

“All the Prophets Testify”: Hosea 1:2-9

Midweek Bible Study – 2026 July 15

Rev. Dr. Jayson S. Galler, Pastor, Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Kilgore, TX

<https://www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/prophets>

Invocation & Opening Prayer

Follow-up to last class: pace, depth, other comments or questions?

Outline (the following is from *TLSB* p.1428; we are listing the major divisions and will expand/collapse them as we proceed through them [we previously noted possible alternate explanations for the arrangement, such as *CSSB* p.1351, and *God’s Word for Today*, p.3]):

- I. Superscription (1:1)
- II. Hosea’s Personal Issues as Prophecies (1:2-3:5)
 - A. Names of Hosea and Gomer’s Children Presage Israel’s Judgment (1:2-9)**
 - B. Great Reversal of the Curse (1:10-2:1)
 - C. Divorce Proceedings with New Betrothal and Marriage (2:2-15)
 - D. Images of Great Reversal (2:16-23)
 - E. A Second (?) Marriage to Gomer (3:1-5)
- III. Various Oracles (4:1-14:9)

Names of Hosea and Gomer’s Children Presage Israel’s Judgment (1:2-9):

(“Presage”: foreshadow, portend, or predict a future event, often one that is unpleasant)

1:2 *When the Lord first spoke through Hosea*: Golden refers to the verse as Hosea’s prophetic calling, entailed in his call to marry. God is the source of the message, and Hosea is the medium of delivering the message, ultimately to the people (confer *TLSB* but to come extent compare Laetsch). Note the use of words and deeds. Confer other mentions in this passage regarding the Lord’s speaking further: 1:4, 6, 9—after each child was born. Keil-Delitzsch overviews the passage, “For the purpose of depicting before the eyes of the sinful people the judgment to which Israel has exposed itself through its apostasy from the Lord, Hosea is to marry a prostitute, and beget children by her, whose names are so appointed by Jehovah as to point out the evil fruits of the departure from God.” Such prophetic actions can be called “performative speech acts”, and, as Golden notes, God’s Word does what it says, and he also refers to Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Holy Supper.

the Lord said to Hosea: we noted at 1:1 that, as *TLSB* puts it, “The manner of God’s revelation to Hosea is not given in detail.” Laetsch says, “The very first word addressed to Hosea imposed upon him an almost impossible task, yet by its almighty grace made him willing to submit to the Lord’s will.”

“Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom: Laetsch says the Hebrew term *laqach* translated “take” has the sense of take and receive, accept. The Hebrew noun *zanuwn* can mean adultery, fornication, and prostitution. As we overviewed last week, a main question is whether Gomer was actually a prostitute/adulteress or whether the characterization was figurative, with various combinations of possibilities also taken by various commentators. *TLSB* notes that Luther favored the symbolic understanding but that many modern commentators hold to a literal view, which *TLSB* says is the simplest understanding of the text. Roehrs-Franzmann notes that “Whether Gomer was actually a harlot in the ordinary sense is not necessarily said. She was a wife of harlotry in that she, like the rest of her people, participated in the fertility rites of Baal worship [the Hebrew word can mean “lord” or “husband”]; perhaps she submitted to some sort of bridal initiatory rite to insure fecundity [the capacity or potential to reproduce] for her coming marriage.” Objections to Hosea’s marrying a whore (for example, because it was forbidden to priests in Leviticus 21:7), if that is what she was, are often met with God’s command for Hosea to do so, even if seemingly against God’s own word or character. Golden comments, “Hosea’s call is shocking in a unique way, as he is called to take a whoring wife. The temptation is to soften the impact of Hosea’s marriage, yet the text is meant to be provocative. It is the shocking, even offensive, effect of the call that lends graphic potency to Yahweh’s Word against Israel. It is outrageous that a prophet would marry a whoring wife; it is even more outrageous that Yahweh would marry himself to a whoring people. That is the shockingly outrageous nature of the Gospel.” Golden continues, “The scandal of Hosea wedding himself to such a woman and the scandal of Yahweh wedding himself to such a gride is in concert with the scandal of the cross, which includes Christ wedding himself to his bride the church, despite the church’s infidelity.” We might think of Ephesians 5:22-33 and the Church’s being cleansed by the washing of water with the word, namely, Holy Baptism. *GWfT* refers to Jesus’s treatment of the divorced Samaritan woman in John 4:1-26 and the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11. *TLSB* comments, “the troubled marriage of Hosea and Gomer underscores the prophet’s message of God’s judgment against Israel for her unfaithfulness.” That connection is explicit in what follows in this verse.

