God. And so what we're going to see here as we study through the book Hosea, is that God is going to communicate, repeatedly, His faithfulness— even in the face of Israel's unfaithfulness toward Him.

And He's going to illustrate that point in a very, very strange way. And you can be thankful that you weren't living during that period of time, and you weren't the man Hosea, because Hosea was called upon by God to take an unfaithful wife, or as the ESV is going to put it, a wife of whoredom. I'm not thrilled about that term, but it's, you know, but, because it's kind of, it's crude.

It seems crude, but you know it was a crude thing to do, but he's (Hosea) told to take this woman as his wife, who is persistently unfaithful to him. And in so doing this becomes a picture that God wants to communicate of the unfaithfulness of Israel in their covenant relationship to their God, which He likened very much to a marriage. And He likened their unfaithfulness to adultery, spiritual adultery. And that's what you need to know going into this study of the book of Hosea, and so let's get into it.

Chapter one, verse one. It says, *“The word of the LORD that came Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam...”* And that's Jeroboam, in case you're keeping track of the names of the Kings of Israel, this is Jeroboam II. They didn't actually call him Jeroboam II, they called him Jeroboam the son of Joash, who was a king of Israel. But we call him Jeroboam II because we want to differentiate him from the very first Jeroboam who came along, who was the very first king of the divided kingdom of Israel when Rehoboam, David's grandson, split the kingdom through his pride and stupidity, frankly.

It was a man named Jeroboam, who began the kingship in the northern split kingdom of Israel, taking Samaria as his capital. And this is a different Jeroboam now, who is actually a descendant of Jehu and who we'll talk about tonight. Incidentally, the name Hosea is the same name that we also see in the scripture—Hoshea, and it's essentially the same as Joshua or Yeshua, and the Greek version is pronounced Jesus, and it means salvation. The name itself means salvation.

It goes on here in verse two to say that, *“When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, The LORD said to Hosea, ‘Go take to yourself....’”* And here it is, *“a wife of whoredom.”* The New American Standard Bible and the new King James both say a wife of harlotry. The NIV says an adulterous wife. And it's very interesting, isn't it? So Hosea is told to take a wife who had a background in harlotry. In other words, she had lived as a prostitute for a period of time, and he was literally to pick out a woman who had lived as a prostitute, if you can imagine what that would be like.

And it, we're in the middle of verse two and it says, *“And you are to, ‘have children of whoredom, (with her) for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD.’”* And that's how God sees spiritual adultery; unfaithfulness to him, as whoredom. Pretty interesting, isn't it? So again, Hosea's marriage was to be a picture; a living picture, illustrating the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel.

Verse three goes on, *“So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.”* And now we're going to see several children that are born to this couple and their names are also going to have great meaning.

It says in verse four, *“And the LORD said to him, ‘Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.’”*

So the very first child that is born to Hosea and Gomer was to be named Jezreel. And the word Jezreel, or the name, means ‘scattered.’ And it has kind of a dual meaning. The message here that God is conveying to Israel is that they will very soon be a scattered people. And we know from the rest of the Bible and even from history, that what took place in the northern kingdom is that the Assyrian Empire was allowed to come and conquer the northern kingdom of Israel, and they scattered them.

And so He (God) says to name this first child ‘Scattered’ or Jezreel. But there's also another meaning to the name of this first child. And you might have noticed in the explanation; it was kind of explained. And I need to tell you what happened in the Valley of Jezreel because that— in that valley, there was a man by the name of Jehu who said repeatedly that he was zealous for the LORD.

And yet he, and he was— he believed himself to be a tool of the LORD to bring judgment against the house of a very wicked king in Israel named Ahab. You might remember King Ahab. And I believe that he, in fact, was a tool of the LORD to bring judgment, but he went way beyond what the LORD intended. In fact, he massacred people. En masse.

And he, in fact— he massacred the entire family of King Ahab. And even though Ahab was an evil king, the murder of that entire family by Jehu grieved the LORD. And so God tells Hosea to, to name his first child Jezreel, to communicate the fact that He had not forgotten what Jehu had done in the Valley of Jezreel when he massacred that entire family and all the atrocities that went along with that.

