

SESSION THREE

HOSEA

The Use of Hosea 1—2 in Romans 9

INTRODUCTION

Although several allusions to Hosea can be found in the New Testament, there are at least three passages from Hosea that are clearly utilized by the New Testament authors:

Hos 1:6,9,10; 2:1,23	with	1 Pet 2:10; Rom 9:25-26
Hos 11:1	with	Matt 2:15
Hos 13:14	with	1 Cor 15:55

Each of these three instances is intriguing in the way that the New Testament authors make use of them. Two of the citations (Hos 11:1 and 13:14) are related in some way to Jesus. The other is connected to Gentile blessing, although Hosea 1—2 does not seem to give any indication of thought about Gentiles. Why does the Apostle Paul relate Hos 1—2 to Gentiles in Rom 9:25-26? What kind of hermeneutic is he working under? Certainly he has not misused Scripture, for he is writing under inspiration. But on what basis does he make the correlation?

This paper will deal with the use of Hosea 1—2 by Paul in Romans 9. Concerning the use of Hosea in 1 Peter 2:10, the reader is referred to the article by W. Edward Glenny.¹

STRUCTURE OF HOSEA 1—2

I would like to begin by taking note of the structure of these chapters and the themes that they contain:

<u>Judgment</u>	<u>Salvation</u>
1:2-9	1:10—2:1
2:2-13	2:14—3:5

Observation: The salvation sections go hand in hand, and find the same fulfilment. Notice that the 1st salvation section (1:10—2:1) begins with thoughts of the Abrahamic covenant, while the 2nd salvation section focuses heavily upon the New Covenant. He speaks of another "covenant" in 2:18-20, emphasizes the day of restoration with reinstatement of the blessings, and concludes in 3:5 with the repentance-restoration era coupled with the Davidic covenant, all to be fulfilled "in the last days." This temporal indication in chapter 3 suggests that the blessing sections of chapters 1—2 are eschatological "salvation oracles." Any partial fulfilment in the near future is secondary to the ultimate fulfilments that will come in the messianic age.

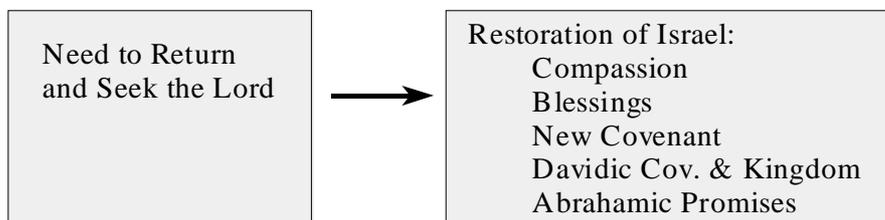
¹W. Edward Glenny, "The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1992), 156-87.

NEW COVENANT

Although the New Covenant is not formally announced until Jeremiah 31, we do find the anticipation of it much earlier. Notice in the restoration/return passage in Deut 30:1-10, there is the promise of God circumcising their hearts, a clear anticipation of the very thing He will do with the nation as promised in Jeremiah 31. Since the Deut 30 passage (which looked forward to the New Covenant heart circumcision) was conditioned on the national repentance of the people, the repentance theme in Hosea 3 suggests that the eschatological salvation/blessings of Hosea coincide with the time of New Covenant participation and fulfilment.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE COVENANTS TO REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION

Israel's national repentance (Deut 30:2; Hos 3:5) will result in their restoration with the reinstatement of blessings (Deut 30:3; Hos 1:10—2:1; 2:14—3:5). Notice that Deut 30:3 promises compassion (חַנּוּן) as does Hosea. All of this comes together for Israel:



Hosea only gives us the picture from Israel's viewpoint. But a different perspective is afforded by Jesus Himself. He clarifies that the New Covenant is based on His shed blood, i.e., the cross. The New Covenant and Abrahamic Covenant promises are operative now (at least in part). This does not mean their intentions have been exhausted. They certainly have not been with Israel. Though the nation as a whole is not participating, a believing remnant within Israel is. The apostles Paul and Peter are not dependent on their own exegesis or hermeneutics for their understanding of the inauguration of the New Covenant (Jesus made that clear!). Furthermore, God sovereignly worked through Peter (Acts 10—11) to clarify that the Gentiles would be equal participants. Since they received the Spirit also, it was clear that they, too, were participants of the New Covenant, though they formerly were not God's people (Eph 2:11ff). Thus a people (the Gentiles) who once were not God's people have become His people and are no longer strangers to the covenants of promise. This theological background paves the way for the use of Hosea by the New Testament authors.

THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF HOSEA: THE PROBLEM EXPOSED

In Hosea 1:6-9, the covenant people of Israel (i.e., the northern kingdom) are being disowned by God as His people. The reason is due to their departure from the LORD in unfaithfulness (especially in going after other gods). This does not mean God was making any kind of final termination of His program with the Jews. Paul was clearly aware of Israel's future fulfilment, since He emphatically taught this in Romans 11. Furthermore, the book of Hosea itself anticipated Israel's ultimate restoration.² This "disowning" applied to that generation of Israelites who composed the northern

²Glenny explains, "Because of Israel's disobedience, the nation that had been the people of God in covenant relationship with Him (Lev. 26:12; Exod. 6:7; Deut. 26:17-18) was then called 'not My people,' and God was no longer their God (Hos. 1:9). Though Gomer committed adultery, Hosea never sought to divorce her. Instead he restored her to a proper relationship with him. In the same way God's ultimate purpose with disobedient Israel is to heal her relationship rather than terminate it (2:2b, 7, 14-23; 3:5; 14:1-2). His

kingdom (and subsequent ones like them). In fact, by underscoring the Abrahamic covenant in 1:10a, God affirms that He has not swerved from His original intention. Nevertheless, He has the right to discipline and judge any unfaithful generation. Verse 1:10 does go on to predict that this "not My people" will one day become again "the sons of the living God."

Regarding the restoration/blessing section of Hosea 2:14-23, Leon Wood offers an accurate insight:

This section develops a thought that corresponds to that of 1:10-11. This passage looks forward to when Israel will experience great blessings from God. A partial fulfilment occurred at the return from the Babylonian captivity, but the complete fulfilment can be only in the glorious millennial reign of the future. Numerous expositors (Calvin, Keil, et al.) find this fulfilment in terms of the church. The text, however, gives no hint of this. Normal principles of interpretation call for the blessings of Israel, here enumerated, to be taken just as literally as the punishments set forth in vv. 6-13.³

Thus, it is clear from both the context of Hosea as well as Paul's own expectations in Romans that the salvation oracles of Hosea predicting blessing will find their *ultimate fulfilment* with ethnic Israel.

The problem, however, is this: if these restoration/blessing sections pertain to Israel, how can it be that Paul and Peter use these passages in regard to Gentiles? From the hermeneutical side, how are these passages being used? Some would deny that Paul in Romans 9 is using the Hosea quotations in regard to Gentiles.⁴ Others would acknowledge that he is, but they would say that he is only making *application* of a principle from the Old Testament to the church in the New Testament.⁵ I would suggest that Paul is using the Hosea passages in regard to Gentiles and that he is doing something more than just making application of a principle. I would propose that Paul and Peter clearly understood the original context of Hosea and knew that these promises were aimed at restored Israel. However, they also understood that a *partial fulfilment* was to be found in the new status that Gentiles found in Christ by virtue of their inclusion in His salvation and participation in the New Covenant. The Apostles had a conscious awareness that the restoration of Israel finds its fulfilment in the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant. Participation in the Abrahamic and New Covenants is the key for both.

THE USE OF HOSEA IN ROMANS 9:25-26⁶

In Romans 9:25-26, Paul makes use of two quotations from Hosea: one from Hos 2:23 and the other from 1:10 (and in that order). This occurs in the broader section of Romans 9—11 in which Paul is trying to explain that God's covenant promises to Israel have not failed, even though the majority of

faithfulness to Israel stems from His love (2:19; 3:1; 11:1-11)" (W. Edward Glenny, "The 'People of God' in Romans 9:25-26," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:605 [Jan-Mar 1995]: 44).

³Leon Wood, "Hosea," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 178.

⁴Alva J. McClain, *The Gospel of Grace* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 183; and John A. Battle Jr., "Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:25-26," *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (1981): 115-29.

⁵Herman A. Hoyt, "A Dispensational Premillennial Response," in *The Meaning of the Millennium* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 41-46; and John A. Witmer, "Romans," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 478-79.

⁶For much of my insight into the hermeneutical use of Hosea 1—2 in Romans 9, I am indebted to the insightful article by W. Edward Glenny, "The 'People of God' in Romans 9:25-26."

