

Hosea 2:6 - 4:19

God's Judgment and Grace;
Homer Loves Gomer Again; Charges Against Israel

Day 1

Read Hosea 2:6-13

God's judgment

1. How did God try to stop Israel's immorality and unbelief? 2:6,7a

- What would this cause the people to do? 2:7b (Compare Luke 15:17-20)

2. What had Israel failed to understand? 2:8a (How had God warned the people earlier? Deuteronomy 8:12-18)

- How were they spending what God had given them? 2:8b (See Ezekiel 16:17-19; Cf. Hosea 13:2)

For Your Information: "Baal means 'lord.' Baal, the god worshiped by the Canaanites and Phoenicians, was variously known to them as the son of Dagon and the son of El...Believed to give fertility to the womb and life-giving rain to the soil, he is pictured as standing on a bull, a popular symbol of fertility and strength (see 1 Kings 12:28). The storm cloud was his chariot, thunder his voice, and lightning his spear and arrows. The worship of Baal involved sacred prostitution and sometimes even child sacrifice (see Jer. 19:5)."
- The NIV Study Bible (332)

"Agricultural villages... dominated the world of ancient Israel. The Mediterranean climate brought rain only during the winter and early spring months...and a drought meant that their fragile hold on life was severely threatened. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Canaanite storm god Baal was so pervasive a figure in ancient worship...More often than not, local villages chose to combine Yahweh and Baal worship in order to maximize their chances of a good harvest (see Judges 2:11, 6:25-32)."
- The IVP Bible Background Commentary O.T. (752)

3. What was God going to do with Israel's resources? 2:9 (What does the "my" suffix add to this picture?)

- What would be the result? 2:10

Optional Digging Deeper

From Leviticus 26:1-13, what promises did God make with the nation of Israel? (How do these blessings compare to the kinds of things Gomer/Israel was running after her "lovers" to get?)

For Your Information: "In the Hebrew "expose her lewdness" [2:10] is literally 'uncover her shame.' The word for 'shame' (*nablut*) means 'withered state.' Israel would be withered because God would withhold his bounty. God also would uncover this condition by revealing it before the neighboring nations. Israel's 'lovers' thus would come to despise her, not wanting to have dealings with one so distressed. No one would 'snatch' her from God's control, both because they would not care to and because God would not permit it."
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary

4. What picture of the people and the land does 2:11-12 give you?

For Your Information: "In verses 2:5-13, we find God speeding the process of disillusion – for such it is. The 'lovers', the pagan gods and their equivalents, are illusions that recede with every step one takes toward them." – Derek Kidner (30)

- Why do you think the people credited their wealth to other people and/or idols? 2:12 (Compare Jeremiah 44:16-17; Isaiah 31:1)

5. What does idolatry always do to our relationship with God? 2:13b See also 2:8b (Compare Deuteronomy 32:18)

- What horrible practices did the sacrifices to idols include and how did that make God feel? Ezekiel 16:20-21; Jeremiah 32:32-35)

Optional Digging Deeper

What had God warned the people about before they entered the Promised Land? Deut. 6:10-12; 8:11-18

6. What was Israel's deepest need? Jeremiah 9:24

7. Underline what we have received from God

- Isaiah 42:5 This is what God the LORD says-- he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: NIV
- Psalm 139:13,16 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb...16 All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. NIV
- Proverbs 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. NIV
- Acts 17:25,28 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else...28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' NIV
- James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. NIV

Applying the Word: How present is God to you in your day-to-day life? What are some things, other than God, that you tend to credit for the blessings you have in life? (Has God ever used frustration, failure or loss to take away your dependence on something other than Him?)

Day 2

Read Hosea 2:14-2:23

God's mercy

For Your Information: "This passage looks forward to when Israel will experience great blessings from God. A partial fulfillment occurred at the return from the Babylonian captivity, but the complete fulfillment can be only in the glorious millennial reign of the future."
– The Expositor's Bible Commentary

8. List the ways ("I will's") that God will deal with Israel in the future.
2:14,15 (Compare Jeremiah 24:4-7)

Optional Digging Deeper

How does Ephesians 2:1-5 describe our state when Christ saved us?

