

Session 10 The Bridegroom God and His Bride: An Old Testament Overview

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

This is part ten in our series on the Bride of Christ. We're looking at the Bridegroom God and His Bride with an Old Testament overview, whereas earlier we looked at the Bride of Christ with respect to the New Testament.

Paragraph A. The message of the Bride of Christ and the Bridegroom God was first established in the Old Testament by the Old Testament prophets. The first prophet to reveal it and emphasize it was Hosea. We'll look at that in a few moments. The fact that it was established in the Old Testament lets us know that God had this as part of His long-term plan from ages past. Then, Jesus and the apostles developed the idea in the New Testament.

FOUR OLD TESTAMENT WOMEN

Paragraph B. There are four women in the Old Testament who are pictures of the Bride of Christ. We haven't had time to develop this fully, but I want you to be aware of them. Each one gives us insight into different ways we can relate to God. These women are Eve, Rebekah, Ruth, and Esther.

A BETROTHAL IN THE WILDERNESS

Roman numeral II. We're going to look at one of the most dramatic historical events to occur in human history. It's significant in its meaning, but also dramatic. This was when God appeared in His glory before an entire nation on Mount Sinai. I'll look at that through the lens of Jeremiah the prophet. Jeremiah interprets, by the Holy Spirit, what was happening at that very unique moment in history when all the nation of Israel, nearly three million people, were gathered together when God descended in His glory. Jeremiah tells us that it was actually a betrothal service, or an engagement service. God was officially declaring His engagement and His marriage relationship with the nation of Israel. Israel didn't understand it at that time, or, at least, we don't know that they did. Some years later, Jeremiah by the Holy Spirit says, "I'll tell you what was happening at Mount Sinai when God revealed Himself in flaming fire, lightning, thunder, and trumpets. It was actually their betrothal, their engagement service." In ancient Israel, to be engaged, or betrothed—which is the same thing—was the legal beginning of an official marriage relationship. The consummation of the marriage would typically happen a year later.

REVELATION BROUGHT REVIVAL

Paragraph A. Jeremiah is a youth; he's probably in his late teens. His very first prophecy as a teenage prophet gives us profound insight into this dramatic event that happened in Exodus 19. It's interesting that this was the preaching that Jeremiah was engaged in while the great reform of Josiah was taking place. King Josiah led the last great reform before the Babylonian captivity. The point I want to make is this: that reformation, that revival, was fueled by the preaching of Jeremiah, and the preaching of Jeremiah was actually related to the revelation of the Bridegroom God. My point is that God, even in the Old Testament, used the Bridegroom revelation to bring restoration, renewal and revival to the nation.

“I REMEMBER THE KINDNESS”

Paragraph B. Jeremiah 2. Here is his first message. Again, he’s probably seventeen or eighteen years old. He’s a youth and it’s his first prophetic revelation to the nation. What would God give Jeremiah as his first message?

“Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem” (Jer. 2:2). In other words, “Let everyone in the city hear what you have to say. Give the message over and over.” It wasn’t just a one-time message. Israel at this time was in a backslidden state. Jeremiah, the young prophet says, “Here is what God wants to tell you. ‘I remember you, says the Lord. I remember the kindness of your youth; the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness’” (v. 2b, paraphrased). The Lord says to them, “I remember when we were betrothed, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” He’s clearly speaking of the event in the days of Moses, 1,000 years earlier, when the entire nation gathered together before the mountain of Sinai out in the wilderness. They’ve come out of the nation of Egypt after 400 years of slavery. They’ve only been out of slavery for three months. At their first meeting, the first dynamic encounter they have, God appears in fire. God comes down before them and says; “I remember when you said yes to Me in that covenant moment. I remember the love of our betrothal; I remember how you loved Me and how I loved you.” It’s the remembrance of that unique relationship that God is trying to stir up in Israel 1,000 years later. Even to this day, God uses the revelation of His desire to intimately connect to us—in the way Jeremiah describes her—to awaken our heart and to awaken our wholeheartedness to Him.

GOD AS PROVIDER AND DELIVERER, BUT NOT A DESIRE

Paragraph C. It’s some years later and Jeremiah emphasizes this reality again. Here in Jeremiah 31:32 he essentially says, “Remember the covenant I made with you? The covenant at Mount Sinai—that same event, out in the wilderness, fresh out of the land of Egypt—when I took you by the hand and I was leading you? I was holding your hand. That was the covenant I made with you, a covenant you broke, though I was a husband to you” (Jer. 31:32, paraphrased). Jeremiah emphasizes that again. Israel didn’t grasp the significance of the fact that God was not only their Provider and Deliverer, but God wanted a marriage relationship with an entire nation. He wanted to reveal His desire and He wanted a tender interchange with them, relationally, and an intimate connection with them as a nation. They thought of Him mostly as a deliverer and a provider. He thought of Himself mostly as a husband in relationship with a nation, giving Himself to them in desire and wanting them to give themselves back to Him. It was in that time, in the generation of Moses, when the first commandment was first given: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Deut. 6:4). God spoke it audibly. He said, “This is what I want: that you would love Me with all your heart.” Still, Israel didn’t connect. They saw God as a provider and a deliverer, but not as a God of desire who actually wanted to exchange love with them.

