

# “All the Prophets Testify”: Hosea 2:16-23

Midweek Bible Study – 2026 August 12

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)

Images of Great Reversal (2:16-23):

2:16 *And*: the Hebrew is a simple conjunction that can be “and”. We previously have discussed the matter of where any section breaks might be, such as after 13 and/or after 15, as we have taken it. To be sure, regardless of where we might place any section breaks, there is a close connection between Hosea/the Lord’s alluring in 2:14 and Gomer/Israel’s response in 2:16 and following.

*in that day*: in this passage, the phrase recurs in 2:18 and 2:21 (the only three uses in Hosea), though in 2:18 the ESV oddly renders the phrase “on that day” (other translations I checked also vary among the three phrases, but not as the ESV does). Not immediately clear is whether all three references are to the same “day” and what day exactly “that” day is, whether a time before the Messiah, the time of the Messiah, or the Last Day when the Messiah comes in glory to judge the living and the dead, or in some prophetic telescoping sense perhaps all three. Luther refers to the time of 2:14. Kretzmann thinks “that day” is the Messianic period. *TLSB*’s comment on 2:18 suggests that the phrase “makes plain that the end of time is in view, when a new heaven and earth will be established”, though how much that fulfillment would be of comfort to Gomer/Israel at the time that it was prophesied is perhaps debatable. Obviously what day is determined to be in view in part depends on how what is said to happen on that day is understood. For example, Keil-Delitzsch says, “The church will then enter once more into the right relation to its God,” and that happens anytime people repent. Golden thinks since Israel did not return from exile then Yahweh’s renewed marriage is a Last Day promise.

*declares the Lord*: confer 2:21. The attribution of what is said to the Lord reminds us that the Lord is speaking through Hosea and so emphasizes the certainty of the matter. The previous use of the phrase in 2:13 may have indicated the end of that particular oracle, a function that neither of the uses of the phrase in this passage seems to do, though Golden says in 2:16 and 2:21 the phrase marks the beginning of discrete sections.

*you will call me ... and no longer will you call me*: the two uses of the English “you” are both embedded in the Hebrew second-person feminine singular verbal forms. Similarly, the four uses of the English “you” in 2:19-20 are also feminine singular, while the “you” in 2:18 is masculine plural (a “y’all” or an “all y’all”). Golden refers to the form as second feminine singular, what would be “you”, but without explanation translates them as third feminine singular “she”.

*‘My Husband’ ... ‘My Baal’*: the Hebrew word *’iysh*, which the ESV translates “husband” can be such things as “man”, “male” in contrast to female, “husband”, “human being” in contrast to God, *et cetera*. Kretzmann uses the KJV or ASV that transliterate the Hebrew “Ishi”. The Hebrew word *ba’al* that the ESV transliterates as “Baal” can be such things as “owner, husband, lord” or “lord (used of foreign gods)”. *TLSB* comments, “Hbr *ba’al* means both ‘husband’ and ‘lord.’ Here both senses nuance the meaning.” Keil-Delitzsch explains, “Calling or naming is a designation of the nature or the true relation of a person or thing. The church calls God her husband, when she stands in the right relation to Him; when she acknowledges, revers, and love Him, as He has revealed Himself, *i.e.* as the only true God.” Laetsch says, “This is a cry in which repentance and shame, joy and love and hope, are strangely intermingled.” Some see the verse reflecting a “remarriage” after a “divorce” in 2:2, but, as Golden says, 2:4 was “a potent statement of the estrangement that Israel’s idolatry had occasioned” and “The marriage is restored by the gracious working of Yahweh, who never ceased in marital fidelity and love toward Israel.” Later Golden identifies our confession of God and invocation of His Triune Name connected to Baptism, and so forth.

2:17 *For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth*: the Hebrew conjunction can be a simple “and”, though the force of some causative explanation seems appropriate. For example, Keil-Delitzsch says, “As soon as the nation ceases to call Jehovah Baal, the custom of taking the names of the Baals into its mouth ceases of itself.” Laetsch disagrees and sees what follows as an intensifying consequence. The Lord is speaking as the One Who will remove the names of the Baals, and Laetsch says the Lord is the only One Who can. The plural “names” and plural “Baals” we have discussed previously as perhaps relating to the plurality of shrines to Baal or using “Baal” as a general term for a number of different pagan gods. Less clear is the identity of “her” mouth, perhaps less Gomer and more Israel as the Lord’s bride/wife—in 2:16 addressed in the second person “you” feminine singular and here in 2:17 referred to in the third person “her”. Kretzmann, for example, refers to the people mentioning the names in prayer. Golden says that removing their names “is a means of destroying them”.

