

SPIRITUAL RESTORATION IN THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA 2:16-25

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I. THE PLACE OF 2:16-25 [ENGLISH BIBLE 2:14-23] IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA

While the critical scholars are never tired of discussing the book of Hosea's redactional process, it is, in general, pretty much accepted that the book can be divided into two main sections, chapters 1-3 and 4-14. Whether or not chapters 1-3 is edited at a later stage than chapters 4-14, what is important to understand the present shape of the text is that the first three chapters of the book of Hosea, as Childs pointed out, "provides the exegetical key in the framework from which the entire book is to be read."¹ The effect can be twofold.² First, Hosea's marriage and the birth of the children have been raised to a metaphorical level of language. That is, it functions symbolically to address every generation, not just Hosea's own day. Second, the message of judgment and salvation is inextricably joined in the purpose of God for his people.

The account of both Hosea chapters 1 and 3 are given as a narrative form and deals with the relationship of marriage between Hosea and his wife. Whereas Hosea chapter 2 is written in a poetic form and deals with the marriage metaphor between Yahweh and Israel, there is a certain pattern followed in Hosea chapters 1 and 3: the marriage relationship was started, the marriage relationship was broken, and the marriage relationship was restored. The pattern reflected in Hosea chapters 1 and 3 is followed in Hosea chapter 2: the marriage relationship between Israel and Yahweh was started, broken, and restored. Here "threats of punishment (Hos 1:2-9; 2:4-15) are juxtaposed with promises of salvation (2:1-3, 16-25; 3:1-5). The full

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¹B. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 381.

²Ibid.

force of the threat is therefore mitigated by passages of hope.”³ This pattern of judgment-restoration is picked up and used as a model for arranging the material in chapters 4-14. Much of the material in these chapters is devoted to the themes of judgment and of punishment, yet the oracles of hope and restoration are inserted at several important points.⁴ In fact, each of the two sub-sections, 4-11 and 12-14 ends with an oracle of hope—11:8-11 at the end of chapters 4-11 with the insertion of brief calls to repentance in 6:1-3 and 10:12, and 14:2-9 at the end of chapters 12-14 with an insertion of another brief call to repentance in 12:7.⁵ Thus, “just like the accounts in Hos 1 and 3, and in Hos 2, so also in Hos 4-11 and 12-14 the climax of Hosea’s message is not judgment but hope.”⁶ The hope here lies in the fact of God’s promise of restoration.

Therefore, 2:16-25 is one of the restoration oracles in the book of Hosea and thus reflects the important theology of the book. The passage also provides the restoration hope in the relationship between Yahweh and Israel.

II. THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT OF HOSEA 2:16-25

The message of restoration in Hosea 2:16-25 builds upon the preceding message of judgment in 2:4-15. The following chart demonstrates the sense in which “those things that have been denied by way of punishment in (v. 4-15) are either reversed or restored when salvation comes (vv. 16-25).”⁷

Punishment (2:4-15)	Salvation (2:16-25)
1. Strong words of accusations and threats (vv. 4-8).	1. Soft and tender courtship language (vv. 16-25).
2. Marriage relationship broken (v. 4, cf. v. 13).	2. Marriage relationship restored (vv. 18-22).

³Gale A. Yee, *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea: A Redaction Critical Investigation*, SBL Dissertation Series 102 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987), 53.

⁴Maksal Jones Hynniewta, *The Integrity of Hosea’s Future Hope: A Study of the Oracles of Hope in the Book of Hosea* (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1996), 30.

⁵Ibid. See footnote 14 as well.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 59.

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| <p>3. Yahweh will strip Israel naked (vv. 5, 12).</p> <p>4. Yahweh will have no pity upon the children of Israel (v. 6).</p> <p>5. Israel has loved, worship and offered sacrifices to the Canaanite Baals (vv. 7, 13).</p> <p>6. Essential agricultural products withdrawn because Israel ascribed them to Baal (vv. 23-24).</p> | <p>3. Yahweh will make Israel into a new bride ready both for the betrothal ceremonies, and will cloth her with his righteousness, justice, steadfast and faithfulness (vv. 16-22).</p> <p>4. Yahweh will again have pity upon them (v. 25).</p> <p>5. Yahweh himself will stop Baal and remove the Baal names from their lips (v. 17).</p> <p>6. Fertility of the earth will be which will bring enough crops (vv. 7b, 10, 11, 14).</p> |
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The above relationship shows that the judgment is written from the intention of the restoration in view. The fact that chapter 2 is located between chapters 1 and 3, which deal with Hosea's own personal experience, and that chapter 3 ends with the restoration of Hosea with his wife and at the same time restoration of Yahweh with Israel, shows that the relationship between Hosea and his wife is intended to inspire the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. With this as a context of Hosea 2:16-25, now let's turn our attention on the text itself.