FIRE, SMOKE, EARTHQUAKE, AND TRUMPET

Paragraph D. Exodus 19. Now we look at the event itself. Moses describes it in his own words. When they came out to meet God at the mountain, “Mount Sinai was completely covered in smoke, because the Lord came down in fire... and there was a trumpet blast from heaven” (Ex. 19:18–19, paraphrased). A heavenly trumpet. This betrothal service was the statement of God’s desire for a heart exchange and for intimate connection with an entire people. The trumpet was blasting. This was actually a down payment of what will happen again at the second coming. The second coming is the consummation of the marriage relationship for which Exodus 19 was the betrothal service. It becomes a 3,500-year engagement, because Moses lived 1,500 years before Christ. To us, this is a long engagement, but to the Lord, one thousand years is like a single day (2 Pet. 3:8). So, it was a quick engagement: only about three and a half days. The Lord says, “This will be a quick engagement.”

THE FIERY CONSUMMATION OF OUR BETROTHAL

Exodus 20:18. We're talking about three million people. There were 600,000 men, and then the women and children along with them, and the entire nation witnessed this. Imagine: thunder, lightning, trumpet, fire, and smoke—the whole nation trembled. It was their engagement. Imagine what it's going to be like when Jesus comes in flaming fire (2 Thess. 1:8) once again with the trumpet—probably the same trumpet. It's the same relationship, and He brings it to consummation. All the nations of the earth will witness it, not just the three million of the nation of Israel.

Again, there has never been an event like this, in all of human history, when God revealed Himself in fire. In Deuteronomy 5:4, Moses says, "The Lord talked with you, face to face on the mountain, from the midst of the fire." It was actually a face-to-face encounter. This is the only time God ever did this with a group of people—millions of people.

"RETURN, O BACKSLIDING CHILDREN"

Paragraph E. This is a little more on Jeremiah. He began his young ministry with the bridal paradigm in Jeremiah 2–3. That was his first message. His first message spoke of the Lord as the Bridegroom, but here there's a second message as well. Jeremiah 3. See how Jeremiah connects the love of God with the motivation to repent. "Return, O backsliding children" (Jer. 3:14).

Why? Why should you return?

"For I am married to you" (Jer. 3:14). In other words, "The reason you return to Me is because you understand that I am a God who is willing to share My desire with you. I am a God who is willing to be involved with you in a tender and deep way at the heart level. I'm the Genesis 1 God. I want to be more than your King. I want to be more than your Deliverer, your Forgiver, your Savior—I will be all those things—but I want to be the God who connects heart to heart with you in mutual love. That's why I want you to return" (Jer. 3:14, paraphrased). It's because the Genesis 1 God has more to give you. "I have My heart to give you, and I want to empower you in the deepest and most profound relationship imaginable."

HOSEA, THE BRIDEGROOM PROPHET

Top of page two. We're going to move on to Hosea. I would call Hosea, if I had to use a term, "the Bridegroom prophet." Hosea revealed the Bridegroom God. From the biblical point of view, he was the first prophet to actually reveal the nature of God as having a Bridegroom heart. We won't be able to break this down in a full way because of time, but I want to encourage you to spend some time checking out some of the things I'm hinting at here. What a dramatic story, the book of Hosea!

"TAKE TO YOURSELF A WIFE OF HARLOTRY"

Paragraph A. Central to the prophetic message of Hosea is this very unusual story. The story is so unusual, it's really hard for us to relate. God commands this young prophet, a single, young man—we don't know how old he is—I'm guessing he's in his twenties because it's the beginning of his prophetic ministry. Most of the commentators say his prophetic ministry went on for fifty or sixty years, but this is at the beginning of his ministry. He's a young, single, holy man. It says in verse 2, "When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, at the beginning of his fifty-year ministry" (Hos. 1:2, paraphrased). No one knows the exact amount of years, but at the very beginning of this long prophetic ministry, the Lord gave him the most unusual commandment. He said, "I want you to take a wife, but here's the deal: I want her to be a harlot" (Hos 1:2).

Hosea must have thought to himself, “This isn’t what I was planning; I had something else in mind.”

The Lord says, “No, you’re My prophet. I need you to do this. I want you to take a harlot as a wife. Then, knowing she will be unfaithful to you, I want you to raise a family with her. Have children with her while she abides in her harlotry.”