*and they shall be remembered by name no more*: given the preceding half verse, one might expect “they” to be the names of the Baals, but the sense requires a change from the object of the preceding half verse to the subject of this half verse. The Lord’s removing the names from the mouth might stop confession/worship of the Baals, but removing the names from the mouth by itself is arguably insufficient to stop belief in the mind or heart. So, the Lord says “they”—that is the Baals—no longer will be remembered by name. *CSSB* comments, “There will be such a vigorous reaction against Baal worship that this Hebrew word for ‘master’ will no longer be used of the Lord.” Roehrs-Franzmann seems to go further, “Israel will no longer combine and confuse the worship of the Lord with the worship of Baal as she has done in the past.” Similarly, Keil-Delitzsch says, “the abolition of polytheism and mixed religion is a work of that divine grace which renews the heart, and fills with such abhorrence of the coarser or more refined forms of idolatry, that men no longer dare to take the names of the idols into their lips.” Golden discusses how “Remembering and invoking and bound together”. Laetsch refers to the people hearing and using the word but not remembering the idols the name represented.

- 2:18 *And I will make for them a covenant*: the Lord is still speaking through Hosea, but less clear is the referent of the third-person masculine plural “them”, for whom the Lord will make a covenant. The only masculine plural noun so far in the passage has been the Baals, which hardly seem to be in view in 2:18. Israel might normally be a masculine singular collective nation (or a masculine plural for all the people, as perhaps later in this verse) but so far this passage Israel seems to have been feminine singular as the Lord’s bride/wife. Golden says the movement “between masculine and feminine is common in Hebrew.” As Golden translates, the Hebrew is more literally “cut” a covenant, with reference to the animals that are sacrificed that the covenant’s parties pass between. Golden also suggests this is the first Old Testament reference “to a new covenant for the end time”, new because it is made in the future and in its promise to make all things new. *TLSB* comments, “Acting as a third party, God establishes a covenant between Israel and the wild creatures. He demonstrates both His rule over the created order and His compassion for Israel.” Perhaps confer and compare the marital “covenant” in 2:19. In commenting on 2:19, Luther remarks, “He does not say, ‘I will make a covenant,’ as He said to the fathers, but, ‘I will betroth.’ There is on earth no love more ardent than that between a groom and his betrothed. The groom gives his bride not a gift but himself, the deepest love of his heart and all his property. He goes ahead of his bride; he seeks her out, etc.”

*on that day*: confer and compare the discussion above at 2:16 and the use of the phrase in 2:21. (We previously noted *TLSB*’s comment on this verse that “the end of time is in view”.) Laetsch says, “Here, as so often in the O. T. prophecy, time and eternity merge into one grand picture. The perfect peace and riches of heaven will cause us to forget all trials of this life, however burdensome.”

*with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground:* the wording seems to recall creation, though not in order, since the birds of the heaven were created on the fifth day, and the wild beasts of the earth and creeping things were created on the sixth day (Genesis 1:20-25), and Keil-Delitzsch refers to after the flood in Genesis 9:2. Golden refers to both and refers to a promise of new creation. Keil-Delitzsch says, “God makes a covenant with the beasts, when He imposes the obligation upon them to hurt men no more.” Laetsch refers to the animals destroying Israel’s crops. *CSSB* comments, “Animals, the instruments of destruction in v.12, as well as birds and insects, would no longer threaten life. Nature and history combine in a picture of peace”. Kretzmann seems to take it almost only figuratively, “with all those things which might prove harmful and dangerous to them, under the picture of ravenous beasts, birds of prey, and poisonous reptiles”.

*And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land:* Golden recalls that these three were mentioned in 1:7 as not being able to save Israel. Keil-Delitzsch glosses, “The breaking in pieces of the weapons of war and of battle out of the land, is a pregnant expression for the extinction not only of the instruments of war, but also of war itself, and their extermination from the land.” *CSSB* says simply, “War is terminated.” *TLSB* comments, “God will break the bow that endangers the animals and humankind, though for now it is still needed.”

*and I will make you lie down in safety:* as noted above, this “you” is masculine plural; if, as it seems, it refers to Israel, then there has been a shift from the third-person “them” earlier in the verse to this second-person “you”. *TLSB* comments, “This promised peaceful coexistence between people and beasts is a complete reversal of the conditions described in v 12, where wild animals are a threat.” More-figurative again is Kretzmann, “All this is, of course, a figurative description of the time when there would be peace on earth through Him who is our Peace.”