Jews were presently rejecting Christ while many Gentiles were accepting Him. Not all of those who were Jewish by birth were considered “Israel” by God (Rom 9:6). The covenants and promises were for the believing remnant of the nation. Furthermore, God assured that His promises would not fail, because He sovereignly elected some of the Jews to salvation to insure that there would be a believing remnant. This matter of God’s electing grace would no doubt elicit an objection from some, so Paul defends God’s right to do so in Romans 9:19-29. The logic of his argumentation could be depicted in the following manner:

Romans 9:19-29	
Big Idea: God sovereignly chooses out of both Jews and Gentiles those who (as the recipients of His mercy) are to obtain His salvation in Christ.	
9:19-21	Because God is sovereign, no one has a right to question His method by which some are chosen for salvation.
9:22-24	Whoever is chosen for salvation (whether Jew or Gentile) is chosen strictly on the basis of <i>God’s mercy</i> .
9:25-26	The inclusion of Gentiles in God’s mercy is defended on the basis of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10.
9:27-29	The inclusion of Israel in God’s mercy is defended on the basis of Isaiah 10:22-23 and 1:9.

It is precisely because God’s plan of salvation is based on *mercy* that He cannot be charged with injustice! If personal merit (works!) had entered into the equation, God would not be fair to choose some for salvation. Though Paul’s discussion in the first half of Romans 9 has focused upon Israel, it is important to defend this thesis of *salvation by mercy* for both Israel and Gentiles. Paul does so, treating first the Gentiles (9:25-26) and then Israel (9:27-29). It is crucial to note that Paul has reached his conclusion by verse 30: “What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.” If in his conclusion he makes an inference about Gentiles, then it must be conceded that in the preceding material he has discussed the Gentiles. The only place for this would have to be Romans 9:25-26. Glenn notes,

The continuing argument concerning Jews and Gentiles in verse 30 would not make sense if, after mentioning both groups in verse 24, Paul had given Old Testament support only for the inclusion of Jews in God’s present-day program.⁷

Thus, in quoting these verses from Hosea, Paul must have in mind the Gentiles, not Israel.

Granting, then, that Romans 9:25-26 does have in mind Gentiles, does this imply that Hosea had Gentiles in mind or that the promises in Hosea should be *reinterpreted* to mean the “church”? We need not think the prophet Hosea (as the human author) had in mind Gentiles as the referents. God

⁷Glenny, 50. Note that Glenn defends the use of the introductory particle ὡς to express substantiation (p 49). Compare the use of καθὼς to introduce the quotations from Isaiah in Rom 9:29.

could have intended *more* than what Hosea understood! I have already acknowledged that the *ultimate fulfilment* of the Hosea passages will be with ethnic Israel. Nevertheless, these passages can have a *partial fulfilment* with Gentiles. But how can this be?

To understand this, we should remember that much of God's present dealings (in Paul's day) were not clearly revealed in the Old Testament. That is why Paul can speak of his understanding of the "church" as being a mystery (e.g., Eph 3:1-6). This matter of God's grafting individual Gentiles into His covenant program *along with* individual Jews during this age was shocking news for the early church. This news had not been revealed to Hosea. But because God had given such insight into this mystery to the Apostle Paul, he had a deeper understanding of what God was doing than had the prophet Hosea. The divine intention of Hosea 1—2 had not changed at all . . . there was only greater understanding of these passages at the human level as a result of further revelation.

What, then, was the key to understanding the *greater meaning* of Hosea? Primarily, the key was to be found in the outworking of the New Covenant. It was precisely the New Covenant that had made it possible for Israel (i.e., the believing remnant of Israel) to come to their more exalted position of being "in Christ" . . . experiencing all that it meant to be joined to Messiah as a result of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Even for believing Israel, this was a greater privilege than they had known before the Day of Pentecost. Yet, as a result of Acts 10—11, it was now clear that Gentiles, too, had become partakers of the New Covenant through faith in Christ. As Paul writes Romans, he writes through this new theological grid. His consciousness of the New Covenant (and its central feature of the Holy Spirit) is reflected earlier in Romans 2:28-29:

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."

Paul wrote this out of his conviction that not all ethnic Jews were *God's children*. Unless they had been born again and experienced the heart circumcision by the Spirit, they had no "right standing" at all before God. God used the very same means to make Gentiles righteous before Him. Hence, the Gentiles had now been adopted as "children of God" (note Rom 8:14-16).