Just get your mind around this. A lot of you are in your twenties. The audible voice of God comes to you and says, “That plan you have; just put it aside.” This is what He tells you about your family. If someone prophesies this to you, don’t accept it! This is a one-time deal, a one-time deal. People get weird about things like this. They try to be this and they try to be that. Don’t. Just be... wise. How is that? I was going to say *normal*, but those words wouldn’t come out. Just be wise. Who knows what *normal* means? That could mean anything.

HOSEA: A PICTURE OF THE BRIDEGROOM GOD

The Lord said, “Here is why I want you to take a wife of harlotry; here’s why I want you to raise a family where your children were conceived and born while she was unfaithful to you. Here’s the reason: The nation of Israel has committed great harlotry against Me, and I want you to be a picture to them—but more than a picture. I want you to feel what I feel, because I will have you prophesy about Me as the Bridegroom God. I want you to understand what I feel, as well as live a picture of what’s happening between Me and the nation of Israel.” He said, “The nation is living in harlotry against Me. They’re not faithful to Me. So, I want you to marry this woman.” We find out in Hosea 3:1 that Hosea actually fell in love with her; he loved her. God said, “I want you to feel the anguish I feel, because I want you to feel what I feel as the Bridegroom God.”

Here is the first man in human history to reveal God as a Bridegroom, but God insists that Hosea understand God’s heart as a man in order to reveal the nature of God in this way. What a unique privilege, to be the first prophet in human history to reveal the Bridegroom God as a Bridegroom filled with desire. God says, “You’re going to know the pain, the anguish, and even the joy of the recovery of the relationship that I have with her”—because the relationship was ultimately restored. “I want you to feel everything I feel, to be an embodiment of the One who must declare this truth to the nation.”

A PROPHET MUST EMBODY THE MESSAGE

In the seminary of the Holy Spirit, if God has called you to be a prophet—not even sometimes, but always—this is a principle: He will make you embody, meaning He will make you live out and experience, the message you are giving. I’m not saying He will have you do some strange thing like this. But, if you’re a true prophetic voice, He will insist that you become the embodiment in your emotions and your thinking of the message you give. A teacher may not need to go through that unique seminary course in the Spirit, but a prophet always must be the embodiment of their message. Prophets sometimes, mostly *always*, have really difficult lives because God has an ownership of them in this unique way, so that they become the embodiment of the message that God gives them. Hosea is the very first prophet in history to reveal the Bridegroom God. God says, “Not only are you going to give a picture to Israel, but you’re also going to understand what I understand.”

GOD CONSUMES THE PROPHET WITH THE MESSAGE

Paragraph B. For those of you who are new to the book of Hosea, his personal story is told in chapters 1 and 3. Then he delivers his message throughout the rest of the book. Chapter 1, stage one, is the marriage, the early years of the marriage. He’s to meet her, marry her, and have children. That’s stage one. He would name his three children very unusual names that reflected how God was judging Israel. They had two sons and a girl.

They named the girl, “No Mercy.” Now I love the name *Mercy*. How would you like to be named “No Mercy”? What a difficult name to go to school with. “Hi, what’s your name?” “No Mercy. Whatsoever. That’s my name.”

All three names signify the judgment of God. When God calls a prophet, He consumes them with the very message He gives them.

HOSEA MUST BUY HIS WIFE OUT

Then stage two of the marriage is in Hosea 3. This is intense, because the children had been born, and some years had passed. There’s not enough detail in the book of Hosea to know exactly how many years, and the fullness of the detail, but the marriage becomes really strained and separated. She’s in an adulterous affair with another man and ends up on the slave market because she made wrong decisions and found herself in debt. She has no money to pay, and in the ancient world, when you were in debt, you went up for sale on the slave labor market. You would have to serve another person for a year or two to pay your debt.

Here is what God says: “I want you to love her again, after all these years. I want you to take your hard-earned money, buy her out of slavery, and give your heart to her again” (Hos. 3:1).

Hosea’s thinking, “It took me a few years to settle down and get used to the fact that the marriage is over.”

God says, “No, open your heart, restart the marriage, and I want you to love her again. I want you to love her again and I want you to pay the full price because this is what I’m doing for My people. When they turn away from Me, it bruises My heart, but I open My heart again and again to them, and I pay the price to redeem them. I want true, real love between us.”

I believe the second chapter is one of the most significant chapters of the whole Bible. Hosea 2 is the key chapter. It’s between the early marriage story of chapter 1 and the later marriage story of chapter 3. Chapter 2 is right in the middle and has two parts. In verses 2–13, the nation of Israel is the unfaithful wife. In verses 14–23, God restores His people to that faithful, radiant wife status. The first half of the chapter describes how unfaithful she was. The second half of the chapter relates how God restored her and restored the relationship fully.