- What kind of "joy" do you p by the phrase:
 - "In the days of her youth" (2:15)
 - "when she came up from the land of Egypt"

For Your Information: "This is a singular kind of power. "I will allure her." Not, "I will drive her." Not even, "I will draw her." Or, "I will drag her." Or, "I will force her." No—"I will allure her." It is a very remarkable word and it teaches us that the allurements of love surpasses in power all other forces."
– Charles Spurgeon (Sermon #2564)

"True love need be no less ravishing than false only less disappointing. The Lord now for His part will...speak to the heart of His beloved."
– Derek Kidner (32)

"The Valley of Achor as a door of hope: Achor means 'trouble,' so the Valley of Achor is the 'Valley of Trouble.' It was a place of trouble, where Achan's sin was discovered and judged (Joshua 7:26). God's restoration is so great that He will transform the 'Valley of Trouble' into a door of hope."
– David Guzik

"Where God first judged His people in the promised land – became a symbol of new opportunity."
–The NIV Study Bible (1324)

9. What will it be like "in that day?" (Mark the phrase "in that day" in 2:16,18,21)
- 2:16,17 - Israel's relationship with the Lord

For Your Information: *Ishi* – husband; *Bali* – *Bali* (lit., "my Baal"; NIV, "my master")

"In Hebrew, the name 'Baal' comes from the word 'Master' and the two words sound alike. It was the Baals, the idols of the nations, that wanted this 'master-slave' relationship with man. But not the LORD God; He wants a love-based, commitment-based relationship with His people...God was not satisfied with a fear-based, obedience-focused relationship with His people where they thought of Him...as Master. He wanted a relationship where they thought of Him...as Husband." – David Guzik

- 2:18 - The earth (Compare Isaiah 2:4; 11:6-9)

10. List the terms that describe God's "betrothal" to Israel? 2:19-2:20a (What do these terms say to you about the relationship.) (Continue to mark "I will" phrases in 2:17-23)

- What will happen to Israel? 2:20b (Contrast 2:8a,13b) (Compare Jeremiah 31:32-34)

For Your Information: "betroth thee unto me" "Israel will indeed be restored as the wife of Jehovah. This promise is eternal, not conditional, though its implementation must await the national repentance and acceptance of Messiah when He returns, after His long absence and her long affliction (Hosea 5:5; Matthew 23:37-39)." - Henry Morris

"Coming three times in quick succession, the word 'betroth' gives a note of eagerness and warmth to what is promised. It makes it a new beginning, with all the freshness of first love, rather than the weary patching up of differences...The five qualities listed here, ranging from 'righteousness' to 'faithfulness', are thought of as the bride-price which God, the suitor, brings with Him. So the promise overflows with generosity. It is all of grace...It makes three things very plain: the permanence of this union (19a), the intimacy of it (20b), and the fact that it owes everything to God." - Derek Kidner (34)

11. What will be restored?

- 2:21,22 (Contrast 2:9) (Compare Jeremiah 33:10-14)

For Your Information: "Here, the Lord promises glorious redemption of the name Jezreel ['scattered'], which was first given as a sober reminder of scattering in judgment. [1:4] Now it becomes a prophecy of the promise, 'I will sow her for Myself in the earth.' God will restore His people to abundance and blessing. Scattering will be transformed into sowing." - David Guzik

"In that day'...the answer will be an abundant 'Yes!'...it is an answer also to the labyrinthine world of polytheism, with its one god for corn, one for rain, and so on, which had stolen Israel's heart and had muddled all her thinking. Instead of that tangle of competing powers we see the one Lord from whom all blessings flow." - Derek Kidner (38)

- 2:23 (Contrast 1:6,9) (Mark the word "compassion" in 1:6,7; 2:4,19,23)

For Your Information: "And they shall say, 'You are my God!'" (2:23)

"With this, the restoration is complete. The Lord relates to His people as their God, and His people relate to Him as His people. This is *relationship*, full of warmth and love, and what God longs for.

Think about it: Which one of the pagan gods of the nations ever wanted the *love* of their followers? Which of them ever asked, 'Do you love me?' False gods don't want our *love*, they want our fear, our obedience, our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. But the true God, the living God...*wants our love, freely given and enjoyed in relationship with Him*. If we miss this, we miss the heart of God's work in us and for us.