2:19 *And I will betroth you to me forever:* the Hebrew verb *'aras* is used three times in these two verses in Hosea (and only here in Hosea) and is translated “betroth” but can also be “engage”, used of man or woman. Keil-Delitzsch says the term “is only applied to the wooing of a maiden, not to the restoration of a wife who has been divorced, and is generally distinguished from the taking of a wife (Deut. xx 7),” so “The Lord will now make a new covenant of marriage with His church, such as is made with a spotless virgin. This new and altogether unexpected grace He now directly announces to her”. (Confer Jerome as quoted in Ferreiro cited by Golden.) As noted above, this “you” and the following one are feminine singular. Kretzmann refers to the Lord’s “bride, the Church of the New Testament”. “Forever” suggests eternal, and Golden points to the unending wedding feast of the Lamb and His Bride, the Church, in Revelation 19:6-9; 21:2, 9; 22:17. Laetsch refers to God’s past-tense becoming the Husband of Israel and His future-tense becoming the Husband of the Church of the New Testament. Roehrs-Franzmann comments, “God will make a new beginning, a beginning so wholly new that the harlot and adulteress will be treated as a virgin bride, her sins forgiven and forgotten by the mercy of the Lord. He will give bridal gifts for her, and these gifts all speak His covenant love and covenant fidelity towards underserving Israel”. *TLSB* comments, “Hbr *'aras*, not only the engagement proper, but also the compensation for the bride’s family. Cf Dt 22:23-27. Betrothal usually lasted several months and was considered as binding as marriage, from which it was hardly distinguished.” *CSSB* comments, “Rather than money, these five traits necessary to the covenant relationship make up the bride-price”.

*I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy:* “mercy” here is related to “mercy” and “No Mercy” in 2:23. Keil-Delitzsch describes God’s betrothal as purifying the Church through just judgment and also needing steadfast love and mercy due to the remaining sinful nature. Kretzmann refers to the righteousness earned by Christ, the justice on account of Christ’s atonement, the love of His merciful favor, and mercy excluding every idea of merit. *TLSB* comments, “These four qualities may profitably be understood as the price God pays for His Bride.” The fifth quality follows, presumably receiving a unique mention for some reason. Keil-Delitzsch refers to the three uses of betroth as “in ever fresh terms, expressive of the indissoluble character of the new relation.” Golden refers to the final appearance of repetition in a series carrying greater weight.

2:20 *I will betroth you to me in faithfulness:* as noted above, this “you” and the following one are feminine singular. Keil-Delitzsch comments, “In the faithfulness of God the church has a certain pledge, that the covenant founded upon righteousness and judgment, mercy and compassion, will stand forever.” Kretzmann says, “with a pledge of the eternal duration of the covenant on His side”. Laetsch seems to think of somewhat dramatically different covenants between Old and New, but we would probably want to say that salvation is by grace through faith in the Messiah coming/come either way.

*And you shall know the Lord:* the Hebrew verb *yada* ‘translated “know”, as *CSSB* points out, “can refer to intimate marital relations” but “it also refers to active acknowledgment of a covenant partner”. In Hosea 6:3, the prophet exhorts the people to press on to know the Lord. The people’s knowing the Lord may be connected with God’s being their God and their being His people. In Jeremiah 31:34 the connection is to the Lord’s forgiving their iniquity and remembering their sin no more. Roehrs-Franzmann comments, “And all shall know the Lord, the God of covenant; in mind and heart and will they shall be one with Him.”

2:21 Note that some Bible versions format the whole of Hosea 2:16-23 as prose, others format the whole passage as poetry; of the five Bible versions that I keep at my fingertips in my Bible software, only the ESV formats the first portion of the passage as one and the second portion of the passage as the other.

*And in that day:* confer and compare the discussion above at 2:16 and the use of the phrase in 2:18.