GOD’S HEART IN THE MIDST OF JUDGMENT

Look at Hosea 2:6–7. These are very key verses here. God is comparing the nation of Israel in chapter 2 to Hosea’s wife. Her name is Gomer, and she was this harlot, as I’ve said. God is charging the nation of Israel with unfaithfulness, very much like Hosea’s wife, Gomer. He says, “Here is what I want you to go and tell the unfaithful nation of Israel.” This gives us insight into God’s heart—His heart of judgment, in fact. It gives us insight into what is in His heart when He brings judgment upon the people He loves. This is a very significant passage: Hosea 2:6–7. Again, this is part of Bridegroom theology. Hosea mixes judgment and Bridegroom together with no contradiction. The God of desire is a Bridegroom, and the God who judges, only judges to remove the things that hinder love. There’s no contradiction from Hosea’s point of view between the Bridegroom God and the Judge. That’s the intended message we’re supposed to walk away with.

“I WILL HEDGE UP HER WAY... AND WALL HER IN”

God says, “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up [her] way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths” (Hos. 2:6). She wanted to live in compromise. God is telling Hosea, “She will chase her lovers. She will try to live in sin. She will seek to walk out her rebellious ways, but she won’t be able to walk them out because everywhere she turns, I will hem her in with thorns—with a wall of thorns.” Can you imagine, if someone hemmed you into a room and all the walls were thorns, from floor to ceiling? Everywhere she moved: “Ouch, ouch, ouch!” Everywhere she moved, the thorns would stick her. This is symbolically speaking to the whole nation. God is saying, “I will hem her in; I will judge her. It’s going to cause pain. I want to stop her from going the way she’s going. She won’t stop on her own, so I will remove the options and put some painful roadblocks in her life.”

HOSEA’S BRIDEGROOM JUDGE

“She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now’” (Hos. 2:7). Israel will wake up and say, “You know what? This path of judgment, this difficulty, is so hard. I’ve reconsidered through all the trouble and I think I will go back to my first husband, to the God of Sinai.” In other words, “I will go back to the God of covenant”—the God of Sinai, in this context. “I will return”—not to God my King. Yes, He’s God and He’s our King. “Not to God my Savior and Redeemer, but to my Husband. I will return in such a whole-hearted way that there’s a heart connection between me and God; where it’s better for me now than it was when I was living in sin.”

Here’s the point: Hosea is connecting the revelation of the Bridegroom God with the God of judgment. Even in God’s leadership of history, He will sometimes put a hedge of thorns around His people to hinder them from walking into options that will destroy their lives. In the midst of the trouble, some will find repentance and say, “I will return—not just to obeying my Master—rather, I will return to the heartfelt, heart-connection relationship with my God. It’s better for me to live in obedience, to say no to certain things, to live in that connection with the Lord, than to live in sin and have all the consequences of sin destroying my life.”

THE KING OF POWER AND DESIRE

Paragraph C. Middle of page two. Hosea has a very different message. Hosea’s message was new in two ways. Number one, he’s introducing the God of Israel as the God with a burning heart, a God with deep desire. He’s a God with desire for relationship of affection, of interaction—not just a God of power—but a God of desire, the Bridegroom God. Again, Hosea is the first man in the Bible to reveal in an explicit way the King with power is also the Bridegroom with desire.

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM WILL BE DESTROYED

Secondly, and this is very significant: He reveals that the Northern Kingdom of Israel is going to be destroyed. We find out later that it was destroyed within a generation, probably twenty or thirty years after he begins to prophesy. You think, “So what? The Northern Kingdom was destroyed.” Israel had a civil war in 931 B.C., and the north and the south were in division for 200 years. It was a long war. They had times when they were at war and times when they stayed away from one another. The division lasted 200 years. The Northern Kingdom, called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, called Judah, were both of the same group that came out of Egypt. One is called *Israel*, the other is called *Judah*. From our point of view, they’re both Israel as we know it, the nation of Israel from the days of Moses.

Hosea addresses the Northern Kingdom. There are ten tribes. You've heard of the ten lost tribes of Israel, the ten tribes of Israel that lived in the north. They'd had a lot of prosperity during those last 200 years. They were actually in a time of substantial prosperity at this point. Hosea lived in the north, and he was prophesying to them. He said, "I've got good news and I've got bad news. Here is the good news: The God of Israel is a God with deep desire. The bad news is that He's going to destroy our nation."

No one believed him. They were prosperous; they had political stability. They said, "There's no way this could be true." It turns out, however, that he was right.

THE GOD OF DESIRE IS THE JUDGE

Hosea's message was that the Bridegroom God, the God of desire, is also the Bridegroom who is going to destroy the nation—to wake the nation up—so that they can walk in love with God forever and forever. He was the first one who put together the idea, the two-fold message, that the Bridegroom God of desire is the Judge with zeal to intervene. He's the same God with the same heart. The message of Hosea, the unique message, is that the Bridegroom God orchestrated both the judgment and the restoration, which would then bring them to the full consummation of that marriage relationship. He was the first man in history to connect the Bridegroom God with the revelation of God's judgment. That is also the mandate of the Church in the generation in which the Lord returns: He is the King of great power, of healing, of economic provision, who brings transformation of society, who initiates the great harvest that goes forth to the ends of the earth. He is the King with power, but also the Bridegroom with desire, and the Judge with zeal—to intervene and remove everything that hinders love. This King and Bridegroom and Judge has a plan to transition our natural earth into the age to come.