And God is saying, here, “I'm going to judge the family of Jehu for that bloodshed.” And by the way, we actually read about that in the book of 2 Kings. Let me put this up on the screen for you. It's from 2 Kings chapter 15, and it says:

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2 Kings 15:8-10 (ESV)

In the 38th year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam (and that is that Jeroboam II) reigned over Israel in Samaria (for just a short) six months. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin. (That's talking about the first Jeroboam. And it says,) Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him and struck him down (which is a euphemism for ‘assassinated him’) at Ibleam and put him to death and reigned in his place.

And by the way, with the death of this Zechariah, that was the end of the line of Jehu. And so God brought his line to an end at that particular point. That was the final descendant of Jehu. It was not the final man on the throne in Israel; that would come shortly thereafter when Israel was invaded by the Assyrians. But this was that fulfillment of the name of the first child of Hosea.

Moving on. Verse six tells us that Gomer conceived again. This time she bore a daughter, and the LORD said to him, *"Call her name No Mercy."*

Now the 'No Mercy' there is, that's the English translation of the name. It's actually in the Hebrew, it's Lo-ruhamah. And it literally means, "She has not received mercy." And He (God) goes on to explain why they were to name the daughter that, *"for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel to forgive them at all."* And so God is essentially announcing through Hosea, that Israel's days are numbered as a nation. And once again, they came to an end with the conquering of Israel with, by Assyria.

Verse seven goes on. And this is interesting because, notice that God goes on in a positive sense now. He kind of switch, switches— if you will, to kind of a positive statement. He says, but I will have mercy on the house of Judah. Remember, this is the southern kingdom, and I will save them by the LORD their God.

But notice He explains how, *"I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horsemen."* (horses) In other words, He's not going to save them by any kind of military conventional means He says, *"or by horseman."* So God is saying that the same army that is going to conquer Israel, the northern kingdom, is going to also come against the southern kingdom of Judah, but they're not going to have success against Judah. They will conquer Israel, but not Judah. And God tells them it's not going to be by their hand, by the hand of military might, that they will be saved.

Now this fulfillment is also given to us in 2 Kings. Let me put it up on the screen. 2 Kings 19.

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2 Kings 19:32-35 (ESV)

"Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the LORD. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David." And that night (we're told) the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when the people arose early in the morning, behold these (there) were all dead bodies. (just laying around because the angel of the LORD slew them during the night)

So this is the fulfillment of what God had said through Hosea— that Judah will not be taken captive by the Assyrians. In fact, they will defeat the Assyrian army, but not with bows and arrows or horsemen or any sort of military means. Pretty amazing story there, by the way, in 2 Kings.

So now we move on here, verse eight in chapter one; *“When she had weaned (Lo-Ruhamah, which means) No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. And the LORD said, ‘Call his name, Not My People,’”* And again, that's the English translation of the Hebrew word Lo-Ammi. Lo-Ammi. And that means essentially ‘Not My People.’ And that's why He (God) goes on to say, *“...for you are not My people and I am not your God.”*

So you can see that there's been a break here between the LORD God and His covenant people. There's been a break. Why? Because of unfaithfulness. Remember, God considers His covenant with Israel like a marriage covenant between a husband and a wife.

Isn't it interesting that even in the New Testament idea of marriage, we see a picture of Christ and His bride, the Church. Paul talks about that in the New Testament. So you have marriage as a picture in both Old and New Testaments of the relationship between God and His people. And the idea here is that unfaithfulness on the part of the people is like adultery.

But in this particular case, God is saying, “You're no longer My wife. I'm no longer your Husband.” He's simply putting it in different terms: “You are not My people; I am not your God.” In other words, the marriage has been broken. (God says) “You broke it. You broke the marriage covenant. By your unfaithfulness.”

And that's what happens even in our marriages. And we'll talk about this here as we get close to the end of our time tonight. We'll talk about when a marriage is broken by unfaithfulness and how the marriage bond can be broken. But let's move on here.

But then it's interesting. Now the LORD is going to add here some very incredible words of encouragement concerning the future of Israel. Verse 10. He says, *“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said of them, ‘You are not My people,’ it shall be said to them, ‘Children of the living God’”* And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together.”