...All three of Hosea's children, named as marks of judgment, now have their names restored and made into marks of mercy, grace, and restoration. God is that good!" - David Guzik

Applying the Word: What are some adjectives you would use to describe the kind of relationship God wants to have with you?

Day 3

Read Hosea 3:1-4:5

Hosea buys Gomer back

12. What did God ask Hosea to do? 3:1a (What had happened to Gomer?)

IT'S GREEK TO ME: "*husband/friend/another*" "*rea*" Strong's #7453, 'friend; companion; fellow.' .. The word refers to a 'friend' in 2 Sam 13:3...The word may be used of a husband Jer 3:20 or a lover Song 5:16. In another sense, *rea* may be used of any person with whom one has reciprocal relations." - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

13. What would Hosea's actions demonstrate? 3:1b (What does this portrayal say about the depth of God's love, and the longing of His heart toward mankind?)

- How does God's love for Israel compare to Israel's love for Him?

For Your Information: "The adultery...was still in progress: it had been no isolated lapse but a desertion which added a continuing insult to the injury. The love that was asked of him would be heroic – but that was the point, for it was to be God's love in miniature." - Derek Kidner (40,41)

"Gomer is a symbol of Israel's grave sin. More significantly, Hosea...is a picture of God's love that will not let Israel go. God pursues his unfaithful and rebellious people to bring them back to himself." - The Africa Bible Commentary (1015)

"Raisin cakes. Offered to Baal in thanksgiving for harvest." - The NIV Study Bible (1325)

14. What do you think Hosea's having to buy Gomer back indicates about her condition? 3:2 (What did God have to do for us? 1 Peter 1:18; Rev. 5:9)

For Your Information: "Our curiosity is not satisfied over the exact reason for the purchase (were these her debts? was she now a slave? perhaps a prostitute working for an owner? or was this the compensation paid to the loving 'boy-friend' of verse 1 – revealing incidentally what his love was worth?)." - Derek Kidner (42)

3:2 *fifteen pieces of silver.* "Half the usual price of a slave (see Exodus 21:7,32)" - The NIV Study Bible (1325)

15. What did Hosea ask of Gomer? 3:3

For Your Information: "Both God's love and Hosea's love involve discipline, which is not administered in a spirit of revenge or to end the marriage, but in order to restore it. Gomer is subjected to restorative discipline and is instructed to cease all her adulterous activities and be faithful to Hosea, who is now not only her rightful husband but also her redeemer." - Africa Bible Commentary (1017)

16. What did Hosea and Gomer's relationship portray? 3:4

17. What was the goal of God's discipline? 3:5 (Compare Isaiah 27:13; Jeremiah 50:4-5)

For Your Information: "3:4 *many days...*The children of Israel have been without a king and a prince ever since Nebuchadnezzar deposed and blinded King Zedekiah... (II Kings 25:7). So far as known, the children of Israel also abandoned their pagan images and teraphim when the Babylonians took them into captivity about 590 B.C. Furthermore, they have been without sacrifices and priestly ephods ever since the Romans destroyed the temple in A.D. 70.'
3:5 *David their king...* they will recognize Jesus as the long-awaited 'son of David,' who was also the Son of God whose 'throne shall be established for ever' (II Samuel 7:12-16; Luke 1:31-33; Matthew 22:41-45)." – Henry Morris

18. In the following passage from Ezekiel 20, underline the things that would happen with Israel after God had disciplined her for her idolatry. (Note the "you will" or "Israel will" phrases.)

"As for you, O house of Israel, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Go and serve your idols, every one of you! But afterward you will surely listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols. 40 For on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD, there in the land the entire house of Israel will serve me, and there I will accept them. There I will require your offerings and your choice gifts, along with all your holy sacrifices. 41 I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will show myself holy among you in the sight of the nations. 42 Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn with uplifted hand to give to your fathers. 43 There you will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done. 44 You will know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, O house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD." Ezekiel 20:39-44 NIV

Applying the Word: *Have you ever wondered how God felt when you ran from Him or ignored Him or acted out against Him? What does this passage teach you?*

God charges Israel

For Your Information: "4:1-14:9 deals with Israel's involvement in Canaanite religion, her moral sins and her international intrigues." – The NIV Study Bible (1326)

19. What virtues were the Israelites lacking? 4:1

- Why do you think that the characteristics in 4:1 led to the behaviors given in 4:2?