for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord.”: Regarding “the land”, Golden notes that the “the land” refers to “the inhabitants” of the land. *TLSB* comments, “Though directed primarily at Israel (the Northern Kingdom), the judgment announced by Hosea extends to all those included in the covenant relationship with the Lord.” (Presumably *TLSB* means thereby to include also the Southern Kingdom; confer and compare the reference to Israel in 1:4 and the distinction between Israel and Judah in 1:6-7.) Regarding “whoredom”, the Hebrew construction uses the verb *zanah*, which is the root of the noun used earlier in the verse, and in this case the “whoredom” might be both figurative in its relationship to the Lord and literal in its idolatrous fornication with temple prostitutes. Roehrs-Franzmann comments that whoredom “emphasizes the personal character of the bond which Israel is violating and the abhorrent form which the people’s apostasy took, that of participation in the licentious fertility of cult of Baal, in which sacral prostitution played a vital role”. *CSSB* comments, “The one great sin of which the Lord (through Hosea) accuses Israel.” Regarding “forsaking”, *TLSB* notes, “The people no longer followed after the Lord or walked in His ways. Instead, they abandoned Him and followed after pagan gods.” *TLSB* further comments, “On a related issue, the importance of women in Israelite society and in biblical literature is demonstrated by the way the Lord describes His relationships to Israel as being like the relationship between a husband and a wife.” Laetsch refers to the wife as representing the nation and the children the individual members of the nation. We might further mention the relationship between Christ and His Church, and we might discuss how sexual sins are in some ways distinct from other sins, though ultimately all sins are equally damnable and forgivable with repentance and faith in Jesus’s Christ’s death and resurrection.

- 1:3 *So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim*: there is no indication whether the Lord specified Gomer or whether Hosea found her for himself, though Laetsch refers to a wife “chosen for him by the Lord”. Often in the Bible, Men take wives, and women are given to husbands. The name Gomer in some sources is said to mean “complete”, though *TLSB* says that “Unlike the names of his children, the name of Hosea’s wife appears not to have symbolic meaning”, confer Golden, but compare Keil-Delitzsch who sees her as “thoroughly perfected in her whoredom”. *CSSB* notes that this Gomer is not mentioned outside of this book (Keil-Delitzsch refers to the name of a people in Genesis 10:2-3; Golden also mentions allies of Gog in Ezekiel 38:6), and Golden refers to the name’s being used in this book only in this verse. Regarding “Diblaim”, the name reads as Gomer’s father’s name (confer, for example, the Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon, which says the name means “two cakes”; also confer Golden, though he takes the name as “underscoring the historical and personal reality of Hosea’s marriage”). In contrast, *TLSB* says that the name is an unclear geographic reference “perhaps to an undiscovered village” (Keil-Delitzsch notes the use of the name in combination of other names of Moabitish places).

and she conceived and bore him a son: the sequence would seem to suggest that, even if Gomer had been promiscuous prior to Hosea’s taking her as his wife, the baby is Hosea’s son, unless Gomer had immediately been unfaithful and the son was conceived by some other man but born as if the baby were Hosea’s son (confer, for example, Laetsch). *CSSB* notes that “him” is not mentioned in 1:6 and 1:9 in regards to the next two children and so “may indicate that Hosea was not the father”.

1:4 *And the Lord said to him*: confer at 1:2 above and at 1:6 and 1:9 below.

“Call his name Jezreel: “Jezreel” is the name of several different people in the Bible, as well as several different places (for example, in 1:5 below). *TLSB* notes that “Jezreel” means “God sows” (*CSSB* says “God scatters”), and *TLSB* suggests the name “has a double meaning (compare the transliteration of the second and third children’s names in 1:6 and 1:9 below). On the one hand, it recalls that God caused the people of Israel to multiply into the uncountable seed of Abraham (Gn 12:2; 15:5). It also brings to mind God’s judgment against Ahab and the house of Jehu.” (2 Kings 9:1-13 tells of Elisha’s sending a son of the prophets to anoint Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi, as king over Israel and of that young man’s telling Jehu to strike down the house of Aham his master; *CSSB* notes that Jeroboam II was of the dynasty of Jehu, which was established at Jezreel by the overthrow of Ahab’s son Joram—but, if that overthrow was at God’s command, then His judgment against Jehu for striking down Ahab may seem somewhat odd, though Roehrs-Franzmann notes that “God did not will the massive brutality with which Jehu executed his commission”. Keil-Delitzsch limits the number of offenses in view and distinguishes between God’s command for which Jehu is not guilty of carrying out and Jehu’s motive for carrying it out.) That judgment against the house of Jehu is described in what follows in this verse.