There are no mysteriously hidden or lost tribes of Israel. I don't know if you've ever heard anything about the lost 10 tribes of Israel. God doesn't lose anything. And He says very clearly here that Israel and Judah will be gathered together. And He says, *“And they shall appoint for themselves One Head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.”*

Now this is an interesting statement. Now you'll remember that earlier He told Hosea to name his first son Jezreel as a reminder of judgment that was to come upon the house of Jehu for the atrocities he committed and He was going to end his family line. But now God is promising there's going to be a restoration of the two houses of Israel, Israel and Judah.

The two kingdoms would come together in such a way that would be so powerful that the name Jezreel would be changed from having a connotation of judgment to having a rather, a distinction of unity. He (God) ends that, that verse in verse 11 by saying, *“Great shall be the day of Jezreel.”* So now He turns it on its ear and says, “There will be restoration and Jezreel will come to mean something positive.”

This is really fascinating, you know, but that's God. That's God— who turns things around. That's our God. He turns things around, boy... the God of second chances, and third and fourth, and fifth and so forth.

By the way, as we get into chapter two, it is generally believed that this first verse of chapter two ought to have been tacked on to chapter one, and chapter two should have begun with verse two because chapter divisions didn't exist until like the 1400s. So this came years and years, hundreds and hundreds of years, after these were written. There were no chapter divisions in this. So verse one really belongs to the previous chapter where God says, *“Say to your brothers, ‘You are My people,’ and to your sisters, ‘You have received mercy.’”* Notice there once again, those names of derision and difficulty will be turned around and they will take on a positive connotation one day.

Now we get into chapter two. We're going to see that God depicts Israel here in the same light as He would an adulterous wife. And He says in verse two, *“Plead with your mother, plead—for she is not My wife and I am not her Husband—”* There. He puts it in more specific, marriage-related terms, *“...that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts; lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and make her like a parched land, and kill 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, "Plead with your mother," speaking of Israel, "that she would put away her whoredom, 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.

So why would God now speak in a way as to say, "Call, call your mother to repentance, lest these things happen."? He knows they're going to happen. He knows that judgment is right around the corner. So why is He pleading? Why is He pleading with her to turn?

Well, because there are still people in the nation of Israel, individuals, who will still turn, and you have to understand that about God. Although God deals with Israel on a community level; He speaks to them as a nation. He speaks to them as a people. He's also speaking to individuals, and you have to know that there are many, many people who were in the northern kingdom of Israel who eventually heeded the message. It wasn't the majority, but some heeded the message, actually picked up and moved into the southern kingdom because they believed that there was faithfulness going on there. They moved their families, abandoned their family property that was given to them by inheritance, and went to go live in the land of Judah because they knew that Israel had gone astray.

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 you know, we have to remember that. Even though, even though judgment, I – you know, judgment is coming upon the world you guys... I think you know that.

Judgment is coming. Jesus is going to return to judge the earth. It's coming. And the earth is going to fall under judgment. We read about it. You read about it a lot of times in the Old Testament. We of course read about it in the New Testament and quite a bit in the Book of Revelation. We learn a lot about that judgment— what it's going to look like, how difficult it's going to be.

But there are still people getting saved. There are still individuals who are heeding the message. Judgment will come, but there are individuals who are taking advantage of the hour. They're recognizing the message and they're saying, "I need to get right with God. I need to get my heart, my life, right with the LORD." And that's why God continues to hold out that hand— to respond, you know, even when judgment is right around the corner.

Because we saw in our study of the book of Revelation, even during the seven year great tribulation, God is pleading with people to come to Christ. He raises up evangelists. He—there's messages that go forth in the world. I believe that's the fundamental function of the 144,000 that are raised up during the time of the great tribulation (Rev 7) to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. God is going to continue to sound the alarm and bring people to faith up until the last, final moment. And He always will.

