

"The Prophets' Reference Point—A Covenant Relationship" Restoring Identity, Self-definition, & Self-Understanding

The Ministry of the Prophets

September 7, 2025

Hosea 1:2

Hosea 2:2-5

...**This is Vivid Imagery!** ("Whoredom", "shameful acts", severe consequences) ...**This is Relational Imagery!** (Husband/wife ...Faithfulness/adultery)

...These "adulterous actions" have their 'epicenter' in the everyday of life—(v. 5) "bread, water, wool, flax, oil, drink"

Hosea 2:8-9 ["⁸And *she* **did not know** that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal."]

- Adulterous Unfaithfulness begins with their "**failure to KNOW**"
- ...Somehow, the routines of life and the stuff of life began to no longer be associated or credited to God!
...**THIS... was God's concern when He brought them into the Promised Land! ...**

Deut 7 ..."¹ When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you" ... "² and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them..." ... "⁶ For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." ... "⁹ **Know therefore** that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations," ... "¹³ He will love you, bless you, and multiply you..." ... "¹⁴ You shall be blessed above all peoples"

...Why does Hosea have this "dramatic Relational Tone"? ...Because the "Backstory" is that there is a "**SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP**" between God and His Chosen Ones!!

NOTE: The Way the Prophets Speak to God's Chosen People vs the Surrounding Nations!

- (1) Very little is written to the other nations!
- (2) No Reference is Made to any "Covenant" with them!
- (3) God references their Evil and Warns them of His Judgment ...but there's no special role that God reveals He will be playing toward them!

...God is NOT MARRIED to these Nations! ...He is Married to His Chosen People (by Covenant), thus there are DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS!

"Since no other people in the ancient Near East had anything like the concept of the covenant—namely, God's choosing a people as a means of revealing himself and carrying out his plan in history—prophecy took a different shape in Israel than anywhere else. The prominence of the covenant in the prophetic literature would justify labeling the prophets as 'champions of the covenant.' ...In other ancient cultures there was no sovereign god and therefore no plan to be executed." **Andrew Hill & John Walton**, "A Survey of the Old Testament", p. 506

Deut 8:1, 6-11 ...¹¹ The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do..." ...⁶
So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. ⁷ For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in valleys and hills, ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command today."

THIS is such a Critical/Vital Role of the TITHE! ...It was God's means of keeping us and the "stuff of life" attached to HIM. HE is the Source of Our Lives! We say this every time we give to God!!

Hosea 2:10-13

INTRO ...to the Writing Prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah ...the Prophets of the 700's Club) {Jonah??} ...their writing period (780 - 722) ...Amos (~760) & Hosea (~750- 720ishBC)

"Introduction: Hosea has been called the "death-bed prophet of Israel" because he was the last to prophesy before the northern kingdom fell to Assyria (about 722 B.C.). His ministry followed a golden age in the northern kingdom, with a peace and prosperity not seen since the days of Solomon. Unfortunately, with this prosperity came moral decay, and Israel forsook God to worship idols. So God instructed Hosea to marry a "wife of whoredom" (1:2), whose unfaithfulness to her husband would serve as an example of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Hosea then explained God's complaint against Israel and warned of the punishment that would come unless the people returned to the Lord and remained faithful to him. The book shows the depth of God's love for his people, a love that tolerates no rivals." (ESV - Introduction Notes)

The Ministry of the Prophets Starts with a "Reference Point" that Restores Identity, Definition, and Self-Understanding

Isaiah 1:2-4 ["Children have I reared and brought up" ...Israel **does not know**"]

Hosea 11:1-3 ["a child ...my son" ... "I taught him to walk..."]

Isaiah used the "defining concept" of "Children". ...Hosea will use the "defining concept" of "Marriage"!

The Prophets' Reference Point is a Covenant Relationship

Hosea 6:7 But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.

Gen 17:7-9 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ...⁹ And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

Ex 2:24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

Deut 4:23-24 ²³ Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. ²⁴ For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Jer 31:31-32 ³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

...Clearly, there were "covenant expectations" on God's people in the O.T.—and they are likened to a covenant between a husband and wife!

