

Lesson 12

In verse 12, we are in the middle of a cycle that we are seeing for the second time in this second chapter. In verse 8, we saw the sin. In verses 9–13, we are seeing the punishment. And in verses 14–23, we will see the redemption.

Hosea 2:12

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.

Verse 12 is not promising just a temporary setback caused by drought or locusts; verse 12 is instead promising a complete catastrophe.

If the harvest of grain and grapes had been lost in a single year, the people could have hoped for a better harvest next year. But when the vines and the trees are destroyed, the hope for next year is also lost.

What we are seeing in verse 12 is a promise of a complete reversion of the land back to wilderness.

The vines are destroyed, the fig trees are destroyed, a forest appears in their place, and the wild beasts have free reign to eat whatever remains. For all of that to occur, either the people must no longer be present, or they must be

too few in number to prevent the land from turning back into a wilderness.

This punishment is pointing to the deportation of the people that was about to occur after the Assyrian invasion. The people would very soon not be around to celebrate their feasts or to farm and cultivate their land.

Before we leave verse 12, we should pause and notice what the mother says here: "These are my wages, which my lovers have given me."

She continues to believe that these gifts from God (the vines, the fig trees, the produce) were instead gifts from her lovers (her false gods and the foreign nations in which she trusted) – and she persists in that belief even when God shows up to take those gifts back.

What we see with this woman is complete spiritual blindness. And, as a result of that blindness, I think we are seeing something else from this woman – complete shock.

Remember from our historical overview that this drastic change in their situation was occurring after a long period of peace and prosperity. Everything would soon be falling apart, and when it came it would happen very quickly. The people would be shocked by the change in their situation.

I think we see that shock here in verse 12. These things are hers; she earned them. How can they be taken away? How can she not be secure? How can she not be right with God, and why can't she

depend on all of the others gods she now worships?

Blindness and shock – those two things always go together.

We walk across a dark room secure in our belief that we know where we are going – until suddenly we walk into something that we cannot see and that we have forgotten was even there. And so our blindness turns to shock from something unexpected.

Matthew 15:13-14 – Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

There is no condition so dangerous as spiritual blindness.

Yes, Covid is bad, RSV is bad, and the flu is bad. But there is no condition more dangerous than thinking I am right with God, when I am not.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 – And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

As we study this book of Hosea, let's keep in mind that we will never find a greater example of spiritual blindness than the blindness that had befallen the people of Israel at this point in their history. (The Pharisees may have been equally blind.)

They thought they were right with God. They were still going through all of the motions, and they were still enjoying the gifts of the land. They felt very secure.

But they were not right with God. They were about as far away from God as possible, and they were blind to that fact. And they were not secure; they were in great danger. Their judgment was near. They had deceived themselves.

Hosea 2:13

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.

I think the ASV translation of this verse is better than the ESV.

Hosea 2:13 (ASV) – And I will visit upon her the days of the Baalim, unto which she burned incense, when she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith Jehovah.

If we were to paraphrase verse 13, it might be this: **“you want it, you got it!”**

Sometimes the worst punishment from God is when God gives us exactly what we want – and here what the people wanted was Baal.

But would Baal save them when the Assyrians showed up? Would Baal replace the gifts that God was now taking back?

These “days of the Baals” in verse 13 would be the days that Israel was apparently wanting – the days when Israel would turn to Baal instead of to God. The days when Israel would worship Baal. The days when Israel would adorn herself for Baal.

Not the day of the Lord, but the day of Baal – the day when Baal would be in charge of everything. And how would that work out? How **did** that work out?

As for the plural “Baals” or “Baalim” in verse 13, that likely refers either to various false gods that were all called Baal or to various shrines at which Baal was worshipped. We saw various “Baals” on the handout from Lesson 10.

The word “forgot” in verse 13 is interesting. It does not mean that the people forgot God in the sense that they no longer knew who God was. Instead, what it means is that they forgot God in the sense that they did not ever think about God or about what God wanted them to do.

They forgot God in the sense that God did not shape their thoughts or their actions. Israel was not focused on God but instead was focused on her lovers (false gods and foreign nations). God was overlooked and ignored. That is what it means when verse 13 says that they **forgot** God.

Jesus warned us about that same kind of forgetfulness.

Mark 4:18–19 – And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness

of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Such people know about God intellectually, but God does not shape their thoughts or their actions in any way. They would live no differently than if they had never heard anything about God. They instead are guided entirely by “the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things.”

Hosea 2:14–15

14 "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. 15 And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. 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.

If we were to make a list of the most jarring and unexpected words in the Bible, the word “therefore” in Hosea 2:14 would be pretty high up on that list. Here is how one commentary describes its appearance in verse 14:

When Hosea says “Therefore” after what he had said in the previous verse, we can no longer harbor doubts that he is deliberately dealing in non sequiturs.

In effect, what God is saying is this: **“You have done all of these horrible things to me, and so therefore I will do all of these wonderful things for you.”**

Who else but God would ever say such a thing?
But, of course, God did much more than just **say**
such a thing – God **DID** such a thing!

