



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hosea 1:3-2:1

“The Panorama of Divine Love”

TRANSCRIPT

Hosea chapter 1 verse 3 through chapter 2 verse 1 is our Scripture reading for this morning. This is the second in our series of studies in Hosea, as those of you who were here last week know. And we are continuing and we’re beginning the Scripture reading at verse 3, just after Hosea has received his commission to go and take to himself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commiteth flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord.

“So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And the LORD said to him, ‘Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.’

Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, ‘Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them. But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.’

When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said, ‘Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God.’”

That’s an interesting expression, ‘you are not My people and I am not your God’ and it might be helpful for me to say just a word about it so that we might appreciate it a bit better.

I noticed in the hymn that you sang, you sang something about, I am his and he is mine. Now that is a reflection of covenant language. It actually is a reflection of the language of the Old Testament covenants, the covenant made with Abraham, the covenant made with David and the New Covenant. And this is the language of the broken covenant, and the Lord says, “You are not My people and I am not your God.” And that last clause is very unusual in the Hebrew text. And it could be rendered with accuracy, “And I am not your I AM.”

Now if you’ll remember when Moses was getting ready to lead the people out of Egypt, he asked the Lord what his name was, because he said they might ask me who you are. And the Lord said to Moses: I AM who I AM. That precise expression is what is used here. And what God was telling Moses in effect was that there is no way in which you may define God. If you define God you limit God, and so far as his absolute person is concerned, it’s not possible for human beings to define him.

Now we may define him in his relationships to us, and thus he went on to tell Moses, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. That’s his relational name. But when he says I AM who I AM, he’s saying it’s impossible to define me, Moses – I am who I am. And then out of the language of the covenant, these expressions are found throughout the New Testament: you are my people, *I am* your God. So, the broken covenant language is: you are not my people, I am not your I AM.

Yet, he adds in the 9th verse,

“Yet the number of the sons of Israel
Will be like the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered;
And it will come about in the place
Where it is said to them,
‘You are not My people,’
It will be said to them,
You are the sons of the living God.’

And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, (in other words, there will not be the division between the Southern and Northern Kingdom that exists at the present time)

And they will appoint for themselves one leader,
And they will go up from the land,
For great will be the day of Jezreel.

(The first verse of the second chapter of the English version belongs to that part of the prophecy) Say to your brothers, ‘Ammi,’ and to your sisters, ‘Ruhamah.’”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful that we have the privilege of reading these sections from the Old Testament Scriptures, written by Thy servants, the prophets. And we thank Thee for the way in which Thou didst use them and their mouths to proclaim the word of God, to live it before the Nation Israel, to proclaim the truth concerning the love and mercy and grace of our great God as well as the justice, the holiness and righteousness of our God. And we thank Thee for Hosea who has so marvelously, as an instrument of Thine portrayed the love of God for the people of God.

And Father, as we reflect upon this prophecy and upon the condition of the church of Jesus Christ and the condition of local churches, and of our local church, we

see so many things that are true of us and to which we should respond in solemnity. And we also Lord see so many things that pertain to our personal lives, how easy it is to become indifferent, lethargic, even rebellious, and become rebellious children of the Lord God. O God, deliver us from rebellion, deliver us from unbelief, deliver us from indifference. Deliver us from those things that indicate we have lost our first love. And deliver us from the ways in which another party intrudes into this marvelous marriage relationship that the people of God enjoy with Thee. Deliver us from worldliness, for Thou has said in the Scriptures more than once that he who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God.

And O God, we pray that as we study these magnificent words from the prophet of old, may we be responsive. O God, may we seriously listen to his words and line them up along with our personal lives.

And O God, we pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ, but we pray for ourselves, and we ask that through the ministry of the word of God today, the whole body may be strengthened and built up and brought back to Thee where that is necessary. We pray for our country. We pray O God that Thou wilt bless richly our President and those who are associated with him.