THE FIRST BRIDE OF CHRIST MESSAGE

Paragraph D. Hosea's message came just before the most severe judgment in Israel's history up to that time. There had never been a judgment more severe than that. This was also the first time that the Bride of Christ message—we'll use the New Testament terminology—was ever declared to Israel: at the very time when their most severe judgment was just around the corner. The Bridegroom message was declared in the context of the judgment message.

Isaiah does the same thing. In Isaiah 62, he says, "Hephzibah: God delights in you. God wants to be married to you" (Is. 62:4). In Isaiah 63, He's the God who is bringing judgment to the nations of the earth. Isaiah does the same sort of thing: He combines the Bridegroom God with the zealous Judge.

GOD'S JUDGMENTS IN LOVE

The point is this: We can only understand the judgments of God to the degree that we understand the revelation of the Bridegroom heart. That's the point. That was the bigger message behind Hosea's ministry. We'll never be able to understand God's judgments unless we understand His heart as a Bridegroom God, because His judgments are meant to remove everything that hinders love. That's the point of His judgments. He's not just getting something off His mind. It's not like He's frustrated, saying, "I'll show you who's boss around here!" No, He's not venting. He's intervening to remove everything that hinders love. If we don't understand that the Judge and the Bridegroom are the same God, we'll be offended by His judgments instead of trusting His leadership, because His love is perfect.

HOSEA 2:14–23: ONE OF THE GREATEST PASSAGES IN THE OT

Roman numeral IV. Bottom of page two. We're coming to one of the greatest passages in the whole Bible. You really should study this. When you read it through only once, you may not get a lot out of it at that one quick reading. Give yourself some time. Hosea 2:14–23 is truly one of the greatest passages in the entire Old Testament. It's one of the high marks of Scripture. This passage is stunning—line by line—if you go beyond a superficial reading.

FROM UNFAITHFUL TO FAITHFUL

This is the first time in the Bible where the Bride of Christ—again using the New Testament terminology—is proclaimed in a clear, direct, explicit way. The point of this message is, “How does God turn an unfaithful wife into a radiant, faithful bride?” That's the message. The answer is right here in chapter 2:14–23. You can apply these verses to your own life. It's not only how God deals with the nation of Israel or the Body of Christ; the way God turns an unfaithful wife into a radiant, faithful wife is the same for us as individuals. This is how God relates to me as an individual. It is the same way He relates to a nation or to the Body of Christ worldwide. Also, when you're disciplining someone—pouring yourself out into a younger believer—you want to understand Hosea 2:14–23. This will give you insight on how God turns that new believer into a faithful, devoted believer. Don't read this passage as a history lesson and think, “Wow, Israel (or the Body of Christ), this is how God is going to change you.” Think of it personally, and think of it in your ministry as an application for training up a new believer.

“I WILL ALLURE HER”

Bottom of page two. Paragraph A. In Hosea 2:13b, God is speaking of Israel. “But Me she forgot. Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her... She shall sing there” (Hos. 2:13–15).

This is filled with meaning. Here is Israel, who has totally forgotten God. In verse 14, this word *therefore* is very important. God says, “She has forgotten Me. She has written Me off. Therefore, I will allure her.”

We think, “What?” You might think He would say, “Therefore, I will deal harshly with her.”

No. “She has forgotten Me. She has no interest in Me. Therefore I will allure her. I will wow her. I will woo her. I will show her how much desire I have for her and I will allure her, because she has forgotten Me” (Hos. 2:13–15, paraphrased).

GOD'S PRIMARY STRATEGY

Now, in the overall context of Hosea 2, God hedges us up with thorns (Hos. 2:6), and He allures by revealing His desire (v. 14). God has a twofold strategy. He uses thorns to stop people from moving forward in ways that will destroy their life. He also reveals His desire; He allures. The verse I don't have in the notes is Romans 11:22. Paul said, “Behold the goodness and severity of the Lord” (Rom. 11:22, paraphrased). It's the beholding of both His goodness as the God who allures, and beholding His severity as the God who hedges up with thorns. This is how we find insight into God and His strategy to take an unfaithful people and make them faithful. His primary strategy is always to allure. God will always excite your heart about Himself if you'll listen. He doesn't want to hedge up anyone in thorns. His first attempt will always be to allure, to show how much He desires them, you, and others with how much beauty He has. He wants to wow and to woo the heart first.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD LEADS TO REPENTANCE

Paul mentioned this in Romans 2:4. He says, “The problem is that they didn’t understand the goodness of God. They didn’t know that if they grasped God’s goodness, it would actually lead them to repentance; it would lead them to wholeheartedness” (Rom. 2:4, paraphrased). Did you know that the revelation of goodness leads a heart somewhere? It leads people to repentance if we understand His goodness. That’s what God is doing right here through Hosea. He says, “I will allure an entire rebellious nation.” This is how God approaches us. He wants to allure us; He wants to fascinate us with His desire, with His beauty, with His plans for us, with His commitment to us, and with His tender mercy.