III. RESTORATION MESSAGE OF HOSEA 2:16-25

(ENGLISH BIBLE 2:14-23)

In this section, the outline given by Anderson and Freedman will be followed: that is, the new Exodus (2:16-17), the end of Baal worship (2:18-19), covenant and betrothal (2:20-22), and consummation in the great chorus (2:23-25).⁸

A. The New Exodus (2:16-17 [14-15])

The restoration message starts with the logical connector "therefore" (לָכֵן) showing that the deliverance presupposes judgment, that is, discipline and punishment. After stating the sin of an unfaithful wife (vv. 4-7), Hosea 2:8 starts the first pronouncement of judgment with "therefore." In 2:11 another judgment sequence with

⁸Frances I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 6-7.

consequential connector לָכֵן with participle and continues with consecutive future (perfect) verbs. There is a comparatively counting severity in the succession of judgments.

Now the text starts the third time with the word “therefore” (לָכֵן) in 2:16. According to Andersen and Freedman, indictment + לָכֵן + penalty is a typical sequence and the word “therefore” is often the first word in a judgment oracle.⁹ Thus, at this point another judgment is expected possibly with the most severity as its climax. Surprisingly here the message of restoration promise begins in the least expected place. This pleasant surprise reinforces the fact that God’s judgment should be viewed as a process of restoration not as rejection. לָכֵן here should be viewed not only in connection with the preceding context (vv. 4-15), but also all the לָכֵן used in chapter two as being part of God’s grace activity. God’s love is expressed even in his intention of judgment. Therefore after all the substantial judgment had been complete, Yahweh will restore his people by his forgiving love (royal love). This will result in Israel’s change of heart.

The Hebrew interjection “behold” (הִנֵּה) stresses a marked change in subject. Surely the restoration begins to unfold with another emphatic pronoun, אֲנִי, at the beginning of the sentence, providing the clear message that *God* is going to do something. This is in contrast with the preceding sentence, “*me* she forgot” (2:15), but nevertheless God is going to do something good for her: “*I* will allure her . . .”

The language here is very passionate. The verb “allure” (מְנַתְּיָהּ) is used for the seduction of a virgin (Exod 22:15 [16]) and even for the divine constraint which holds a prophet powerless (Jer 20:7). Based on these usages, Mays concludes its meaning to “persuade irresistibly, to overwhelm the resistance and will of another.”¹⁰ This, however, is a bit too strong in this context in light of the following phrase “speak tenderly to her” (v. 16), which does not imply any forcefulness. The word rather connotes “persuasion by means of attractive benefits.”¹¹ This interpretation fits the best in this context in light of verse 17. The expression, הִנֵּה עַל לִבָּהּ—“speak tenderly to her,” is a tender

⁹Ibid., 269.

¹⁰James Luther Mays, *Hosea*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 44.

¹¹Leon J. Wood, “Hosea,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, ed. F. E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 179.

expression, used of courtship (Gen 34:3) and winning back love (Judg 19:3), and also kind, considerate favor not necessarily involving romantic intentions (Ruth 2:13).¹² God is going to move her heart to respond.

The word “desert” (or “wilderness”) in this verse and “Egypt” in the next one point to a historical parallel with the time of Israel’s journey from Egypt. The wilderness was the place where Israel loved God and followed him according to Jeremiah 2:1-3 (“ . . . I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown . . .”). It was the place where Israel was under the guidance of God and put their trust in their Omnipotent God, and the place where God made a covenant with Israel as a nation and Israel became Yahweh’s bride. It was also a place where Israel was tried and probed. Therefore “wilderness” connotes more than one meaning: the place of love, fellowship, covenant trust, obedience, and even chastisement. As the future Israel has passed through her wilderness, she will receive again the vineyards that had been taken away (2:14).

