

“All the Prophets Testify”: Hosea 3:1-5

Midweek Bible Study – 2026 August 19

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<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)

A Second (?) Marriage to Gomer (3:1-5):

3:1 *And the Lord said to me*: the Hebrew conjunction can be a simple “and”, and we should note the relationship between the Lord’s announcing a reversal of the Lord’s relationship with Israel in the preceding passage and the Lord’s directing Hosea to reflect that reversal with a reversal of Hosea’s relationship with Gomer in the present passage. Though arguably something less than “declares the Lord”, “The Lord said to me” is a reminder that the Lord is speaking to and through Hosea. *CSSB* notes that chapter 1 was narrated in the third-person and that chapter 3 is narrated in the first-person; Golden says the shift “grants this chapter a heightened intimacy” and points to the Lord’s first-person speech in 2:14-23. Roehrs-Franzmann suggests the two tellings are of the same marriage. Keil-Delitzsch calls this “a second symbolical marriage” and says the “purely symbolical character of this divine command is evident from the nature of the command itself” (not surprisingly, confer Kretzmann; also confer Luther).

“*Go again*”: there are two imperatives, and though the adverb is in between in the English, where perhaps it could do double duty, in the Hebrew it is first, Keil-Delitzsch says for emphasis. Contrary is Golden, who takes the “again” with the Lord’s speaking, noting the use of the same verb “go” in 1:2b, and contrasting the law impact of chapter 1 with the Gospel impact of chapter 3. The Hebrew imperative translated “Go” in its basic sense refers to such things as “walking” and “proceeding”. The Hebrew adverb translated “again” can have a continuative or persisting sense, such as “still” or “yet”. For his part, Laetsch favors “yet” or “still”.

love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress: Although, the Hebrew verb translated “love”, used four times in this verse, in Hosea so far had only been used referring to the mother/wife’s “lovers”, arguably from her perspective (2:5, 7, 10, 12, 13). Keil-Delitzsch says loving the woman as 3:2 shows, is equivalent to taking a wife. The Hebrew word translated “woman” can be “wife”, which sense may be more relevant in this case, given the adultery (the NIV, for example, has “Go show love to your wife again”). Golden notes the use of a general term rather than Gomer’s specific name. The other person loving her in the Hebrew is a “friend”, “companion”, “fellow”, or “another person”, perhaps notably not the term for man/husband. Keil-Delitzsch says the word never refers to a fellow-creature generally but the fellow-creature “with whom one lives in the closest intimacy”, a husband or paramour. That other relationship, presumably initiated after Gomer left Hosea, makes her an adulteress, even if she was not one already before Hosea took her as his wife in the first place. The use of the Hebrew *na’aph* translated “adulteress” is in this verse is the first use of the verb in Hosea (it is used, as you would expect, in places such as Exodus 20:14, in what we normally number as the Sixth Commandment, though Golden calls it the Fifth). The adulterous relationship is “continued and contemporaneous”. As Laetsch points out, some think that the woman referred to in this verse is not Gomer but “a common streetwalker”, based on the unfounded presumption that Hosea divorced Gomer, and Golden discusses how the “two-woman theory” destroys the message of restoration by a loving God. *CSSB* says, “Hosea’s love for unfaithful Gomer illustrated God’s love for unfaithful Israel.” *TLSB* says, “God directs Hosea to love Gomer despite her unfaithfulness. This act dramatically depicts God’s faithfulness to an adulterous Israel.”

even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.”: the Lord casts Himself parallel to Hosea and Gomer parallel to the children of Israel. We have previously noted the issues with parallels between Gomer and her children and Israel as the singular Lord’s bride/wife and perhaps plural people of Israel. Golden identifies the Lord’s reconciliation with Israel as a cause of some sort of Hosea’s reconciliation with Gomer. Note that, in the first half the verse, Gomer is passively loved by another man, while, in this half the verse, the children of Israel actively turn away from God to other gods and are loving cakes of raisins. More literally, the Hebrew word *enab* is “grapes”, and with the Hebrew *’ashiyshah* is understood as a raisin-cake, used in sacrificial feasts, though the AV is said to consistently translate “flagon of wine” (confer Kretzmann). Golden perhaps is accurate but overly literal with “raisin cake of grapes”. For better or worse the item seems to evoke the Lord’s Supper. Regarding the “cakes of raisins”, Roehrs-Franzmann says they “were used as offerings in the cult of fertility goddesses” (one of which was Baal’s wife Asherah). *CSSB* comments, “Offered to Baal in thanksgiving for harvest”, but one wonders if the raisin cakes were then eaten by anyone or consumed by fire. *TLSB* explains, “Devotion and offerings to Baal. This recalls Israel’s boast that the fruit of the land comes through Baal (2:5).” Keil-Delitzsch takes the raisin cakes figuratively, “representing that idolatrous worship which appeals to the senses, and gratifies the carnal impulses and desires”, so that “loving grape-cakes is equivalent to indulging in sensuality”.