For Your Information: "The phrase '*bloodshed follows bloodshed*' is literally 'bloody deed touches bloody deed' in the Hebrew. Apparently violent crimes had become so common that one seemed immediately to follow another, as if touching it." – The Expositor's Bible Commentary

"Hosea knows that knowledge of God is not simply the source of morality, it is morality itself. Israel's spurning of the knowledge of God led to its spurning the ethical conduct that goes with such knowledge." – Africa Bible Commentary (1017)

20. What were the consequences of their behavior? 4:3 Cf. 2:3b,9,12
(Compare Jeremiah 12:4)

Optional Digging Deeper

Contrast the promises and warnings that God had made to Israel about the land:
Deut. 28:9-14

Deut. 28:15-19

21. What had happened to the spiritual life of the people? 4:4-6a
(Compare Proverbs 4:19)

Day 4

Read Hosea 4:6-19

Condemnation of the Priests

22. What had the priests done with God's word? 4:6b (Compare Malachi 2:7,8; Jeremiah 5:4,5)
(Underline references to prophets, priests, rulers, and people in this chapter.)

- What were some of the duties of the priests? Deuteronomy 31:9-12; 33:10

23. Underline problems God had with the priests and prophets in Hosea's day and later:

- Jeremiah 2:8 The priests did not ask, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who deal with the law did not know me; the leaders rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, following worthless idols. NIV
- Jeremiah 5:30-31 "A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: 31 The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end? NIV
- Jeremiah 6:13 "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. NIV
- Jeremiah 23:11 "Both prophet and priest are godless; even in my temple I find their wickedness," declares the LORD. NIV
- Isaiah 28:7...Priests and prophets stagger from beer and are ^{befuddled} with wine; they reel from beer, they stagger when seeing visions, they stumble when rendering decisions. NIV
- Ezekiel 13:9 My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations... NIV
- Micah 3:11 Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, "Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us." NASU
- Zephaniah 3:3-4 Her officials are roaring lions, her rulers are evening wolves, who leave nothing for the morning. 4 Her prophets are arrogant; they are treacherous men. Her priests profane the sanctuary and do violence to the law. NIV

24. What else had the priests done?

- 4:7

- 4:8

25. How was God going to discipline the nation? 4:9,10a Why was this necessary? 4:10b

Optional Digging Deeper

What had happened to the priesthood in the Northern Kingdom under Jeroboam I?
1 Kings 12:31; 13:33

How had some of the true priests in the Northern kingdom responded? 2 Chronicles 11:14-16

Moral Failure

26. What do you learn about the practices of the people in:

- 4:11

- 4:12

- 4:13 (Note the “therefore.” What were they reaping?)

- 4:14

Optional Digging Deeper

For God’s denunciation of idols see Deut 4:19, 32:16-17; Psalm 115:1-8; Isaiah 44:9-20; Habbakuk 2:18-20.

In the New Testament, what is also considered as idolatry? Eph 5:4-6; Col 3:5-6

For Your Information: “Wine was apparently used in Baal worship, along with divinations, sacrifices, and ritual sexual acts. Their *staff* refers to wooden idols that Baal worshipers consulted for guidance.” - The Nelson Study Bible (1451)

4:14: “Even-handed justice forbade punishment of the young women while the men were enjoying the prostitutes!”

- The Expositor’s Bible Commentary

27. List the phrases that describe what had happened to the peoples’ *knowledge/understanding*. 4:6,11,14b (Mark the words “knowledge” and “understanding” in 4:6-14.)

For Your Information: “Knowledge of God meant more than simply a mental understanding of God’s word. It involved a deep-seated spiritual relationship with the Lord, involving commitment of the heart as well as of the mind...There is a relationship between knowledge and moral behaviour. Israel may have deluded itself into believing that it could indulge in idolatry and still maintain wholesome personal and social relationships...The moral lapses of those who are ignorant of God clouds the mind and have a deadening effect on moral judgment (4:11)” - Africa Bible Commentary (1017,1018)

28. How did God command Judah (the Southern Kingdom) to respond to Israel (Ephraim)?
4:15,17b (Compare Matthew 15:14)

- Where could someone in the Northern Kingdom flee? See 2 Chronicles 11:16; 15:9

For Your Information: "At one time, **Gilgal** was a place where prophets were trained under Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:1; 4:38). But in Hosea's day it had become a center of false worship (Hosea 9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5).