...the Prophets come to a people who are EXPECTED to understand that their life, their purpose, their manner of living is meaningfully connected to something. ...and that "something" has the right/authority to be a "defining", "directing", and boundary-setting something

"the prophets affirm that God chose Israel for covenant relationship. ...With these truths in mind, the prophets addressed Israel as a people with special responsibilities based on this special relationship (Jeremiah 2-6; Hosea 1-3; Amos 2:6-3:8; etc.)." (ESV Study Bible Notes)

Heb 8:6-13 ⁶ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

⁸ For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

¹¹ And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

¹³ In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

...We are NOT the Old Cov. People! ...But we ARE the New COVENANT People! ...Which means there is a "Defining Covenant" that Frames and Informs My Life Existence! ...

According to God—His People NEED a "Defining Relationship"!! [they need a relationship that provides "Identity, Definition, and Self-Understanding"]

...When Israel goes to "dwell in the land" (to do L.U.T.S.)—they need a "Relational Definition" that constantly speaks to their self-definition and self-understanding!

...THIS is No Small Matter in Our Current Cultural Moment!!

"Expressive individualism is the quintessential secular creed. It is the chorus of nearly every chart-topping song, the subtext of every Disney film, the final resting place of contemporary education, parenting, and even much contemporary religion." **Samuel James**, "Digital Liturgies", p. 6

"Expressive individualism holds that each person has a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold or be expressed if individuality is to be realized." (Scholar Robert Bellah) ... "In other words, what most people in the modern secular world believe is that the key to their happiness, fulfillment, and quest for meaning in life is to arrange things so that their inner desires and ambitions can be totally achieved. If these desires and ambitions align with those of the community or the religion, great! But if not, then it's the community or the religion that must be changed or done away with. Life's center of gravity, according to expressive individualism, is the self." **Samuel James**, "Digital Liturgies", p. 5-6

Hosea's Peeps were "Having a Moment" ...for them it just felt like the next thing in their "Pursuit of Happiness! ...They Wanted to Know—What Will Make Me HAPPY? ...and they listened to the Voices of Their Day!

...When the Prophets show up to help—they take God's people to a Particular Reference Point...

Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

...I'm not called to look to myself and write my own script! ...I'm called to read God's writing that He will place in my heart and mind.

BTW... it's not such a pure idea that if you look inside and discover yourself, you'll actually be discovering "yourself"—what you might actually be discovering is someone else's opinion, idea, tradition or trend that you're now going grant power to!!

Rom 12:2 "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

- **Interesting insight from God's Word: *Your "mind" (the inner you) is being formed and shaped by this world!*** ...What you may be discovering, when you look inside, is simply an idea you got from a movie, a song, a subgroup who all recite a similar script! ...Don't make the mistake of thinking that, "If it's inside of me—It's ME!!" ...**Acts 5:3** But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? [You thought your stinginess or financial fears were Your Idea??]. ...**Jn 13:2** During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him [You thought your "Deconstruction" & "Religious Protest" was coming from "Your Inner-Person"??] ...**2 Cor 4:4** "...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" ...**Jer 17:9** "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" [When your "inner-impulses" tell you who you are and what will make you happy—you sure that's gonna work?]

"That Jones shall worship the god within him turns out ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon, anything rather than the Inner Light; let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if they can find any in his street, but not the god within. Christianity came into the world firstly in order to assert with violence that a man had not only to look inwards, but to look outwards, to behold with astonishment and enthusiasm a divine company and a divine captain. The only fun of being a Christian was that a man was not left alone with the Inner Light, but definitely recognized an outer light, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners." **G.K. Chesterton** (quoted in "Don't Be True to Yourself", p. 5)

Self-Definition, Self-Identity is NOT Our Prerogative!! ...It's Beyond our Paygrade!! It Requires Unbiased, Uncorrupted Information that WE DON'T HAVE!!

What's My Reference Point for my Identity, Self-Definition, & Self-Understanding?