Verse four goes on, *“Upon her children also I will have no mercy, because they are children of whoredom. For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’”*

Notice how God is revealing the fact that they had come to believe that their pagan gods were their providers. They forgot that the LORD their God was their provider. *“Therefore,”* God says in verse six, *“I will hedge up her way with thorns.”* That's a way of saying I'll make life difficult for her, *“I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths.”*⁷ *She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them. Then she shall say, ‘I will go and return to my first Husband, for it was better for me then than now.’”*

“⁸ And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used” in the worship of Baal. *“⁹ Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness.”*

*“¹⁰ Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of My hand.”*¹¹ *And I will put an end to all her mirth,”* and that's a word meaning amusements, *“her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts.”*¹² *And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, ‘These are my wages, which my lovers have given me.’ I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall devour them.”*¹³ *And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot Me,’ declares the LORD.”*

So you see how God is couching this language of the unfaithfulness of Israel, as a wayward wife, who went off and had other lovers and looked to those other lovers as the means of her supply, when in fact it was the LORD God all along.

But I want you to notice that once again as we go on here reading in verse 14, God is going to go back and speak of restoration. He's going to talk about good times to come, and this is really interesting in the light of these passages related to judgment. Look at verse 14. And there's a background that goes with this too, which I'll bring you up to date on.

But He says here in verses 14 and 15, *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.”* Now, once again, this is God taking what was originally known as a very negative thing and turning around and making it something that is positive and fruitful.

The valley of Achor, you see, has a significant meaning. If you remember, first of all, ‘achor’ means trouble. The Valley of Achor— it means the Valley of Trouble. And it was named that because of a man named Achan. And you'll remember that Achan was a man who, when Joshua first brought the people of Israel into the land, God said to them, “The first city that you're going to go up against is Jericho. And now I'm telling you that whatever you find in Jericho, it all belongs to Me. You can have anything you want from any of the cities after that, but Jericho I get. It's all mine.”

But Achan was a man who saw some of the things in Jericho and he hid them. He took them and he hid them in his tent. And you'll remember when his sin was discovered and judged because it was actually recorded in the book of Joshua chapter seven. Let me put it on the screen for you. This is what it says:

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Joshua 7:24, 25b-26 (ESV)

And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zarah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, (That's the stuff he had hidden in his tent.) his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the (here it is) Valley of Achor. And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day, the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.

And again, it was the Valley of Trouble and it was bad and it had a very negative connotation. And whenever everybody ever talked about the Valley of Achor, all they had to do was think about it, talk about it, or look at that pile of

rocks that was still there and they would remember the trouble that was brought upon Israel by this man named Achan. A place of judgment, a place of pain.

But look what God is saying here at the end of verse 14. He says it's going to become a doorway of hope; this place that was known for judgment and trouble. And this is God's way of saying, "I'm going to turn it around. I'm going to turn this thing around and make what was a trouble, a place of hope." Again, this is what the LORD does as we trust Him with the troubles of our lives. He'll bring it to a place of hope.

Verse 15. Actually, we're in the middle of verse 15, *"And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt."*¹⁶ *"And in that day," declares the LORD, 'you will call Me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.'"* What a blasphemous name that was.¹⁷ *"For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more."*¹⁸ *"And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety."*¹⁹ *"And I will betroth you to Me..."* look at this (verse 20): *"... in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD."*²¹ *"And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow her for Myself in the land."* He literally pictures putting Israel back in the land as sowing them in the land.

And He says (continuing verse 23), *"And I will have mercy on No Mercy,"* Right? Lo-Ruhamah. *"...and I will say to Not My people,"* Lo-Ammi *"You are my people"; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'"* So you can see here that the LORD is expressing prophetically His anticipation of a time to come when the relationship of the people of Israel will be powerfully restored.

And we're going to see that– we're going to actually cover the next chapter. Don't worry about time here; it's a very short chapter. But we're going to see more of the same. We're going to see the LORD looking ahead in anticipation to a time in their future that has taken place, and a time in their future that has not yet taken place.

So chapter three, *"And the LORD said to me, 'Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.'"* So here's

what's going on. God tells Hosea to go back and return to his wife, even though she is still actively committing adultery.

Can you imagine what that would be like? Can you imagine what it would be like? Your wife is, your spouse, is committing adultery actively, and the LORD says, “I want you to go back to him. I want you to go back.” Wow. Because you know, I mean everybody knows infidelity and unfaithfulness— those are devastating things in a marriage, and it most certainly breaks the marriage bond as we talked before. Unfaithfulness will break the marriage bond. But one of the things that we see in this passage here is that it doesn't have to be the end of a marriage necessarily. There are actually many marriages that have suffered unfaithfulness and have come back to be very strong and very faithful and very genuine.