We remember those of our own number who are sick and have need of ministry in a physical way, in a mental way perhaps. We ask, Lord, that Thou wilt minister and bless. We commit especially these prayer requests that are in our calendar of concern. We know, Lord, that Thou art able to meet the needs that we have, and we leave these things in Thy hands with confidence.

And then, Lord, we pray that through the preaching of the word and through the meetings of this week, there may continue to be a spiritual ministry through Believers Chapel and its outreach. Bless the radio ministry, the publications ministry, the Bible classes – all of the means by which the word of God is spread. How marvelous it is,

Lord, that Thou hast used us in a small way to proclaim Jesus Christ, whose we are, whom we desire to serve.

We ask a special blessing upon the deacons, and the new deacons, and we pray O God that Thou wilt minister to them and use them in our midst for the glory of the name of Jesus Christ.

We pray through him who loved us and gave himself for us. Amen.

[Message] The subject for this morning in the continuation of our studies in Hosea is “The Panorama of Divine Love.” If it is true that all the world loves a lover, then all the world should love Hosea. For he is the prophet of unconditional love. Hosea of *checed* – the Hebrew word that means something like “lovingkindness” or “loyal love.” It’s the Scottish *leel* love, loyal love, faithful love. No one more beautifully illustrates the divine love than Hosea.

“No prophet of Israel,” Cadmun has remarked, “has outranked him in the appreciation of eternal mercy.” And another commentator has said, “It was Hosea’s privilege to interpret the eternal in the selfless endeavor of forgiving love.”

About Hosea’s personal life we know a great deal from this book, but other than this, we know very little about him. His name means “salvation” – perhaps it’s a shortened form of “the salvation of Jehovah.” We know that he labored in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, or it seems at least reasonably certain that he did. And he prophesied from about the period of 753 B.C. to 725 B.C., a very critical time in the history of the Northern Kingdom.

It was a period of decline, economically, politically, and particularly a period of decline spiritually. Under Uzziah, the Northern Kingdom had had a magnificent history, but after Uzziah’s death, the decline set in, and in fact the decline had set in during Uzziah’s days, and spiritual declension was the end. In many ways, Hosea’s day was very similar to ours. Spiritual declension in the midst of economic prosperity, and the prophet has some very striking and solemn things to say with reference to it.

The story of Hosea’s love is somewhat reminiscent of the greater Galilean who also first showed his love in earnest preaching in Galilee just as Hosea did, but then had to pass the darkening parables of national declension on to the shades of Gethsemane and finally the black night of Calvary.

One very remarkable thing about the Bible is its realism. The Bible paints life as it really is, so different from the way in which we describe human affairs. It always seems as if there is an element of the charade about which human beings write about human beings. “Middle-age,” 50 to 60 years of age. The Bible lets us know it’s thirty-five. Thirty-five is middle-age, biblically. Let me say it again [sudden, loud laughter], thirty-five, seventy divided by two – middle age. When you’ve reached thirty five half your life is gone. You only have one half left, ideally. Of course, by reason of strength, if you manage to have 80 years apportioned out by the sovereignty of God, then when you reach forty you are half-through. The Bible paints things realistically. We look at things as they really are in the Scriptures, and it’s really only in the Bible that we find true realism.

Well Hosea is asked to do a very difficult thing. He is told by God to take a wife of harlotry and have children by harlotry as an illustration of the way in which he has loved the land, and the land and the people have committed harlotry against Yahweh, the only genuine God.

And so Hosea takes a wife by the name of Gomer. And, this particular marriage and the products of the marriage are designed to give elucidation concerning the relationship of Hosea, or rather Hosea’s God, and the people of his day. So that Hosea and Gomer illustrate the Lord God and Israel, and the children of harlotry are designed to represent various aspects of the children of Israel.

Now when we turn to this passage we are looking at now, the first thing that captures your attention is the three children that are born of this wedlock, Gomer and Hosea. What they are: they have an unfaithful mother. So they are children of harlotry.