3:2 *So I bought her*: The Hebrew conjunction can be a simple “and”. Though the Lord had not specified Hosea’s “buying” Gomer, the implication is that Hosea is doing what is necessary to obey the Lord’s command in 3:1. Though the “quoted” statement of the Lord ended in 3:1, Hosea’s report of his ensuing actions is still Divinely-inspired. The Hebrew verb *karah* translated “bought”, used only four times in the Old Testament, can have the sense “to get by trade” or “bargain over”. Notably the Hebrew verb is not *ga’al*, which is used 104 times, usually with some sense of “redeem” (note the ESV text heading). Left explicitly unsaid are from whom Hosea bought Gomer and why any price was necessary. Keil-Delitzsch rejects the idea of a bride price as not practiced among the Israelites and instead says it was for a marriage present to the bride after her consent to the wedding (confer Kretzmann on dowry-money), with Keil-Delitzsch commenting that, if “the woman was satisfied with fifteen shekels and fifteen ephahs of barley, she must have been in a state of very deep distress”. Laetsch considers the shekels and barley as provisions for Gomer. Roehrs-Franzmann says we cannot make out whether payment “is for the purchase of a slave or the payment of a bride-price” (remember the five traits in 2:19-20 as the bride price; Golden specifically refers back to them). *CSSB* suggests, “Gomer had evidently become a slave, and Hosea bought her back.” *GWJF* says Gomer “in effect sold herself into the slavery of prostitution” but also says “Hosea’s payment may be considered a dowry” and refers to God’s payment for our redemption. Golden suggests Hosea may have paid the bride price anew to her father Diblaim (1:3). Perhaps *TLSB* wisely stays silent? (Inquiring minds want to know!)

for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and lethech of barley: the ESV text note tells you that a shekel was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams; a homer was about 6 bushels or 220 liters; a lethech was about 3 bushels or 110 liters. *TLSB* comments, “Beyond the emotional burden of his marriage to an adulteress, Hosea also had to pay a price for her: 15 shekels of silver and c 9 bushels of barley. This may be compared to the fine imposed for injuring a female slave (30 silver shekels; Ex 21:32) or the offering given by a woman fulfilling her vow (30 silver shekels; Lv 27:4).” *CSSB* notes that the 15 shekels is half the usual 30 shekel price but then suggests that half was paid in silver and half in barley for a total value of 30 shekels (confer prices in 2 Kings 7:1, 16, 18).

3:3 *And I said to her, “You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man*: Hosea’s expectation of Gomer’s marital faithfulness presumably would be for their earthly lifetimes, if not longer. With reference to 3:4, *TLSB* somewhat oddly comments on this verse, “Though Israel will never cease to belong to the Lord, the fulness of their relationship will obviously not be enjoyed until the return from the impending Assyrian exile” (if there is such a return of the Northern Kingdom). Golden takes “not playing the whore” and “not belonging to another man” as equivalent.

so will I also be to you: the Hebrew conjunction can be a simple “and”. *TLSB* comments, “Gomer is expected to be exclusively devoted to Hosea, just as he will be to her. This relationship symbolizes the one between the Lord and Israel.” Confer Kretzmann, “in a faithful union”. The 1984 NIV in the text has “I will live you” and in the margin has “wait for”, so *CSSB* suggests Gomer would live in isolation for a fixed period of time comparable to Israel’s exile (presumably not the full 70 years). Likewise Golden sees a fixed time and translates this phrase, “Then, indeed, I will be yours”. Luther could be taken as seeing them not coming together at all (perhaps like David and Michal in 2 Samuel 3:12-16; 6:12-23?) Roehrs-Franzmann similarly sees deprivation and discipline of the wife and relates it to the narration of chapter 2 (for example, 2:6’s being hedged up and unable to get out), commenting, “there will be no connubial intercourse [that connected to a husband and wife and their life together]. The prophet’s love, like the Lord’s, goes the way of harsh self-denial for the good of the spouse.” Golden likens the time of waiting to “a new betrothal period during which Gomer is to bear the fruits of repentance by not whoring after others” and “allows for trust to be rebuilt”. *GWfT* talks about estranged marriage partners’ going “the extra mile to effect a reconciliation”.

- 3:4 *For the children of Israel shall dwell many days*: however the Hebrew conjunction is translated, there again is a connection between what Hosea is doing with Gomer and the Lord is doing with Israel. Keil-Delitzsch says the explanation that follows “contains the ground of the symbolical action”. *TLSB* comments, “Such privations will remind the exiles of their broken relationship with God”. To the extent that the Northern Kingdom does not return, those privations last “many days” in the sense of the “forever” of their earthly lives, at least (though compare *TLSB* on 3:3). The three pairs that follow might be associated with the three estates of society, church, and family, though an ephod might normally be associated more with church and not family (also confer/compare to what extent the three estates and/or pairs of privations might be referenced in 3:5). The three pairs seemingly could be negative as far as the Northern Kingdom is concerned and not ever restored as they had them prior to God’s act of judgment at the hand of the Assyrians. Confer, for example, Roehrs-Franzmann, “The Lord will take from His people all that contributed to their apostasy.”