But God is telling Hosea to go back and be restored to his wife, even in her unfaithfulness. And there's a, there's a— you know, you learn a lot about love when you see how God responds to His people here. I mean there, there's a lot about love that we just don't get from living in the world because we get, you know, we get told what love is all the time; in books, in movies and songs, and they are constantly telling us what love is.

But you learn that there's something else to love when you read the Bible because the Bible makes it clear that God in His love toward His unfaithful people— it's something that He chooses to do. And when we say that you know, when we say God chooses to love His people... on the very surface, that sounds like a simple statement. God chooses to love us. God chooses to love His people. He even chooses to love unfaithful people.

But when you really get to thinking about it and you uncover, and you dig down into the deeper meaning of what that really is talking about, it's— what it's saying is, He loves us when we don't deserve His love. He loves us when we least deserve His love. He loves us when we are unfaithful to His love. That's what it's saying, yet He chooses the path of love.

And so what God is teaching us here is something very important about love that we're not going to learn about from the world. He's teaching us here that love is not just a matter of the heart; it's not a romantic notion alone. It is also a matter of the will. Because here God chooses to love and He pictures this, He depicts His choice to love by telling Hosea, “Go and take her back, in the midst of her unfaithfulness. Take her back.”

And that is really incredible because you know, I've told you guys; you know I used to be a radio announcer for many years. I was a, well, we called them disc jockeys back then. They don't spin discs anymore. Back in my day, they actually, we actually played records. I actually li.... I was in radio long enough to go from records to tapes to CDs but the name remained. But I remember, I played a lot of music on the radio that perpetuated this idea of what love is. You know? And I was thinking about it; in fact, if Sue was paying attention before she— we came to church tonight, she heard me singing a song because I get songs stuck in my head and I just keep singing them. And she'll say to me, “You need to change the station please, on that.” She, and that means start singing a different song.

But I was singing a song by Earth, Wind and Fire. Some of you guys remember Earth, Wind and Fire. Back in 1979, that was just after Noah got off the ark, by the way; the earth's crust was still cooling— there was a song that Earth, Wind, and Fire recorded and it was a big hit. And it was called “After the Love Is Gone,” and there was a particular lyric in that song. Let me put it up on the screen for you. Don't sing. But it said:

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*Oh, after the love has gone
What used to be right is wrong
Can love that's lost be found?*

Songwriters David Foster/Jay Graydin/William B. Champlin
After the Love Has Gone lyrics © Songtrust Ave, Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

And that was the question that was being asked. And it was a rhetorical question, I'll grant you, in the song that Earth, Wind and Fire wrote. But the rhetorical expectation was ‘No, it can't be found once it's lost.’ Well, I'm here to tell you that's just not true. I'm here to tell you that love that's been lost can be found again. But it is, and the reason is, because it's not just a feeling; it's a choice.

And I've told you that Sue and I began to walk with the LORD after the first five years of our marriage, which were a train wreck. And believe me, the love was gone. It was gone. And yeah, we were living the lyric by Earth, Wind, and Fire. But for some reason the LORD moved upon our hearts, to give our marriage to Him and trust Him with it.

There wasn't really anything to build on. We had pretty much ruined everything, but we decided to just be obedient. That was our decision. That was it. We

didn't even at that point, even decide to love one another. We just decided to be obedient to God. And that's, that was the starting block. And then after that, you and, but see, being obedient is showing love when you don't feel it. We didn't know it at the time, but it was choosing love: I'm going to, I'm going to show you love. I don't feel a bit of it, but I'm going to treat you lovingly.

And it's a very, very difficult thing to do. Very difficult thing to do. But we found out something amazing during that time. We found out that when you walk in obedience to the LORD, He honors that obedience. And as we simply stepped out and then— and we didn't step out perfectly; we stepped out and stumbled. We stepped out and stumbled, then stepped out and stumbled. But we kept stepping out. In obedience. And when we did, we found that there was this amazing work of the LORD to put the love back in the marriage. A love that we had frittered away with our foolishness, stupidity, and recklessness. He put the love back in. He did. We didn't. We chose to be obedient, which means I'm going to treat you lovingly.