The Valley of Achor, a place of trouble and disgrace at the time of Israel’s entrance into Canaan under Joshua (cf. Achan’s sin and punishment, Josh 7:24-26), will in the future be “a door of hope.” At this point Anderson and Freedman provides a very interesting insight regarding the meaning of door of “hope” (דַּלְתֵי הַאֲמוּנָה).¹³ According to them, in Joshua, the same word is used to refer to the scarlet “cord” (תַּקְרָה) that Rahab placed by the window of her house (Josh 2:18, 21). This story is near enough to the Achan incident to suggest that Hosea may have deliberately connected them here. If that is the case, it provides a great homiletical point. Making the Valley of Achor a door of hope can mean several things. First, it can mean the reversal of fortunes of what has happened there. Thus Israel will conquer the land that God has promised again. Second, it can also connote the place of punishment. Therefore the door of hope can simply mean the restoration from punishment. Third, if it is connected with Rahab’s cord, then it means, as Rahab, a radical conversion of a Canaanite woman, who finds salvation through her faith in Yahweh. The same hope is open to

¹²Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary 31 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 53.

¹³Anderson and Freedman, *Hosea*, 276.

anyone who has the same faith in Yahweh, that is, salvation for all. Thus it can be said in 2:16-17 that the author envisages the future return of Israel as a new Exodus, new covenant, new settlement of the land, new life and new salvation.

God does most of the actions (allure, lead, speak, give) here. Then finally Israel will now “respond” (or “sing,” שָׁרָה) as in the days she came up out of Egypt (cf. Exod 15:1-18). It is a response to God’s saving acts. This response may refer to the covenantal response of obedience at Sinai (Exod 19:5-6). In Deuteronomy 31:21, Yahweh tells Moses that “when many disasters and difficulties come upon them, this song (i.e., chap 32) will testify (שָׁרָה) against them.” This verb here signifies the song of curse (Deut 32). It could be employed by Hosea as a reversal of the covenant curses in the restoration period and as a description of eschatological blessing.¹⁴

B. The End of Baal Worship (vv. 18-19 [16-17])

The eschatological formula, “in that day” (vv. 18, 20, 23), introduces further predictions (vv. 18-25). The formula יָמֵי הַיְדֹשָׁדֵשׁ refers here to the day Yahweh “will allure her and lead her into the desert . . .” mentioned in v. 16 and thus connects vv. 18-25 to vv. 16-17.¹⁵ In this sense the perspective of 2:16-17 is very much eschatological. It is a day of future restoration.

The expression “declares the Lord” used only four times in Hosea. And it occurs three times in chapter 2 alone. It shows the special importance of chapter 2 in the whole context of the book of Hosea. The first one is used to conclude the unit of 2:4-15. The last one also functions to mark another unit of text (Hos 11:11). Here it introduces the first series of the new relationship with Yahweh heralded by “in that day.”

In that day there will be a restoration of relationship. By using the marriage metaphor, God will be recognized as the “true husband.” He will no longer be called “my Baal.” He will remove Baal worship and all remembrance of the names of the Baals from Israel. This divine promise is based upon the command in Exodus 23:13 (“Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips”), and is repeated in Zechariah 13:2 (“On that day, I will banish the names of

¹⁴Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 7-8.

¹⁵Hynniewta, *Integrity of Hosea’s Future Hope*, 62.

the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more,' declares the LORD Almighty"). Israel will be spiritually revived so that she will recognize God to be her true husband. Then a true covenant relationship will be restored and Yahweh will be truly worshiped.