Romans 5:8 – But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And Hosea 2:14 is even more shocking than Romans 5:8. Why? Because of that word “therefore.” Not “you have done horrible things to me, **but** I will do wonderful things for you.” But “you have done horrible things to me, **therefore** I will do wonderful things for you.”

Hosea 2:14–15 is not at all what we would expect to see here. The word “therefore” should introduce the logical consequence of what we just saw – the logical consequence of Israel rejecting God in favor of Baal. But that is not what we see here. Verses 14–15 are not the logical consequence of verses 8–13, at least not from a human perspective.

These verses are not showing us the wisdom of this world. Instead, what we see here is the wisdom from above. What we see here is the opposite of what we would expect to see. What we see here is a door of hope.

What is the explanation for such a thing? Romans 5:8 answers that question: “But **God shows his love for us** in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

The only possible explanation for the word “therefore” in Hosea 2:14 is also the only

possible explanation for the cross of Christ – they are both explained only by the love of God. And that love cannot be explained by the wisdom of man.

And what is the wonderful thing that God is planning for Israel?

God will allure Israel and speak tenderly to her. And God will bring her into the wilderness. Why the wilderness? That sounds a bit like a punishment, but it is not.

There are several things going on with that word “wilderness” in verse 14.

First, that wilderness shows us a restoration.

God had removed the vineyards to create that wilderness in verse 12, and now in verse 15 God gives her back those vineyards in the wilderness. What that means is that the land prior to that wilderness is being restored. God is making all things new.

Second, the wilderness also shows us Israel’s trust in God.

She followed God into that wilderness trusting that God would protect her there. Jeremiah would later use similar language in his opening words to Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 2:2 – Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.

Third, the wilderness points to a restoration of the marriage bond.

Israel would follow God, her husband, anywhere – even into the wilderness. We see that also in the same verse from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 2:2 – Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.

And fourth, the wilderness reminds us of another wilderness into which God led and protected his people.

Ezekiel 20:10 – So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness.

And we see a reference to that same event here at the end of verse 14 – “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.”

God would protect Israel as he had protected them during the Exodus, and the people would answer God as they had answered God during the Exodus.

Here at the end of Israel’s history, God is looking back to the days of Israel’s youth. And God is promising that things would be like that once again. **But when?**

To help us answer that question, we should note that Hosea 2:14–15 reminds us immediately of a great prophecy from Jeremiah 31.

Jeremiah 31:1-5 – “At that time, declares the LORD, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people.” Thus says the LORD: **“The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness;** when Israel sought for rest, the LORD appeared to him from far away. **I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.** Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines and shall go forth in the dance of the merry-makers. **Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria;** the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit.

And when would that prophecy come to pass? Keep reading in Jeremiah 31.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 – “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, **when I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

This wonderful thing that God had in store for Israel here in verses 14–15 is the same wonderful thing that God had in store for everyone – the gospel of Christ – the new covenant of his blood.

And that is not a wonderful blessing for Israel at the end of all time – that is a wonderful blessing for Israel that appeared in the first century when Jesus came and gave his life for us all – both Jew and Gentile. “The grace of God **has appeared**, bringing salvation for **all people.**”

(Titus 2:11) And that wonderful blessing remains available for all to this very day.

There is a beautiful promise in verse 15 – I will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. What does that mean?

The Valley of Achor is one of the rugged narrow entrances into the central hill country from the Jordan Valley. It was in that valley where Achan was executed in Joshua 7, after which that valley then became a reminder of the trouble that comes from being disobedient to God. In fact, the Hebrew word “Achor” means “trouble.”

Now that valley of trouble is reversed so that it instead becomes a door of hope! **And we should thank God every day that he is still turning the Valley of Trouble into the Door of Hope!**

Psalm 23:4 – Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

And what is that door of hope in verse 15? We should ask instead **who** is that door of hope.

John 10:7-9 – So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, **I am the door of the sheep.** All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **I am the door.** If anyone enters by me, **he will be saved** and will go in and out and find pasture.

Jesus is our door, and Jesus is our hope.

Ephesians 2:12 – Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the

commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

1 Peter 1:3 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

So what is the hope in verse 15? If there can be no hope apart from Christ, then that door of hope in verse 15 must be Christ.

Hosea keeps giving the people bad news and good news. And the bad news is always the same – that Israel would soon be carried off by the Assyrians. But the good news is also always the same – that Israel (along with everyone else in the world) would some day find hope and reconciliation in the gospel of Christ. Punishment would be followed by redemption.

Hosea 2:16–17

16 "And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' 17 For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.

Verse 16 begins with a phrase that is crucial in understanding this prophecy – “in that day.” We will see the same thing in verse 18 – “on that day.” And we will see it in verse 21 – “in that day.” Whenever you see those phrases in the Bible, circle them! They are always crucial.

Why are those three short phrases so important? Because they give us the time frame of the prophecy.

We will have very little hope of understanding any prophecy in the Bible if that prophecy includes a time frame and we ignore that time frame.