And what they are called – that is, their names – Lo-ammi, Lo-ruhamah, Jezreel, these are things that are the embodiment of God’s word to Israel, and incidentally to us, too, by way of application. In a sense, then, they are signs and portents for Israel. So not only is the marriage of Gomer and Hosea pedagogical, but the children that are born are also pedagogical.

Hosea easily understood the comparison of relations to his wife with Yahweh’s relations to Israel, because the Semites frequently used this figure. When they spoke of their gods, their false gods, they spoke of the relationship of the gods to the people under the terms of marriage. In other words, that kind of relationship that we think of as a covenantal relationship, though the special sense of an unconditional covenant is peculiar to the Nation Israel. But they would have understood it when they heard that Hosea and the relationship to Gomer are designed to be like the relation of the land and the people to their God. That was their way of showing things.

And there was no better to show sin than harlotry. I would imagine, if this had been done naturally without any direct word from the Lord God in all of the steps of Hosea’s prophecy, you can imagine Hosea being told that God thinks that the children of Israel have departed from him, and he’s very upset over it. And Hosea draws down his lexicon or his dictionary, and he says, I will look for a word that expresses in the ugliest way what it means for people to leave their God. And since we are married to him, what is the ugliest word that I can find to express a people married to the Lord God leaving him? And he comes ultimately to the word, harlotry. Israel is a whore. So this is the most offense of all words he can think of, and he uses it to express what it means to leave the covenant of the Lord God.

Now he takes Gomer to himself. She’s a woman of harlotries – she’s that kind of woman – and then further revelation is given in the birth of the sons and daughter. And we read in verse 3, “So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.” The children now capture our attention.

And we are told in verse 4 that the the LORD said to him, “Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.” Three portents now. Jezreel first, then Lo-ruhamah, then Lo-ammi, and they form a crescendo of divine judgment.

Jezreel. Think about that for a moment. Do you remember anything that happened in the Valley of Jezreel that gave the term “Jezreel” a glorious name? Why yes, there was something very significant. This was the place where Gideon routed the Midianites, where the 300 overcame the 132,000. This is where Gideon made such a magnificent victory in this valley that this valley was covered with glory because of the past conquest of Yahweh. So, Jezreel was a name covered with glory. Now it will stand for the bloodbath and savagery and butchery that is represented by Jehu.

It is interesting to go back and read again the history of Jehu. I read again this week the history of Jehu. It’s quite an interesting history. It’s a history of a man who was anointed by one of the prophets at the Lord’s instruction, Elisha, as king over Israel before he was king. And he was given a commission by the Lord God, and his commission was to root out Ahab’s dynasty and all of the descendants. And Jehu took the commission not only seriously, but more seriously than he should have.

And to read 2 Kings chapters 9 and 10 is to read how Jehu became the fourth and longest-lived dynasty in Israel. He came to power by the murder of Jehoram, the son of Ahab by shooting an arrow in his back as he fled. Jezreel was the site then of Jehu’s bloodbath. After he had been anointed by Elisha, he had a mandate to exterminate the house of Ahab, and he took it very seriously. He’s a standing example of a human scourge. God’s executioner; he left nothing undone. And his reward was the promise of the throne to four generations of his sons.

Sennacherib was once called in the Old Testament “the rod of God’s anger” because he was going to be the means of discipline upon the people of God. And he

paid also, because he overdid his commission. And as a result of his pride and arrogance he was punished by God. Jehu, likewise.

Jehu likewise had a commission from God and he overdid it. And 2 Kings 10 is a welter, someone has said, of trickery, butchery, hypocrisy in which the only trace of a religious motive is fanaticism, and even this is suspect in view of his sacrificing to Baal. Let me just briefly recount the things, because that’s what lies in the background here when God says, “Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.”

Jehu first of all slew Jehoram. Then he not only slew the king of Israel who was the king of Israel at that time, he also slew Azariah, who was the king of Judah who happened to be visiting. He massacred all seventy of Ahab’s male descendants in order to stop any possibility of challenge to his right to rule. He did this through leading citizens of the kingdom, who he warned if they didn’t support him, things would happen to them. And so they went out and did his bidding of killing all of the male descendants. Forty-two relatives of Azariah who happened to be visiting in Samaria, he also cut them down.