for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel: regarding “just a little while”, confer “on that day” in 1:5. Regarding the “house of Jehu”, *TLSB* comments, “King Jeroboam II, king of the northern tribes at the time, sprang from Jehu’s family tree. The end of this royal line is an important focus of Hosea’s prophecy.” Regarding the “blood”, *TLSB* comments, “Much blood was shed in Jezreel, including that of Naboth and his sons (2Ki 9:26 [confer 1 Kings 21]), King Ahab (1Ki 22:38), King Joram (2Ki 9:24), and Jezebel (2Ki 9:33).” Roehrs-Franzmann notes that “The Word of the Lord by Elijah which predicted that the blood of Naboth would cry out from Jezreel for the blood of Ahab (1 K 21:19) was fulfilled when Jehu slew Joram (Ahab’s son and successor) and Jezebel and cast their bodies on the blood-marked plot of ground in Jezreel; and it was to Jezreel that the basket containing the heads of Ahab’s 70 sons, murdered at Jehu’s request, was sent (2 K 9:1-10:11).” Roehrs-Franzmann continues, “It is the history of bloodshed that gives Jezreel its sinister tone here. The name itself has a more auspicious sound, for it means ‘God sows,’ and to this sense the prophet alludes in 1:11 and 2:22.”

and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel: regarding “an end of the kingdom”, *TLSB* comments, “Unfortunately, the royal house of Jehu turned out to be no better than its predecessors. This line ended when Zechariah was murdered (2Ki 15:10). Keil-Delitzsch says the end is not only the royal line but also the regal sovereignty itself. Regarding “the house of Israel”, arguably only the northern kingdom is in view here; confer and compare “the land” in 1:2 above and the distinction between Israel and Judah in 1:6-7 below.

1:5 *And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel*: regarding “on that day”, confer “in just a little while” in 1:4. Keil-Delitzsch says not only the end of Jehu’s line but also the end of the kingdom that followed. Golden says the judgment foreshadows the judgment and redemption of Good Friday and the Last Day. Regarding “break the bow”, *TLSB* comments, “Figurative for the destruction of an opponent’s military strength (e.g. 1Sm 2:4). Assyria destroyed Israel’s military power and devastated its land in 723/2 BC (2Ki 17:5-6).” *CSSB* notes that even after Israel’s military power was broken Samaria held out under siege for some two years longer”. Regarding the “Valley of Jezreel”, *TLSB* refers to Color Map 2 and comments, “Triangular valley southwest of the Sea of Chinnereth [a.k.a. the Sea of Galilee], with Mount Tabor at the northeast point. Owing to its adequate rainfall and rich soil, and its location on the main roads running east/west and north/south, it was an important part of Israel’s territory.” Keil-Delitzsch notes the word-play between “Israel” and “Jezreel”, and Laetsch, with some onomatopoeia of his own, comments, “the sharp sibilants cutting the hearer to the very marrow”. Laetsch reiterates that the Valley of Jezreel was where Israel’s strength was defeated, despite Holy Scripture’s giving no location for the battle.

1:6 *She conceived again and bore a daughter*: presumably Gomer conceives by Hosea. Keil-Delitzsch says the figure of sons and daughters indicates “the totality of the nation, both men and women.”

And the Lord said to him: confer at 1:2 and 1:4 above and at 1:9 below.

“Call her name No Mercy: the ESV text note indicates, “Hebrew *Lo-ruhama*, which means *she has not received mercy*”. The first son’s name’s Hebrew pronunciation is transliterated into English, while the daughter’s name’s meaning is translated into English (confer the second son in 1:8, but compare, for example, the NIV, which gives the Hebrew of the names of the second and third children in the text; Luther says they should be retained in Hebrew). *TLSB* calls the name “symbolic” emphasizing what follows in the rest of the verse. *GWfT* mentions names that people give to their children in our time and why and how people can be saddled with them.

for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all: regarding “the house of Israel”, confer and compare “the land” in 1:2 and the “house of Israel” in 1:4 above and Judah in 1:7 below. *TLSB* comments, “due to Israel’s persistent unfaithfulness, God will withdraw His compassion. Such threats of judgment are not Hosea’s final word, however; 2:23 promises a future love for the people.” The Septuagint of Hosea 1:6 is thought to be referenced by James 5:6 (as noted below at 1:9, the Hebrew of 1:6 and 1:9 are thought to be referenced by 1 Peter 2:10).