So I just wanted you to know the answer to the question, 'Can love that's lost be found?' is yes. It can. The reason many times that it's not found is because couples simply don't want it to be found. They simply don't want to go there. They choose not to go there. But again, that's a choice too. Sometimes one person chooses it for you in a marriage situation. Sometimes, sometimes there's one person who very much wants the love to be discovered again, and the other partner says, 'I don't care.' And there's very little you can do in a situation like that, but....

So let's keep reading. So look, so Hosea is told to take back his adulterous wife. He (Hosea) says, *"So I bought her for 15 shekels of silver and a homer"* (which is a measurement) *"and a lethtec"* (and I'm not sure what that even is) *"of barley."*

These are, I mean, these are measurements. But anyway, this is incredible. I want you to see what's being said here in verse two. Even though what we read here leaves us with probably more questions than we have answers. We're not exactly sure what Hosea is paying here. We're not sure why he's paying, because this woman is his wife. We're not sure why he's having to pay. Gomer could have left him and become a temple prostitute and he had to pay to get her out of that service. Or she could have become enslaved to what we would call today a pimp; someone who employed her as a concubine or a prostitute or something like that and hired her out and he (Hosea) had to pay the price.

But either way, can you imagine the humiliation of being married to a woman, having had children with her, she goes off to live in that life of adultery again, and then you go and pay for her, to get her back?

This is a very extreme example of someone taking the high road. And make no mistake about it, this is the high road. It's not a fun road. It's one that most people would say, "No way, Hosea," you know? But he, but he took it out of obedience. Obedience to God.

Verse three. *"And I said to her, 'You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you,'"* which is faithful. And then in the following verses we're made to understand that this too is a picture of what God wanted to convey to the people of Israel.

Verse four and five, which is the end of the chapter, *"For the children of Israel, shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and..."* (look at this) *"...David their king..."* (Guys, David has long since passed from the scene. So that tells you something, which we'll talk about in a moment. But he says they will seek the LORD their God and David their king *"and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to His goodness..."* When? *"...in the latter days."*

And what we're seeing in these last couple of verses of chapter three is once again, that law of double reference that we have seen so many times in the Old Testament prophecies. And it basically means that this prophecy, that is given here, is referencing two different points in time.

It's referencing a point in time that is in the near future and one in the distant future, which has not yet come to pass even today. Because, as we've said before, David is going to rule again, you guys, in Jerusalem, during the millennial kingdom. David, when he is in his resurrected body, is going to rule in Jerusalem.

Jesus is going to rule over the earth during the millennial kingdom. David is going to rule over Jerusalem. And that's when the people will be seeking not only the LORD, but also David their king. So, this passage speaks of those two time references. The closer to their future— to their timeframe, references the time where they were returned home from their exile in Babylon, which we've of course already gone through in our study of Ezekiel.

But I want to remind you of something, you know. The nation of Israel was judged because of idolatry. Much later on the nation of Judah was judged because of idolatry. And then Judah, and all the tribes that were living in Judah at that time, were carried off to Babylon where they existed for 70 years. And then they returned back to their homeland.

And guess what? They never dealt with idolatry again. God cured them. He cured them of their idolatrous ways, which is spiritual adultery. So, anyway that's where we're going to end here at the end of chapter three. And we're going to pick it up in chapter four next time. So that's where we will conclude tonight's study.

So let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for giving us this time tonight to be in your Word. And LORD, we thank you for the insights that we gain here about your love for your people, about love being so much more than just a romantic notion— but also a choice of the will.

We thank you Father, for helping us to understand your prophetic timetable— how you will deal with the nation of Israel in the latter days, and how we can look toward these things being fulfilled. We continue to pray, LORD, that you would open our hearts to all that you have for us to do in this day and in this age, the age that we are living in.

LORD, you've brought us to this time, just for this time. And we live in a very challenging time, to be sure. And yet, LORD, this is when you brought our lives to be, and we need to continue to pray, LORD, use us. Use me in the way that you have determined that my life should be lived. LORD, fulfill, we pray, the purpose for which you have given us life. We thank you and praise you for your work in our lives, and we ask you to continue to speak to us through Jesus Christ our LORD, amen.