C. Covenant and Betrothal (vv. 20-22 [18-20])

With second eschatological formula "in that day," there will be reconciliation of Israel with nature. Yahweh will make a covenant with his creation for Israel. Here, however, Israel is merely described as "for them" (לָהֶֿם). The ambiguity of this word suggests, as Stuart pointed out, that "Hosea has already prophesied the existence of the new kind of Israel, very different from the one he knew in the eight century B.C."¹⁶ This covenant reverses the punishment in 2:14, where "wild animals (חַיֵּֿי הַשָּֿׂדֶֿה) will devour them." Now Yahweh will make a new covenant, starting with the beasts of the field (חַיֵּֿי הַשָּֿׂדֶֿה), with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the earth. These three groups of living creatures are given in their order from the Genesis 1 creation account (1:30). It, therefore, envisions the restoration of the original purpose of creation. It returns to the paradise. This promise also rests upon Leviticus 26:6 ("I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove savage beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country"), and is expanded in Ezekiel 34:25 ("I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety"). In these verses, God's abundant blessing is in view in contrast to the covenant curse. However in this context it can still further expand and include an eschatological vision almost like that of Isaiah in 11:6-9 and 35:9.

Not only is there a peace with the animal kingdom but also safety from enemies. As Leviticus 26:6 above shows, the military war represented by the sword is the next theme as the covenant blessing. The bow and the sword, the two main weapons of Hosea's day, will be abolished. Thus war will be eliminated so that "all may lie down in safety." The term sounds much like that of the eschatological vision of Isaiah 2:4 (Micah 4:3), depicting universal peace.

In verse 21 [19], God restores completely a new marriage

¹⁶Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 58.

relationship with new qualities: righteousness (צְדָקָה), justice (מִשְׁפָּט), love (רַחֲמֵי), compassion (חַנּוּן), and faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה). The verb “betroth” is repeated three times which is unusual and very emphatic. The preposition with pronominal suffix לִי (“to me”) is also repeated three times and emphasizes the personal relationship. The verb שָׂרָה (piel: “to betroth”) refers to a more formal term than “go, take” (1:2) and involves settlement of the proper bride price to the bride’s father. In Deuteronomy 22:23f, a virgin that is betrothed to a man is considered to be already his wife for legal purposes (cf. also Deut 30:7; Exod 22:16-17). David’s betrothal to Michal is already equated with marriage (2 Sam 3:14j, “give me my wife”; cf. 1 Sam 18:25). The descriptions of qualities with the five occurrences of the preposition are usually taken as the bride price of this marriage as was the case in 2 Samuel 3:14. David betrothed Michal with (בְּ) a certain bride price. Here the image of betrothal is much more fresher than the image of remarriage or reunion of a broken relationship. It is going back to the original status of “the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt” (2:17). God is going to start from her virgin status. What a remarkable forgiveness and restoration process for what she has done. It is also a profound theological statement “describing the foundational components of the marriage relationship, which derive from the character of Yahweh himself.”¹⁷ This marriage will be permanent (לְעֹלָם), not temporary.

As a result the bride will “know” (יָדָע) Yahweh. While this term can have sexual overtones (e.g., Gen 4:1; Num 31:18; I King 1:4), its use here metaphorically suggests “intimacy”¹⁸ in a covenant sense. “To know Yahweh” is Hosea’s inclusive term for what is expected of Israel as the covenant people (Hos 4:1). This is the reversal effect of “me she forgot” in 2:15. “Knowledge” involves learning and obeying the will of the covenant God. It is the response to the unity of Yahweh’s saving act and binding requirement such as is expressed in “I am Yahweh your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me . . .” (Exod 20:2ff.).¹⁹ The lack of such knowledge had led to the loss of any reality in the role

¹⁷Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 283.

¹⁸Stuart, *Hosea*, 60.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 69.

of being the covenant people (“my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge”; 4:6).²⁰ Elsewhere in the Bible, “to know God” is expressed in another way, that is to love God “with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37; cf. Deut 30:10). Mays says rightly, “its integrity and permanence is the forerunner of Jeremiah’s new covenant (Jer 31:31ff.), and the first proclamation of the Church as the eschatological bride of Christ (Eph 5:23ff.).”²¹