1:7 *But I will have mercy on the house of Judah*: instead of “But” in this clause and “and” in the next clause, Golden translates “no longer”. *TLSB* comments, “God’s covenant with Abraham’s descendants will continue through the remnant of Judah. Though the Babylonians did in fact take the Judeans into exile in 587 BC, the captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem 70 years later.” Keil-Delitzsch discusses the contrast between Israel and Judah as showing Israel “that Jehovah is no longer its own God, but that He has dissolved His covenant with the idolatrous race.” Roehrs-Franzmann sees a warning here to Judah.

and I will save them by the Lord their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by horses or by horsemen.”: *TLSB* comments, “God pledges to save Judah by His own hand rather than by their armaments. This reminds the northern tribes as well that their military strength, even if multiplied, is worthless (10:13). A fulfillment of God’s promises to deliver Judah from the Assyrians miraculously is recounted in 2Ki 19:32-36.” The 2 Kings passage recounts the angel of the Lord’s striking 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. Keil-Delitzsch also mentions that “the Lord does not need weapons of war and military force, in order to help and save”. And, Keil-Delitzsch further notes, “whoever forsakes the living God, will fall into destruction, and cannot reckon upon the mercy of God in the time of need.” *GWfT* refers to salvation beyond Judah’s deliverance, and Luther refers to the third child’s connecting the prophecy of the temporal kingdom with the eternal kingdom.

1:8 *When she had weaned No Mercy*: regarding the weaning, *TLSB* comments, “Occurred by age 2 or 3. Normally a time of celebration for the family and community (cf Gn 21:8; 1Sm 1:24).” Keil-Delitzsch says that the phrasing “implies the uninterrupted succession of the calamities set forth by the names of the children.” Golden sees the mention of the weaning as again underscoring “the historical reality of the events” but also serving as a marker of time to repent. Golden comments, “faithful pastoral care will not allow impenitence to go unanswered but will confront it with the goal that the obdurate be brought to repentance and restoration”.

she conceived and bore a son: *TLSB* comments, “No Mercy’s weaning coincides with the conception of Not My People and so reinforces that the distance between God and His children is steadily increasing.” *CSSB* sees progression from the first through the second to the third child; Laetch sees each child representing different phases of the judgment. Regarding the timing, through elevated levels of the hormone prolactin, nursing is sometimes said to naturally suppress ovulation and so conception, though we can also see God as closing and opening the womb. One might debate whether there is any theological “distance” between God’s not showing Israel mercy and Israel’s not being His people; perhaps things other than mercy were then withheld? (*CSSB* refers to a reversal of love and a break in the covenant relationship).

1:9 *And the Lord said*: confer at 1:2, 4, and 6 above.

“Call his name Not My People: the ESV text note indicates, “Hebrew *Lo-amni*, which means *not my people*” (compare the transliteration of the first son’s name in 1:4 above and confer the translation of the daughter’s name in 1:6 above). *TLSB* comments, “Breach between God and Israel continues to widen. It can still be restored, however, through the people’s repentance and God’s restorative action (2:1, 23).” Golden mentions that the language is akin to divorce.

for you are not my people, and I am not your God.”: the ESV text notes indicates that the Hebrew of the final phrase is literally “I am not yours”, though Golden translates, “I am Not I Am to you”. Keil-Delitzsch note the shift to second-person plural. Hosea 1:6 and 1:9 are thought to be referenced in 1 Peter 2:10.

What are you taking home from the prophecy considered tonight?

TLSB's Law and Gospel Application Note for Hosea 1:2-11 says, "Hosea's tragic marriage and the suffering it inflicts on his children dramatically depict the wretched condition of God's people at the time. Sadly, the waywardness exhibited by God's people still happens today; unless the Spirit continues to grant us repentance and faith, we fall into the same kind of unfaithfulness and apostasy. Through Hosea's ministry, God shows mercy, pledging to gather, restore and lead His people into a better future."

Next time, July 22, Hosea 1:10-2:1

Closing Prayer & Benediction