Then, of course, he did things like throw Jezebel out into the palace area and killed her so that the dogs might eat her, so that Elijah’s prophecy with reference to her might be fulfilled.

Not only that, but he destroyed all of the worshippers of Baal, gathering them all by hypocrisy and trickery into the temple and then managed to exterminate them. But at the same time, this man, Jehu, tolerated corrupt worship of Yahweh linked with the bull images of Dan in Bethel.

One might ask as he reads the Bible, and I’m sure people have asked this question, who is it that God can permit this and why is Israel judged for the evils of the house of Jehu, for the bloodshed of Jezreel, for these things happened in that same valley of Jezreel? Well the answer is very plain, I think. The answer is that there is no

indication that the royal house or the people as a whole ever in any way renounce the deeds of Jehu. In other words, generations have now persisted; the nation is still guilty in its leadership for the things that Jehu has done. And when one links the fact that they’ve plunged into spiritual decline, well I think I can understand God saying, name the son Jezreel, because I’m going to punish Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel; he went far beyond my commission, and I’m going to put an end to the house of Israel, and it will come about on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel – that is, her military might and power will be destroyed, and they will be destroyed in the very place where Jehu carried out his wickedness.

And in 733 the Assyrians came in and took part of the Northern Kingdom where the Valley of Jezreel is contained. And finally in 722 the Northern Kingdom went off into captivity. God’s prophecies are fulfilled. What he says comes to pass.

Now that’s one thing. But Jezreel’s not enough. We read in verse 6, “Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter.” Now it’s interesting, is it not, that the word, “him” found in verse 3 is not found in verse 6? In verse 3 we read, “So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim and she bore him a son.” But in verse 6 we read, “And she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter” – not, *bore him* a daughter.

Now of course we cannot prove that this is intentionally done that this second child is not Hosea’s child. But it’s perfectly consonant with it. And since she’s a woman of harlotry, one tends to think that that is the sense we are to make of this, because here there is evidence that the marriage of Hosea and Gomer has been invaded by a third party. And so she gives birth to a daughter, but there is no indication that this is Hosea’s daughter.

Now God gives her a name, too. He tells Hosea, “Name her Lo-ruhamah.” Now that is an Hebrew expression. It is a negative *lo* which means “not” in Hebrew.

Rubamah is a form of the Hebrew verb that means “she has not received compassion.” So this is something [like] “she has received compassion.” This is the negative, and the

result is: “she has not received compassion.” Or to put it in simple form: “not-pitied,” “not-compassionated.” That’s the name of the little girl, Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I should ever forgive them.”

You know, it’s a shattering thing to lose a kingdom. They were going to lose the kingdom of Northern Israel because Jehu’s dynasty would be brought to an end. And they would lose their power. But it’s an even more shattering thing – it’s a desperate thing – to lose not only a kingdom but to lose God’s compassion and mercy. That’s the worst thing that could ever happen to anyone, to lose the mercy and compassion of God. And that is what the Northern Kingdom is told.

Now also, the Southern Kingdom is referred to here. And we read in verse 7, “But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them in the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.” Now one might ask the question, why did the Lord God deliver Judah and not deliver Israel? Was it because Judah was righteous? No. There is not righteous nation. There has never been a righteous nation and there never will be until the future. Judah is unrighteous and so is Israel unrighteous.

But we learn a very important principle here. We learn that God makes distinctions among guilty men according to his sovereign grace. Israel was guilty. Judah was guilty. Well, one might say, well, they were not quite as guilty. Perhaps. But fundamentally it was God’s privilege and his right to exercise distinguishing grace as he sees fit. And Israel deserves punishment and judgment and Israel experiences it. But it is postponed for a while so far as Judah is concerned. Ultimately, she shall experience it, too.