D. Consummation: The Great Chorus (vv. 23-25 [21-23])

With the third eschatological formula, “in that day” along with “declares the Lord,” now the message of Yahweh reaches its climax and binds the message to previous ones (2:16, 18). As a result of this beautiful relationship between Yahweh and Israel in the future day, Yahweh will respond. The saving activity of Yahweh is in view here. Yahweh will “respond” to the needs of the people. A full agricultural cycle is here described—heavens, (rain)-earth, (soil)-grain, wine, oil—those elements Yahweh once had to withhold (v. 10 [8]) to teach Israel a lesson. Those three elements (grain, wine, and oil) represent “plenty” promised in traditional blessings. They were also to be a feature of the end time (Jer 31:12; cf. Hos 14:8; Amos 9:13-14).²² These oracles serve as polemic against the fertility cult of Baal. Yahweh will superintend all fertility in the new age. The restoration blessing of agricultural bounty promised in Leviticus 26:42 and Deuteronomy 30:9 is fulfilled.²³

In verse 25, a threefold message of Yahweh’s judgment (1:4, 6, 9) upon Israel is completely reversed and takes a new meaning. First, place of ‘blood shed at Jezreel’ (1:4) now becomes the place of abundance as fulfillment of its name, “God sows.” The word-play on Jezreel’s name (זֵרְעֵאל) is so obvious in the next verse, “I will sow her” (וְזָרַעְתִּיהָ) since both share the root זָרַע—“to sow or plant.” However here the pronoun of the verb, וְזָרַעְתִּיהָ, refers to Israel not Jezreel since it happens “in the land” (בְּאֶרֶץ). As Andersen and Freedman pointed out this fits the best in the context. In light of its

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 52.

²²Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 287

²³Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 61.

close resemblance of “I shall sow her to me (‘ָ)” (v. 25) and “I shall betroth you to me (‘ָ)” (vv. 21-22).²⁴ This phrase stands for population growth in the land, echoing the blessing of 2:1-2. This is an allusion to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

Second, God will show his love to the one who is “not my loved one (1:6).” The doom and destruction described in 1:4-9 and 2:4-15 [2-13] will have come to pass yielding to a great future hope. Third, “not my people” (1:8), will be called “you are my people” again (cf. Rom 9:25). The Israelites, in turn, will respond, “You are my God.” (Lev 26:12). The reversal of the significance of the names symbolizes a powerful message of God’s love toward his people. God is going to do it.

IV. RELATIONSHIP TO THE NEW TESTAMENT:

HOSEA 2:25 [23] AND ROMANS 9:25

In the preceding section of Romans 9:25, the apostle Paul is making an argument that God is at liberty to select the objects of his mercy indiscriminately from among the Gentiles and Jews. Then Romans 9:25 along with 9:26 are an appeal to the Old Testament passages in confirmation of the call of the Gentiles, drawn from Hosea 2:25 and 2:3 [1:10]. The particles ὡς καί in the beginning of verse 25 show the dependent relationship of this verse to the preceding one and at the same time it develops the claim made in v. 24.²⁵ The quotation, however, differs from the LXX (LXX reflects mostly the sense of MT in this case), in that the combination of the first line and second line in Hosea 2:25 is reversed in Romans 9:25. However, it is quite feasible that Paul intentionally reversed the order of the sentence to emphasize Gentile inclusion first and to justify God’s people coming out of “Not God’s People.” Yet as Fitzmyer puts it, the sense is still preserved even if it is reversed in order: “‘not my people’ becomes ‘my people,’ i.e., Gentiles, not part of the chosen people, have become God’s people, the object of his choice and loving affection.”²⁶

The significant variance, however, is the substitution of

²⁴Ibid., 288.

²⁵James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary 38b (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1988), 571.

²⁶Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 573.

καλέσω (Rom 9:25) for ἐρῶ (LXX, Hos 2:25). This insertion is seen as intentional as well as an effort to link between vv. 24 (“even us, whom he also called”) and 25, and also between vv. 25 and 26 (“they will be called”) without changing the real sense.²⁷ Paul’s use of ἀγαπάω can also be understood that he is taking this alternative rendering as appropriate in light of the prominent message of Yahweh’s love in the book of Hosea.²⁸ This idea is strengthened by the fact that he quotes another verse from Hosea straight on without a break, showing that the whole message of Hosea is in view here.²⁹