*I will answer ... I will answer the heavens:* in 2:15 the same Hebrew verb ‘*anah* is also translated “answer”. Roehrs-Franzmann says it has the sense “respond willingly”. Golden says these two uses of the verb could be “begin to speak” or “testify”. *CSSB* says Israel responded to the Lord’s overtures and so “no God responds to her new behavior.” Keil-Delitzsch comments, “God will hear all the prayers that ascend to Him from His church”, explaining that by a figure of speech Hosea describes the heavens as praying to God to allow the heavens to give the earth that which the earth needs to be fertile (recall what Baal was thought to do). Kretzmann refers to the heavens as interceding for the believers. *TLSB* comments, “The Lord pledges to respond to His Bride, esp her words of desertion (v 5), her eventual promise to return (v 7), and her predicted calling on the Lord as her ‘Husband’ (v 16),” though how exactly that is answering “the heavens” is unclear (perhaps “the heavens” restate the Lord as the subject?). *TLSB* at this point refers to “a repentant Israel”, though we previously had discussed 2:7, at least, as hardly being evidence of repentance. For his part, Golden says, though arguably somewhat inconsistently, that the Lord does not “answer” something spoken previously by the heavens to Him but initiates the speaking in and to the heavens by declaring His Word.

*declares the Lord*: confer above at 2:16.

*and they shall answer the earth*: the referent of “they” reads in English, at least, as if “they” are the heavens”. Why exactly the heavens need to answer the earth is not immediately clear. Kretzmann refers to the earth as pleading for mercy.

Roehrs-Franzmann explains that the earth will be able to supply the material blessings of the covenant because the heavens gave their rain after the Lord commanded a blessing.

2:22 *and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil*: *CSSB* says “The land also responded in becoming productive”. *TLSB* comments, “The fruit once withheld from that region (vv 8-9) will be restored, thus demonstrating the Lord’s love for His people.”

*and they shall answer Jezreel*: Keil-Delitzsch says, “The blessing which flows down from heaven to earth flows to Jezreel, the nation which ‘God sows’” (as the next verse makes explicit). Kretzmann says, “the people of the true Israel, of the church of God, becoming partakers of the rich blessings of the Lord in the Messianic era.” *TLSB* comments, “God’s response to a repentant Israel will be to renew and multiply Jezreel’s agricultural capabilities.” The ESV text note reminds us that “Jezreel” means “God will sow”, and we remember the name’s use for Gomer’s first son in 1:4 and its previous seeming reversal in 1:11.

2:23 *and I will sow her for myself in the land*: Golden connects God’s sowing to Jesus’s Parable of the Sower and other parables. The referent of “her” presumably is again Israel as the bride/wife of the Lord; Keil-Delitzsch says, “the wife whom God has betrothed to Himself for ever, *i.e.* to the favoured church of Israel, which is now to come a true *Jezreel*, as a rich sowing on the part of God.” Regarding “sow”, *TLSB* comments, “*Hbr zara*’. Related to the word *Jezreel* (v 22).” *TLSB* further comments, “This wordplay emphasizes that Jezreel will someday no longer be the scene of bloodshed (1:4). Instead, God Himself will cultivate the land and so assure that His people will reap a bountiful harvest.” *CSSB* further notes, “The terms of the covenant were: ‘I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God’ (Ex 6:7)”.

*And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’*: the ESV text notes remind us that “No Mercy” is *Lo-ruhama* and that “Not My People” is *Lo-ammi*. *TLSB* comments, “The meanings of these names will also turn around, so that Israel will once again be accepted as the Lord’s children and Bride.” In Romans 9:25, the Divinely-inspired St. Paul freely “quotes” from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10, and in 1 Peter 2:10 St. Peter seems to allude to this passage and others, applying them, as *CSSB* puts it, “to Gentiles coming into the church”. Golden connects the passage to God’s election and the comfort and confidence the teaching about election gives. And, Golden again notes that the Lord’s calling people His people leads to their calling Him their God, as follows.

*and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’*”: regarding “he”, *TLSB* suggests, “May refer to the last child, Not My People, who speaks for all.” Kretzmann applies it further: “That is the confession of the Church and of all its members. Wherever the Gospel of Christ is preached, members are won for the Church, and the sum total of these believers are the bride of Christ and partake of all the blessings which HE has gained for all men by His redemption.”

What are you taking home from the prophecy considered tonight?

As we noted last time, *TLSB's* Law and Gospel Application Note for Hosea 2:14-23 says, "Despite Israel's complete disregard for the covenant, the Lord promises to renew His marriage with her. To this end, He will even marshal creation as His witness and servant. Though it pains us to admit it, our wealth often begins to lead us into the same failings as those of Israel in Hosea's day, putting our trust in things rather than in the Lord. Fortunately for us, however, the God of Israel never weavers in His commitments. God's Law continues to show us our sins and to make us want to be rid of them. Through Christ, all our waywardness and idolatry is forgiven, and a new all-inclusive covenant has been enacted."

Next time, August 26, Hosea 3:1-5

Closing Prayer & Benediction