But now, I want you to notice another thing here. In the 6th verse we read, “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel.” My dear Christian friend, there is a limit to the compassion of God. There is a limit to the mercy of God. There is a limit to the exercise of the grace, saving grace of God through the

preaching of the word of God. The Scriptures teach that from the beginning of things to the end, from the day of the flood on down through the age and through our age; there is a limit to the compassionate mercy of the Lord God, a limit to his longsuffering.

And furthermore, a limit to his longsuffering to us. Finally, the Lord Jesus, standing before Herod keeps absolutely quiet, says nothing to him. And then to Pilate says nothing to him. There is a limit to the longsuffering of God. That is, to my mind, an extremely important thing.

“And so I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel that I should ever forgive them.” And then I want you to notice one other thing about this statement. He says, “But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them in the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.” In other words, God saves, but God saves in his own way, and he does not save by human goodness.

The first movement always is from God to us, not from us to God. Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say, “We preach down the preacher, and we preach up our Savior.” And that is what we do. We preach about the sinfulness and guilt and condemnation of men and individuals, and we preach up the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we appeal to men, and we call upon men to come to him to be saved. And we affirm that there is no other saving instrumentality than the Lord God himself, that he is the Savior.

And beside him there is no other person. There is no salvation in good works. There is no salvation in education. There is no salvation in any denomination. There is no salvation in a mainline church – how foolish, how ridiculous could a person be to believe something like that. There is no salvation in the ordinances of baptism or the Lord’s Supper. There is no salvation apart from the Lord God, for we are condemned and the only thing that can possibly deliver us from our guilt is the blood that was shed upon Calvary’s cross.

“There is no other name under heaven among men whereby we must be saved,” the Apostle Paul said. “There is only one foundation,” Paul said, “and that foundation that has been laid is the Lord Jesus Christ.” And he himself said, “I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.” And notice, he did not say, “I am *a* light of the world.” He said, “I am the light of the world.” And of course, he said, as we’ve said so often in Believer’s Chapel, “I am the way, the truth, the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” He’s the only Savior. Yahweh has always been the only Savior and men can only be saved by him. They cannot be saved by their bows. They cannot be saved by their swords. They cannot be saved by their battles, their horses or their horsemen. God says, “I will deliver them in the Lord their God.” Salvation is only in Christ. How could you say it more plainly than that?

As you look over the history of Israel and the history of the teaching of the word of God, it’s illustrated in almost all of the events of the word. Think of the children of Israel before the Red Sea, as they’re fleeing from Pharoah. What shall we do? The Red Sea before us and Pharoah and his hosts behind us, and Moses says to the people, do not fear, stand by and receive the salvation of the Lord which he will accomplish for you today, for the Egyptians you have seen today you will never see again forever. The Lord will fight for you while you work along with him.

How foolish. We know that’s wrong. We don’t even have to be told to look at the Scriptures. The Lord will fight for you while you cooperate with his sufficient grace which he gives to all of us? The Lord will fight for you while you exercise your free will and respond? No. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent, while you keep silent.

Salvation is God’s work. It’s altogether his work. Do you know why? Because he won’t give his glory to someone else. Why won’t he do that? Why won’t he share?
[Laughter] We live in the sharing age. I want to share a little something with you: this is

not the age of sharing [laughter] in spiritual things. God doesn’t share his glory. Do you know why? Because if he did, he would be untrue to himself. That’s why.

He would share, he would deny his sole-sufficiency. It’s not that he’s arrogant and proud. It’s anything but that. But he’s truthful, and the truth lies with him, and all saving grace lies with him. Therefore, he cannot share. To share is to deny that he’s Yahweh, the LORD God, and he will not give his glory to another.

And in fact, in the future day, the prophets say, “And the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.” So, if you go on to Jericho when the children of Israel attacked that city, and Joshua went out – you know, he was thinking, he was reconnoitering about battering rams and all of the kinds of things that a captain of the Lord’s host might think about – and he met a man over across the way there. He went up to him and said, “Are you for us or are you for our adversaries?” And this man said, “No.” You don’t answer an either-or question with a no.