GOD WILL MAKE OUR HEART SING

Number two. Paragraph two. Hosea says by the Spirit of prophecy, “There in the wilderness, God will comfort her. God will give her promises of love, promises of life, and promises of destiny and honor. He will give her promises—even in the wilderness where she has been rebellious” (Hos. 2:14–15, paraphrased). Only God would give words of promise, love and destiny to someone who is disconnected from Him.

He says in verse 15, “She shall sing there.” When we understand the alluring of God and His comforting heart, it makes our heart sing, even in the wilderness. Someone might say, “Come on, let’s be practical. No one sings in the wilderness. We’re talking about a time of difficulty and pain.” Beloved, it’s possible to understand the heart of God to such a degree that, even in the wilderness, you could sing a love song to Him because your heart has been moved. He has allured you with the revelation of His heart for you, His desire for you, and His plans for you.

HUSBAND AND NO LONGER MASTER

Top of page three. “It shall be in that day,” says the Lord, “That you, nation of Israel, and the Body of Christ worldwide, will call Me, ‘My Husband,’ and you will no longer call Me, ‘Master’” (Hos. 2:16, paraphrased). The word *Master* in this context is negative. The Lord is our Master. He’s the Lord, our Master, in the positive sense. In this verse, however, the word *Master* means “task master,” or “slave driver.” He says, “Here is what you’re going to say when you understand My heart. As I’ve allured you, here is what your confession is going to be. When you relate to Me, you’re going to say, ‘My Husband, the God who desires me.’ You won’t say, ‘My task master, the God who drives me with fear and breaks my spirit.’ You’re going to have a different revelation of God and it’s going to change your response to Him.”

THE BEAUTIFUL GOD

This passage right here in Hosea 2:16, “You shall call the Messiah, ‘My Husband’” (paraphrased). What a radical statement. Israel must have thought, “Hosea, where did you get this revelation? God Himself is going to be our what?” He’s going to be our Bridegroom, our Husband, and not just our Savior, not just our Healer, not just our Provider, not just our King. He’s actually going to be the One who desires us, reveals His beauty, imparts His beauty, and awakens our desire for Him.”

THE BRIDEGROOM WILL AWAKEN AND SAVE

A new revelation of God is what Hosea is giving. This is the beautiful God with the burning heart who wants intimacy with weak and broken people. That’s what Hosea is saying. It’s the revelation of the beautiful God with the burning heart for those who are weak and broken. He actually wants intimacy with these weak and broken people. Hosea was saying, “You will say to the Messiah, ‘My Husband.’” This is the revelation that’s going to awaken the nation of Israel. What Hosea is actually prophesying is the national conversion of the

nation of Israel. They will be converted as related to the events of the second coming. Here is the point: When they see Jesus as Messiah, they won't only see Him as King; they'll call Him, *Husband*. They won't just say, "King of kings"; they'll say, "My Husband." The revelation of the Bridegroom God is going to be so prominent in the generation in which the Lord returns. The Spirit and the Bride will be saying, "Come!" The Body of Christ worldwide will have a revelation that they are the Bride before the Bridegroom. I'm talking about a billion or two billion people. It will go beyond the Body of Christ. This will spill over into the nation of Israel with clarity and reality. The nation of Israel will understand it, and I believe they will get it from the Body of Christ, from the born-again community worldwide. They will hear this prophecy. The prominence of Jesus as a Bridegroom God will fill the Body of Christ, and that will actually be what wins Israel to Himself. It is one of the main issues, although not the only issue.

What an amazing reality: that they will say to Him, "My Husband." Notice, the word *my*—it's personal. Jesus told us to pray, "Our Father." That's plural. The prophet Hosea said that when you come to Jesus, you'll say, "My Husband." It's singular. The relationship is so intimate and personal at the heart level, whereas the Father relationship is corporate and family. We say, "Our Father," but we also say, "My Bridegroom, my Husband," because the interaction of the heart is so personal. Like I've said a number of times, you don't want to allow anyone to bring sensual overtones into this relationship with Jesus. Jesus isn't our boyfriend. We don't go on date nights with Jesus. He isn't our lover, our boyfriend, or anything like that. It's a heart connection with the God of burning desire. It's holy. Sensual relationships inside of marriage are holy as well, but this has nothing to do with that whatsoever. Some people try to put that into the mix. Don't accept that. That's not what the Bible is talking about.