There is no city actually named **Beth Aven**. Hosea is twisting the name of the city of *Bethel* - meaning 'House of God' - into the more fitting name Beth Aven, meaning 'House of Deceit.' Bethel was the southern center of calf worship established by Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:28-29)."
– David Guzik

"The exhortation to Judah not to visit Israel's favorite shrines...was a startling, infuriating thing for Israelites to hear – far more effective than a straight onslaught."
– Derek Kidner (55)

29. Compare the attitudes of:

- The people - 4:16a,17,18a
- God - 4:16b (Compare Ps. 81:8-16)
- The rulers - 4:18b (Cf. 4:8b)

30. What was Israel going to reap? 4:19 (Compare Jeremiah 17:13; Romans 6:20,21)

Optional Digging Deeper

Read Ezekiel 34 for a portrayal of what had happened to the people under corrupt leadership and how God wanted to care for them.

For Your Information: "The shame of Israel was that the people were denying their own supreme God and attributing their blessings to the heathen gods. This was spiritual adultery, analogous to the physical adultery practiced by prostitutes."
– The Expositor's Bible Commentary

Applying the Word: Read the excerpt from Kelly Minter's book *No Other gods* on the next page. What are some idols that you follow? How do you see your understanding being taken away by these "idols?"

How willing are you to let go of these idols and allow the Lord to fill you with His life and love and power and presence. What is keeping you from doing that?



An Excerpt from the book No Other gods by Kelley Minter

Kelly's book opens with a story of going to a museum and seeing a sphinx and learning about the worship practices of the Egyptian people. At first she was critical of people that would look to something like this for their god. She felt God speaking to her, telling her she looked to lesser things all the time as a god,

"Suddenly I realized that I had been looking to weak things, even good things, for life that only Christ can give. If I could display the images that splashed through my mind, you would have seen the statue turn into familiar faces from my life, career paths, and dreams. Not necessarily bad things, just things that had become detrimental because I had exalted them as gods, things I believed could bring me life. As I continued staring, I thought about the idols of our culture: the television, body image, boyfriends, girlfriends, food, shopping, family, children, alcohol, money, houses, spouses, drugs, religion, even our own sense of righteousness. Ouch. The cracked rock statue didn't seem so silly after all. In fact, if only the ancient Egyptians could see us today: an extra helping of cookie-dough ice

cream. A one-night stand. Hours of meaningless sitcoms. A bottle of vodka. They would probably shake their heads in bewilderment, wondering what any of these things held over their sleek stone images. ... We don't think of the litany of modern-day gods we depend on daily for comfort, relief, protection, happiness, life.... Or, if we do think of these things, we tend to think of the ones that are on the universally "bad" list: sexual sins, pornography, alcoholism, and drug addiction. But what about the false gods that are inherently good? Things like friends, spouses, material possessions? The things that have only become bad because we have made them the "ultimate" things in our lives. In some ways, this feels far more common. John Calvin put it similarly: "The evil in our desire typically does not lie in what we want, but that we want it too much."

"Richard Keyes puts it this way: An idol is something within creation that is inflated to function as God. All sorts of things are potential idols, depending only on our attitudes and actions toward them.... Idolatry may not involve explicit denials of God's existence or character. It may well come in the form of an over-attachment to something that is, in itself, perfectly good.... An idol can be a physical object, a property, a person, an activity, a role, an institution, a hope, an image, an idea, a pleasure, a hero— anything that can substitute for God."

"Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, poignantly says, "Idolatry is attached to everything. All of our bitterness, all our impurity, all our malice, all of our problems, everything that troubles us is a result of idolatry. And what is idolatry? It's taking a good thing and making it an ultimate thing."

- Minter, Kelly (2008-04-01). *No Other gods: Confronting Our Modern Day Idols* (Kindle Locations 262-267). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.