However, the real difficulty with regard to these passages is that in Hosea it evidently has reference not to the Gentiles, but to the tribes of Israel. Paul, however, recognizes the inclusion of the Gentiles to God’s covenant favor and then their reception into that favor in these verses. Regarding this issue Dunn provides a perceptive insight.³⁰ According to him, Paul is using Hosea as scriptural proof that those who were not God’s people can by God’s gracious act become his people. Dunn continues to point out that Paul may have it in mind here that “it was Israel who by its adultery lost its covenant status and so may also see in the words of Hosea a promise of Israel’s restoration. But the main force of the quotation achieved by altering Hose 2:23 to introduce the word ‘call,’ is to emphasize that being the people of God is something brought about solely by God’s invitation, that his call can completely transform what had appeared to be a clear-cut case of divine rejection.”³¹

On the other hand, Gentile inclusion is not the concept found only in the New Testament. In the Old Testament it was clearly the original intention of God’s creation from the very beginning (Gen 1:28; 12:3—whole humanity in view). There are certain individual cases as well (e.g., Rahab, Ruth) where they become part of God’s covenant community as a result of their faith in God and his promises. In other words, the privilege of being God’s people once Israel had exclusive claim on themselves was never a part of the Old Testament understanding. Their nationalistic claim was their own

²⁷C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1979), 499.

²⁸Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 571.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*, 575.

³¹*Ibid.*

misunderstanding of the purpose of God's election on their part. Of Israel it had been said, "Lo-Ruhamah; for I will no longer show love to the house of Israel" (Hos 1:6). But this is not the final word. God will again betroth in loving kindness and "in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" (Hos 2:3). So it is a fitting claim with the Gentiles, as the apostle Paul argues in Romans, once forsaken of God but later embraced in covenant love and favor by God's grace through Christ.

This kind of consciousness of the common heritage of promise permeates the New Testament. The promise that the Lord will be God to his people is echoed in 2 Corinthians 6:16, Hebrews 8:10, and Revelation 21:3, 7. The concept of a royal people is found in 1 Peter 2:9 and Revelation 1:6; 5:10. The promise of the offspring figures prominently in Romans 4:16, Galatians 3:129, Titus 2:14, Hebrews 11:18, 1 Peter 2:9-10, and Revelation 12:17.³² Paul finds in the restoration of Israel, the Gentiles becoming partakers of the same grace. In Christ's kingdom where the people had been regarded as aliens, they should be called the children of God whether they are Gentiles or Jews.

In 1 Peter 2:10, Peter also uses ideas and words borrowed from Hosea (1:6; 2:3; 2:25) and shows the fuller aspects of this message. Like Israel when rejected by God, these Christians, both Jewish and Gentile Christians, had at one time not been the people of God and had not received mercy. But now they are God's people (v. 10a) and are those who have received mercy (v. 10b) with Christ.

V. CONCLUSION

In the message of spiritual restoration of Hosea, we see the glimpse of God's powerful love expressed with the most intimate language calling his people back to himself as a wife. It depicts remarkably God's gracious activity toward wayward Israel. In spite of all their sins against God, he remembers his covenant promise and gives them hope and salvation. This new marriage relationship is based on God's own character, especially his righteousness, justice, love, compassion, and faithfulness to his people. These qualities were the true essence of God's covenant relationship with Israel from the beginning of salvation history. God extends the "covenant" to all creation. The peace of

³²Thomas E. McComiskey, *The Covenant of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 189.

paradise returns. All of humanity will be included in the eschatological kingdom of peace. Paul saw Gentile inclusions in the promise.

Yet another question remains. Is Hosea's prophecy fulfilled completely in the Church? Or still in the future? Hosea's promise relates to the experience of a new people, redeemed from the old most importantly. This new people must be one that has the characteristics also applied to them by other restoration promises: true worship, knowledge of Yahweh, no more war among the nations, peace with animal kingdom, etc. As the list goes further, there is doubt that all those things are realized in the age we live in. There is partial fulfillment in the Church, yet full realization is still in the future. As Israelites put their hope in Hosea's message of salvation, we also have hope still for the future. Though we are privileged to become the bride of Christ (Eph 5), yet we have to wait for its final consummation when we meet him face to face.

Spiritual restoration in the prophecy of Hosea, therefore, not only assures the people of Israel of God's covenant-royal love (אֱהָבָה) and gives them ultimate hope for the future, but it also leads us (Christians) to thank God for his abundant grace bestowed on us through Christ and gives us unprecedented hope of the future.

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