"I WILL BETROTH YOU TO ME FOREVER"

Paragraph C. He goes to the next level. This is unprecedented. Remember, this is God speaking, the Bridegroom God, the Messiah, Jesus. He breaks in and says what He wants to say. This should be one of your favorite verses in the Bible, even if it's the first time you've read it. By faith, make this one of your favorite verses, for real. Jesus breaks into the conversation in verse 19. He says, "I will betroth you to Me forever" (Hos. 2:19). "I will betroth you to Me, My heart and your heart, forever" (paraphrased). Whoa. Yes, the overflow, you can see it. "I will betroth you to Me." It's as though He says, "I will betroth you to Me," and people say, "What?"

"Yes, you understood. I am the Genesis 1 God, and you and I will connect at the heart level forever."

Then people said, "What?"

He says, "Yes, let me take your question mark and pull it down into an exclamation point. Yes, I want to marry you forever; the Genesis 1 God and you, the weak and broken person together with Me, forever, at the heart level." He says, "Let Me describe for you what our marriage relationship will be like." Then He lays out five, yes, six points here. He says, "Here is what our relationship will be like: righteousness, justice, loving-kindness, mercy, faithfulness, and yes, you shall know Me. You shall know the Lord" (Hos. 2:19–20, paraphrased). That's the word—*know* the word—for "intimate connection."

THE TRIPLE PROMISE OF BETROTHAL

The first thing I want to point out here in paragraph C is that here in verse 19–20, He says this three times. "I will betroth you to Me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness, justice, etc." Then He concludes with, "I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness" (Hos. 2:20). He says it three times in this one passage. When there's a

triple repetition, when God speaks three times, it's of the highest significance anywhere in the Bible. There are only a few instances where God Himself speaks direction and says the same thing three times. Hosea, the Bridegroom prophet, is the first man ever to hear this revelation, at least from the biblical point of view.

HE BETROTHS THE WEAK AND BROKEN

I want you to notice five things. He says, "Yes, I will betroth you." Who is the *I*? It's the Genesis 1 God. We're not talking about a great man on the earth. We're talking about the Genesis 1 God, Jesus of Nazareth. "I will betroth you; I want to marry you; I want a deep, heart connection forever. I don't just want to forgive you. I will forgive you. I don't just want to use and empower you, though I will do that. I want to marry you. I want to be betrothed to you forever." There's no doctrine more precious than this. It comes from the very lips of Jesus Himself, the second Person of the Trinity. He says, "I will betroth you." He wants you. He doesn't want that ideal image you have of that great man or woman of God. Such a person doesn't even exist: this man or woman who never makes any mistakes and does nothing wrong. He wants you: you, little, broken, weak, prone to discouragement, prone to distraction, prone to about ten other things, you and me. He says, "Yes, I want you as you are. I want you. I understand you. I know who you are. You're the one I want."

"You're kidding."

"Yes, I want you."

"Why?"

"Because I'm the God of love and I see something in you that you can't imagine. You have no idea what's inside you from My point of view, and no idea where you're going in the resurrection relationship with Me. You can't even imagine it."

"Really?"

"Really. Together forever. You have no idea who you are to Me, forever."

That's what He could say to us. Not just for 1,000 years; not just for the millennial kingdom; not just for the ages and ages and ages, but for eternity He said, "I will. It's settled. This thing isn't in the balance. No one can turn this thing back. It's settled." He will do it. It's finished. Beloved, you have it made. You have it made. You're saying, "Well at present, there seem to be a few thorns around me. I don't know where they came from." Sometimes those thorns are from the enemy; sometimes they're from the Lord.

THE SECRET OF A GREAT RELATIONSHIP

Number two. The nature of the relationship. These details in paragraph two are very important. They deserve long meditation in every detail. What will the marriage be like? What will it be like to be married to Jesus? Incidentally, these are the words Jesus uses to describe the relationship He's planning with you. From His point of view, this is what He's working; this is what He's committed to doing. From a natural perspective, this passage would be phenomenal for a marriage seminar, because this is what Jesus does with His Bride and you can't do better than that. You want a good relationship with a guy or a gal? Hosea 2:19–20 is a really good place to look in terms of desirable characteristics in a relationship. He says, "Righteousness." We're talking about a radiant heart of purity. We're talking about emotional wholeness and a love that empowers a

supernatural purity and abandonment to God. Holiness: this is no sterile code of conduct. This is a heart connection that's extravagant in purity and total givenness to God. Jesus said, "You will be given to God in this relationship. I will empower you and convince you; wait and see." This is a good thing for a natural marriage. Justice. "There will be no injustice; nothing unfair will ever happen in the relationship. Ever. I promise you. A million years from now, you won't have one complaint that I've treated you in an unfair way." Men, that's a good one to get on your résumé for your wife—never to be unfair and no injustice comes from you, ever. Whoa.