without king or prince: the Northern Kingdom of Israel had their own king and princes. Roehrs-Franzmann refers to Israel’s “national existence”.

without sacrifice or pillar: the Hebrew *matstsebah* translated “pillar” can be a “stump” or “monument” or “personal memorial” or “an altar”, the last of which is perhaps more in view in this pairing. The Northern King of Israel had their own religion and shrines.

without ephod or household gods: regarding “ephod”, *TLSB* comments, “A priestly mantle or cape, either costly and elaborate or relatively simple”, and refers to 1 Samuel 2:18; 23:6-11, “where it is used when seeking a sign of the future”. Regarding “household gods”, *TLSB* comments, “Hbr *teraphim*, small human-shaped idols. Micah used some in conjunction with an ephod in order to ordain his son as priest (Jgs 17:5); they were also used to divine the future (Ezk 21:21). (I thought of Genesis 31:34, as Luther also did.) Some versions and commentators simply transliterate the Hebrew word into English as “teraphim”. The true ephod belonged to the Lord’s High Priest and was used (or the breastplate was) with the Urim and Thummim at the Jerusalem Temple, not in individual households (to some extent confer Keil-Delitzsch). Some see one faithful and one unfaithful item in each of the last two pairs and refer to the syncretistic worship of the Northern Kingdom. Golden remarks about the Northern Kingdom’s not coming back but those left behind’s producing the Samaritans to whom Jesus goes and speaks of worship in John 4, and Golden refers to our waiting for the Last Day.

3:5 *Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king*: Roehrs-Franzmann comments, “The people disciplined by the chastisement of God will be a penitent people”. An immediate question is whether the two half-verses are parallel and so whether “Afterward” and “in the latter days” refer to the same time (so, for example, Laetsch), and so related is whether “return” and “seek” are parallel to “come in fear”. “Afterward” could refer to whatever return from exile might be said of the Northern Kingdom (Keil-Delitzsch thinks the Southern Kingdom is also implicitly included), and “latter days” could refer to the Messianic era (Laetsch says “New Testament era”), up to and including the Last Day and the eternity that follows it. The Hebrew verb *shuwb* translated “return” could be a literal return (though Laetsch rules that out) and/or a spiritual return of repentance (note the seeking of the Lord their God). *CSSB* says that “return” is a “basic word in Hosea’s vocabulary” and that “seek” envisions Israel’s repentance. Regarding “David their king”, *TLSB* comments, “Though Israel [that is, the Northern Kingdom] had not been under David’s line since Solomon’s death, the promised messianic descendant of David (Jesus Christ) would someday become the King for all people.” Indeed, Jesus Christ is Lord and King! Kretzmann comments, “the Jewish Church after the exile being the organization in which the belief in the true God was still taught” and “the Son of David, the Messiah”.

and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days: the Hebrew conjunction can be a simple “and”. The subject “they” embedded in the verb form certainly seems to still be “the children of Israel” from the first half-verse. Regarding “fear”, *TLSB* comments, “Hbr *pachad*, ‘to dread or be in awe’”, and we might think of both terror-fear and reverence-fear, unless the reference is only to the Last Day and the eternity that follows it, when the quick/living and the resurrected dead are glorified and so free of any sinful nature that would need to live in terror-fear of the Lord. Golden refers to sinner-saints fearing and loving the Lord (though that Luther consistently means terror-fear is not assured). How exactly one should differentiate between the Lord and His goodness is not immediately clear. The Hebrew noun *tuwb* translated “goodness” is related to the Hebrew adjective translated “good” in reference to the various results of God’s created acts in Genesis 1:10 *et passim*. Kretzmann refers to goodness shown in many blessings. The 1984 NIV translates “His blessings”, and *CSSB* refers to “The vineyards and olive groves that had been taken away (see 2:12-13, 21) and all of God’s gifts” (largely confer Keil-Delitzsch). Regarding “latter days”, *TLSB* comments, “Conventional prophetic term for the messianic age, when both God’s people and the Gentiles would be gathered to Him”. Similarly, *CSSB* had said it could mean simply the future but in this case refers to the Messianic age. Luther takes it as “following days” and comments, “They are deceived who are ignorant of the figurative language of Scripture and who take such things to refer to the last day of the world.” Laetsch discusses God’s grace working the repentance of the people then and today, and Laetsch notes that on this positive prophecy “Hosea closes the first part of his book.”

What are you taking home from the prophecy considered tonight?

TLSB’s Law and Gospel Application Note for Hosea 3:1-5 says, “In obedience to the Lord’s request, Hosea redeems Gomer and renews his commitment to her, despite her unfaithfulness. This prophesies God’s desire to restore Israel as a pure people after the exile. We are sometimes challenged to swallow our pride and forgive others in similar difficult ways. At such times, we are strengthened by the knowledge that God gave His own Son to forgive and restore us.” (The Northern Kingdom did not exactly return from “exile”, and God’s forgiveness is more than a piece of knowledge for us, who are purified by God through Word and Sacraments and so transformed and enabled to forgive others as we should.)

Next time, August 26, Hosea 4:1-19

Closing Prayer & Benediction