And most of the prophecies in the Bible include a time frame.

You may have heard of Nostradamus, the famous mystic who wrote many prophecies, some of which many people think have come true. What was his secret? His secret was that he wrote vague prophecies with no time frames. So when Nostradamus wrote that a king and his brother would be struck down, people can slide that prophecy along the timeline of history until they get to JFK and RFK in the sixties!

That is not how the prophecies in the Bible work. When the Bible tells us that something will happen, it almost always tells us when it will happen, or at least it gives us many other things that will happen at the same time so that we can easily determine when it will happen.

If Nostradamus had told us in the 1500's that a king and his brother would be struck down in 1963 and 1968 – or that a king and his brother would be struck down a few years before mankind walked on the moon – then I would be impressed.

So once again – we will have very little hope of understanding any prophecy in the Bible if that

prophecy includes a time frame and we ignore that time frame.

But we would never do that, right? Well, I hope not, but experience tells me that we might sometimes do that.

The book of Revelation, for example, begins with a time frame in the very first verse! “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants **the things that must soon take place.**”

Oh, but that doesn't really mean that! Really? Then why does the book repeat that same time frame two verses later in 1:3? And why does the book repeat the same time frame twice at the end of the book in 22:6 and 22:10? And in the middle of the book?

The next time someone brags to you that they take every verse of Revelation literally – ask them if that applies to the very first verse! I suspect it does not!

So again – we will have very little hope of understanding any prophecy in the Bible if that prophecy includes a time frame and we ignore that time frame.

Let's not make that mistake here in Hosea 2 (or anywhere!).

What is the “day” in verse 16?

“In that day” refers to whatever day we were seeing in the prior verse. Hosea just told us something would happen, and here in verse 16 he

tells us that something else will happen “in that day.” That is, the events in verses 15 and 16 will happen at the same time.

So what did we just read about in verse 15? The door of hope. We just read about a day when the valley of trouble would become a door of hope. And again, that promise was pointing to the gospel of Christ that was first proclaimed in the first century. Jesus is the door of hope who replaces the valley of trouble.

So whatever we are about to see here in verse 16 was going to happen at the same time as when Jesus came and became our door of hope through his perfect sacrifice and his wonderful gospel.

Oh, but, no – that can’t be right – these promises to Israel are all about the end of the world when the Jews will all gather in Palestine to fight the Antichrist, and on, and on, and on.

Really? If so, then that would mean that we do not yet have our door of hope because verses 15 and 16 occur in the same day. That would mean that the new covenant we read about in Jeremiah 31 is not here yet. That would mean that the great blessing for the entire world – both Jew and Gentile – has not yet come.

Now do we see why the time frame is so important? It keeps us from making the crucial mistake of suddenly jumping to the end of the world each time we have trouble interpreting a prophecy in the Bible. Yes, there are prophecies about the end of the world in the Bible. But, no, not every

prophecy in the Bible is about the end of the world!

So what does verse 16 tell us will happen in that day? God says to them, “You will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’”

Now that we have taken our deep dive into the history of Baal, we are in a perfect position to catch the little play on words that we find here in verse 16.

Remember that the Hebrew word “Baal” means lord or master, and sometimes it means husband – as it does, for example, in Proverbs 12.

Proverbs 12:4 – A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband [to her Baal]...

Here in verse 16 there are two different Hebrew words that can each mean “husband.” The second such word is “Baal,” and the first such word is “Ish” (which more broadly just means a man, but is sometimes used more narrowly to mean a husband).

So what is the word play? Verse 16 says, “You will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Husband!'”

But, of course, the word that God chose for that second occurrence of “Husband” had taken on a very different meaning by this time. The people were now looking to the false god Baal as their lord, as their master, and as their husband.

One commentary made a very interesting point about the use of the word Baal here. As we have said, that word just means lord or master, and so in that sense it could be applied to God (as it is in fact used that way in the Bible a few times). Here is what that commentary says on this subject:

One could call God "my Baal" and justify it on the grounds that the term means no more than "my lord." But since the word was also the name of the Canaanite deity, the devotees of Baal could make use of this semantic overlap to smuggle their cult into the worship of God.

That commentary struck a chord with me. I suspect many of us have known or at least heard about preachers or teachers in the church who, it seems, were intentionally trying to deceive their listeners. Thankfully, I think such people are rare in the church, but they do exist, and we also see such people around in the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 2:17 – For we are not, like so many, **peddlers of God's word**, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

In my experience, such people all have at least one thing in common – **they are all able to teach things with just enough ambiguity that what they say can mean one thing to one group of people while meaning a completely different thing at the same time to a different group of people.**

For example, I knew a preacher who did not believe in the essentiality of baptism, so in his invitations he would say, "You should be baptized

because in the first century church there were no unbaptized Christians.” You can interpret that phrase in a variety of different ways – which is what he was counting on!

That is a rare talent – fortunately! And I think we can see how that rare talent could have been used to subtly introduce the worship of the false god Baal into the worship of the one true God.