Loving-kindness. We are the object of His tender affections. There will be sensitivity, there will be attentiveness, and there will be kindness. There will be no harshness. The relationship will be molded and fostered in kindness and sensitivity and tenderness. That's the relationship. Jesus says, "You'll like this relationship." As a matter of fact, we have all this relationship in the early stages right now. Our problem is, with our unrenewed mind, we don't understand it that well. He's offering it to us in this age, not just in the resurrection. Men, that's another good one: loving-kindness. Put it on the list. Ladies, when that man pops the question, be sure and say, "Well, you know what? Let's read Hosea 2:19. Then I'll answer you, after that."

Mercy. The relationship isn't disqualified because of our weakness or failure. It's not based on our failure and weakness; it's not based on our ability. It's based on His responsiveness to us and our responsiveness to Him. Faithfulness. He's true to everything He says about Himself. There's no lie; there's no secret He has that's negative or dark. Everything He says about Himself is true, He's faithful to uphold, and everything He says to you is as promised. Revelation 19 is the great wedding day, the consummation at the time of the second coming. It's the Mount Sinai, the mountain of fire, thunder, lightning in the sky with everyone with the whole world watching this consummation. But here, in Revelation 19:2, you know what we say to Jesus? "Faithful and true." We say, "Now that we see the whole story, we confess openly that You are faithful and true to everything You have said about Yourself being loving, wise, and good. You're true about everything you say about us. Yes, we're forgiven, we're redeemed, we're Yours. It's true. Yes, You are faithful and true."

CONFIDENCE TO GIVE OURSELVES FULLY

The crescendo. We'll end with this. "You shall know the Lord" (Hos. 2:20). This word, *know*, is the word for intimate connection. You shall know the Lord in an intimate way. This is the very word used in Genesis 4:1 where it says that Adam knew Eve. In this context there's no sexual connotation, but a heart connection at the deepest possible level. Seven or eight times in the book of Hosea, the prophet says that we would know the Lord. This is probably one of the primary themes of the whole book. It's intimacy; it's the knowledge of God—that we would know His heart, and His heart would fascinate and excite us. The knowledge of God was one of the premiere emphases that Hosea expressed.

Here's his point: These five parts, these five facets of the relationship: righteousness, justice, loving kindness, mercy, and faithfulness—when we understand them—produce in us a confidence to know the Lord in a deep way. These five facets of the relationship produce an environment around the relationship where we have confidence in love. We can open our spirit and give ourselves fully to the Lord. It is these five dimensions of Jesus' heart that actually awaken us into the intimacy of knowing Him in a deep way. These five things will contribute significantly to human intimacy as well, in terms of the emotional connection with a spouse. Those five things will actually enrich the connection in every way—body, soul, and spirit. It's a good marriage course, (Hos. 2:19–20), straight from the lips of Jesus.

JESUS' WEDDING GIFT

Paragraph D. We'll end with this. It's Jesus' bridal gift. That's what I'm calling it. Here is what He brings to the wedding. A Jewish man would bring a gift; he would pay the bride price. Of course, Jesus gave His life. That's the ultimate bridal price. He paid the price. He brings great gifts to the relationship.

A JOURNEY THAT ENDS IN A GARDEN

He says, "Here is what I will do. I will restore the entire animal kingdom, the atmosphere, the agriculture; I will restore the whole earth. I will use My power because I'm not just a Bridegroom. I'm God. I'm the Genesis 1 God. I will restore everything to the paradise garden of Eden." That's where our consummated marriage will begin—in this kind of environment.

So, are you in? Do you want to love Him with all your heart? When I read these passages, I think, "Oh, I love You! I love You! I love You!"

Amen.

MINISTRY TIME

The Lord wants to reveal Himself to you as the Bridegroom God. The Bridegroom God is the same God who judges; the same tender God who removes everything that gets in the way of love.

Let's wait on the Lord for a moment here. Holy Spirit, we come before You and we say yes to You. Beloved, we want to give this confession to the Lord: "You're my Husband. You're my Husband." This is for every man, woman, every single, born-again believer: "You're my Husband; You're mine. You're the God of desire. I say yes. I say yes to You. I won't draw back from You. I say yes to You, Jesus."

If you want to receive prayer or just stand before the Lord and say, "I want this confession, this revelation—this blindness lifted off of me. I want to grasp this dynamic relationship in a greater way," and you would like prayer, I invite you to come up to the front.

Beloved, I remember when the Lord first spoke to me about the Bride of Christ message back in 1988. I said, "I'm not interested in the Bride of Christ." My dad was a boxer. So, I told the Lord, "I played college football. I like hitting people!"

He said, "No, you're really going to like this. You're going to like it." I didn't hear any of that stuff, of course. I could imagine Him saying, "You're going to like it when I tell you how much I desire you, and how I will open up the fountains of your heart more than the 'rah, rah, rah, rah, rah.'"

Well, it's been twenty-plus years. I'm a satisfied customer. I like this truth. I like Jesus the Bridegroom God. I want more, way more than I have.