But he went on to say, “No. I’m not for you. I’m not for your adversaries. I’ve come as the captain of the Lord’s hosts.” So, General Joshua, you’re demoted from this moment on. You’re Lieutenant-General.

And then when the children of Israel were to take the city, they didn’t have an elaborate battle plan. You wouldn’t call it a great plan today: march around the city seven times and then shout [laughter]. Vast, large walls about the city. And so they marched around. I can just imagine the Jerichoites atop their great big wall. It was such a magnificent wall they had houses built on their walls. I can imagine them laughing at that motley little crowd, but when they shouted, God did something. And those walls tumbled down. And Joshua came in, and he and the children of Israel not only won the battle, they exterminated the enemies of the Lord God because they were defiling that land which God was going to give to them.

And you can imagine that at the conclusion of it, you would not say, well, we won the battle. No, as a matter of fact in the text of Joshua it specifically said, the Lord

has given you this victory – given it to you. That’s the way God deals. He deals constantly in that way. And so he says, “Name her Lo-ruhamah. I’ll no longer have compassion on the house of Israel. But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and I will deliver them (that word in the Hebrew text is, “I will save them”) – I will save them in the LORD their God.”

Need I remind you of when Sennacherib and the Assyrian hosts came down against Jerusalem, and poor Hezekiah – what can you do with those Assyrians? Talk about a war machine. They had a war machine. And furthermore, the Assyrians were noted all over that part of the world for their cruelty, their savagery, their brutality. They had all kinds of ways of making it known that you did not, as we say, mess with an Assyrian.

And so, Hezekiah did the only thing you can do in a situation like that. He took the letter that Sennacherib had written to him, to surrender to him. He took it in and he laid it before the Lord, Isaiah says. And do you know, a strange thing happened. Something happened in the night, and 185,000 of the Assyrians were dead the next day. They didn’t have any funerals in Jerusalem, but they had a lot of funerals among the Assyrians. That’s what God does when you leave the issue with him. And the reason of course is he does not want any boasting to be done.

Can you imagine a person writing a great work of art, literature, with a pen, and you can you imagine him finishing his great work like one of [Milton’s] great works, and laying his pen down, having finished his work, and then the pen boasting to others in his collection, “I have written the *Paradise Lost*. Think of that! I have written *Paradise Lost*.” How foolish. So when we are saved through the Lord God. All these means that he has designed to use are just means; instrumentalities. It’s the Lord God who saves.

Now the third sign is the sign of Lo-ammi. And we read, “When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said, ‘Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your I AM.’” Now this of course points to

the covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the New Covenant, the covenant revelation of the Old Testament that, made by unconditional mercy and grace, the Lord God, the Lord of the people of Israel – those words are covenant words.

And he points beyond the covenant to the mysterious person, the I AM who is the God of the covenant. You are no longer my people; I am not your I AM. Unbelief leads to a breaking of the covenant for the generation. Not the ultimate fulfillment of the word of God; but for the generation. And so this generation of Israel that has broken the covenant of our Lord is regarded by God as divorced by him, and they’ll not inherit the covenant blessings because of their unbelief, but the covenant itself pertains to the nation, and it still has its glorious future. So, the sign of Lo-ammi points to the fact that while the promises are given to the nation as a whole, the generations, as they come and go, are responsible to believe that covenantal revelation. And so, Lo-ammi, you are not my people.

Now you know, when you read the 10th verse, you cannot help but be astounded. Listen to the 10th verse in the light of this. Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, Lo-ammi, and now, “Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea.” Astounding. Three disastrous oracles utterly reversed, and in addition to that, the promise of family reunion of the Northern and Southern Kingdom thrown in for good measure. Listen. “Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea.” This generation shall be cut off. He will not have mercy upon them. But their will come a generation in the future, and he will not only bless that generation, but he will so enlarge them that they will have a number that will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.