Hence, the New Covenant with its paramount feature of the indwelling Holy Spirit was now making it possible for both Jew and Gentile to receive the "heart circumcision," thus becoming "children of God." Hosea wrote about Jews without covenant privilege becoming "sons of the living God" (Hos 1:10) and those who were not the people of God becoming "God's people" (Hos 2:23). The *modus operandi* for this to happen was the New Covenant, enacted by the Holy Spirit. Hints of this can be seen in Hosea 2:18-20. In Hos 2:18, God declared, "In that day I will also make a covenant for them." That this refers to the New Covenant becomes clear from Hos 2:20 where God predicts, "Then you will know the LORD." This thought about His people *knowing the LORD* would become one of the primary stipulations when the New Covenant was elaborated by Jeremiah (see Jer 31:33). Further confirmation of the New Covenant is supplied in Hos 3:5 which looks to the "last days" when Israel would seek her Messiah. That is when her blessings would become realized! Though it would be the "last days" before Israel *at the national level* would experience these promises, because the New Covenant had already been enacted at the cross, some people were already partaking of some of the blessings. Initially, these "partakers" were limited to Jews, but subsequent to Acts 10—11 Gentiles were also partaking.

In view of his more enlightened understanding of how God would make Gentiles to be the "people of God" in the very same way that He would do so with some of the Jews, these verses from Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 were entirely fitting for Gentiles. The *fulfilment program* envisioned by these verses (and which eventuate in national restoration) would include Gentiles. These verses in Hosea emphasize

several features which make them particularly relevant to Paul's discussion in Romans 9. First, in both Rom 9:25 and 26, Paul points out God's "calling" in the matter ("I will call those"). The original passage had used the expression "I will say to them," but Paul's rendering underscored the aspect of God's sovereignty in doing so (note Rom 9:24). Second, there is the matter of "change of status": those whose status is one of not being God's people are made to be "My people." Both verses emphasize this, though the second one quoted (Hos 1:10) also emphasizes becoming "sons of the living God." Glenny underscores the significance of these actions, particularly the latter:

The quotations from Hosea in Romans 9:25-26 argue that God's receiving Gentiles as His covenant people is consistent with what the Old Testament prophesied concerning His dealings with the northern kingdom of Israel. If He could call Israel who had broken her covenant relations with Him to be His people once again, he could call into covenant relationship Gentiles who had never been His people before. This "transfer" principle is key to understanding the text.⁸

CONCLUSION

The basis by which God would deal with His Jewish people to eventually restore them to covenant relationship was *compassion*. Hos 2:23 underscored this grace of God by declaring, "I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion." God would use the New Covenant with its feature of the Holy Spirit to exercise this compassion. Furthermore, this would involve a shift in status of the people from being "not My people" to being "My people," i.e., a reversal of status. In this divine action, those without covenant claim now have mercy! This is instructive of the character of God. He is a saving, delivering, restoring, gracious God.

What then is the hermeneutical base for the NT authors? Since the passages of Hosea are clearly to be fulfilled with Israel, Paul and Peter must not be accused of violating the original context of Hosea. They are not saying that the primary point is not in regard to Israel. The NT authors are dealing with a theological truth in both passages in which a universal principle is deduced about God. In keeping with God's character, He delights in taking a "not people" and making them "a people." Even for Israel, change of status is a prerequisite to ultimate blessing. This transition (from Israel to Gentiles) is not abrupt for the New Testament authors, because of their awareness of the covenant implications in which Gentiles participate in the New Covenant for Israel. By this same principle in which God can change the status of the Jewish people, He can apply to those beyond Israel as well, especially since the status reversal is not based on the Mosaic Covenant but the New Covenant.

In his excellent study on Romans 9:25-26, Edward Glenny concludes:

Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 and Romans 9:25-26 both refer to people with no covenant relationship with God who are made His covenant people by participation in the New Covenant.

...

... Therefore the use of the Old Testament in the immediate context suggests a typological-prophetic application of the Old Testament in Romans 9:25-26 and the meaning of verse 24 requires it. God is doing a new work, calling a new people out of Jews and Gentiles, and the Hosea passages support this calling of Gentiles by showing that it fulfills the pattern God established in His prophecies concerning Israel in Hosea. He can "make people out of

⁸Glenny, 55.

formerly nonpeople." Insofar as the church presently participates in the New Covenant promises, described in Hosea 1—2, these Hosea prophecies are being initially fulfilled in her.⁹

⁹Glenny, 57.