I’d like to be able to turn to the Old Testament passages, Genesis 22:17 and Genesis 13:16, because in these two texts which unfold details of the Abrahamic covenant, these very expressions are found. In other words, it is said that Abraham’s seed shall be “like the sand of the seashore.” And it will be said that they shall be so many that they cannot be measured or numbered.

Now you can see what the prophet is doing. He’s taking the words of the covenant, made to Abraham, and saying, though this generation of Israel passes out of existence, though God breaks the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel and does away with that generation, that does not affect the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. And the time is coming in the future when not only will Israel be blessed by God with the Abrahamic and Davidic promises, but they will be blessed by a vast number of additions to them, and in addition, the division between the kingdoms will be restored, and Israel will fulfill all of those covenantal blessings because God has unconditionally bound himself to Abraham and to his seed.

So, national increase. The people may be reduced by divine discipline, taken into captivity, ultimately come back for a time, then swept into the captivity to the four corners of the earth, dispersed as they are today. But the time is coming when they shall again have their kingdom in the land and shall be blessed with this innumerable number of people who have entered into the covenant, and God will say, in the same place where he said to them, you are not people, he will say, “You are the sons of the living God.”

And what shall we do then? For I expect to see this day. I may not see it in this body; but I expect to see that day. And do you know what I will do? I will give thanks to a sovereign, merciful, compassionate God who fulfills his promises. Who’s characterized by *cheched* – loyal love. He keeps his promises. He never fails. He’s always true to them, thus he can always be relied upon. Those same promises that he gave hundreds of years ago are just as valid to us today as they were then. He never disappoints the man who really rests and leans upon him.

You know, he goes on to talk about the fact that they’re going to have a leader. He says, “And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together (that is, there’ll be a reunion of the two kingdoms) and they will appoint for themselves one leader.”

Now of course, this leader will be someone who will run for political office. And there’ll probably be Democrats and Republicans and who knows who will elected by the people – foolish. Of course not.

Why as a matter of fact, Hosea tells us who it will be in the third chapter. He says in the fifth verse of the third chapter, “Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and they will come trembling to the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.” That’s his name: David their king.

Now, who is David, their king? Obviously not the David who has been in existence. It’s David’s greater son who is the true David – the true beloved one. It is, of course the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And they will go up from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.” Isn’t that amazing? In the very place where Gideon won his great victory and where Jehu wrecked the placed by his butchery and savagery and violence, in that very place the Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, and by virtue of his power will rout and scatter the enemies of God as it’s set out in the last book of the Scriptures and establish his kingdom having fought the last of the great battles in the Valley of Jezreel. And it will be said at that time, and great will be the day of Jezreel.

And he concludes by saying, “Say to your brothers, ‘Ammi,’ (my people) and to your sisters, ‘Ruhamah’ (she has received compassion).”

If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, David’s greater son, we invite you to put your trust in faith in God and look forward to the redemption in its completion. Not only in your own salvation, but in the ultimate salvation of Israel, the people of God. May God in his grace so convince you of your sin and need that you flee to the Lord, this compassionate God for mercy and *cheched*, the loyal love of the triune God.

If you’re here and you’ve never believed in Christ, you stand under divine judgment. Like the Northern Kingdom, your future is limited. But if by the grace of God

you have come to faith in Christ, your future is unbounded. May God so work in your heart that not Jehu and the Northern Kingdom and the others who heard these words from the prophet swirling about them but paid them no attention because their own worldly life was more important to them, may you listen to the appeals of a loving God and come to Christ to save you through his grace and the blood that was shed. Come to Christ. Don’t leave this auditorium not assured of your eternal life and of your place in the free, merciful covenant of grace with God. Come to Christ. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, how marvelous it is to read of the saving grace of our triune God. O Lord, we so often stray from Thee. We confess our sin of indifference and lethargy and rebellion. We confess Lord, the interest in the things of this world rather than in the things of the world to come. Deliver us, Lord, from short-sightedness, lethargy, rebellion – all of the sins that prevent us from enjoying life as it is truly in Christ. Open our blinded eyes to see truth.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.