
HOSEA 3: 1 The LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman loved by another, and an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods, and love cakes of raisins."

By the prophet's taking back his wife, for whom he (her friend or husband) still retained has affection, though she had proved unfaithful; by his entering into a new contract with her; and by his giving her hopes of reconciliation, after she should for some time prove, as in a state of widowhood, the sincerity of her repentance; is represented the gracious manner in which God will restore the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, Hos 3:1-4. It is also very strongly intimated that the whole house of Israel will be added to the Church of Christ in the latter days, Hos 3:5.

Verse 1

Go ye, love a woman - This is a different command from that mentioned in the first chapter. That denoted the infidelity of the kingdom of Israel, and God's divorce of them. He gave them up to their enemies, and caused them to be carried into captivity. The woman mentioned here represents one who was a lawful wife joining herself to a paramour; then divorced by her husband; afterwards repenting, and desirous to be joined to her spouse; ceasing from her adulterous commerce, but not yet reconciled to him. This was the state and disposition of the Jews under the Babylonish captivity. Though separated from their own idols, they continued separated from their God. He is still represented as having affectionate feelings towards them; awaiting their full repentance and contrition, in order to renew the marriage covenant. These things are pointed out by the symbolical actions of the prophet.

Beloved of her friend - Or, a lover of evil; or, loving another: for the Hebrew words אהבת רע mean one who loves evil or a friend: because רע signifies a friend, or evil, according as it is pointed. The former seems to be its best sense here; רע rea is a friend; רע ra is evil.

According to the love of the Lord - This woman, who had proved false to her husband, was still beloved by him, though he could not acknowledge her; as the Israelites were beloved by the Lord, while they were looking after other gods. The flagons of wine were probably such as were used for libations, or drunk in idol feasts. Others think that the words should be translated cakes of dried grapes, sweet cakes, consecrated wafers.

HOSEA 3: 2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley.

Verse 2

Fifteen pieces of silver - If they were shekels, the price of this woman was about two pounds five shillings.

A homer of barley - As the homer was about eight bushels, or something more, the homer and half was about twelve or thirteen bushels.

HOSEA 3: 3 I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days. You shall not play the prostitute, and you shall not be with any other man. I will also be so toward you."

Verse 3

Thou shalt abide for me many days - He did not take her home, but made a contract with her that, if she would abstain from her evil ways, he would take her to himself after a sufficient trial. In the meantime he gave her the money and the barley to subsist upon, that she might not be under the temptation of becoming again unfaithful.

So will I also be for thee - That is, if thou, Israel, wilt keep thyself separate from thy idolatry, and give me proof, by thy total abstinence from idols, that thou wilt be my faithful worshipper, I will receive thee again, and in the meantime support thee with the necessaries of life while thou art in the land of thy captivity. This is farther illustrated in the following verses.

HOSEA 3: 4 For the children of Israel shall live many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without sacred stone, and without ephod or idols.

Verse 4

Many days without a king - Hitherto this prophecy has been literally fulfilled. Since the destruction of the temple by the Romans they have neither had king nor prince, nor any civil government of their own, but have lived in different nations of the earth as mere exiles. They have neither priests nor sacrifices nor urim nor thummim; no prophet, no oracle, no communication of any kind from God.

Without an image ephod - teraphim - The Septuagint read, Ουδε ουσης θυσιας, ουδε οντος θυσιαστηριου, ουδε ιερατειας, ουδε δηλων: "Without a sacrifice, without an altar, without a priesthood, and without oracles;" that is, the urim and thummim. The Vulgate, Arabic, and Syriac read nearly the same. Instead of מצבה matstebah, an image, they have evidently read מזבח mizbeach, an altar; the letters of these words being very similar, and easily mistaken for each other. But instead of either, one, if not two, of Kennicott's MSS. has מנחה minchah, an oblation.

What is called image may signify any kind of pillar, such as God forbade them to erect Lev 26:1, lest it should be an incitement to idolatry.

The ephod was the high priest's garment of ceremony; the teraphim were some kind of amulets, telesms, or idolatrous images; the urim and thummim belonged to the breastplate, which was attached to the ephod.

Instead of teraphim some would read seraphim, changing the ט tau into ש sin; these are an order of the celestial hierarchy. In short, all the time that the Israelites were in captivity in Babylon, they seem to have been as wholly without forms of idolatrous worship as they were without the worship of God; and this may be what the prophet designs: they were totally without any kind of public worship, whether true or false. As well without images and teraphim, as they were without sacrifice and ephod, though still idolaters in their hearts. They were in a state of the most miserable darkness, which was to continue many days; and it has continued now nearly eighteen hundred years, and

must continue yet longer, till they acknowledge him as their Savior whom they crucified as a blasphemer.

HOSEA 3: 5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and shall come with trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.

Verse 5

Afterward shall the children of Israel return - Shall repent of their iniquities, and seek the Lord; lay aside their mock worship, and serve the true God in spirit and in truth.

And David their king - Or as the Targum, "They shall obey the Messiah, the Son of David their King;" and thus look believingly upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn. And then shall their long spiritual darkness and dismal captivity have an end; but not before. The Messiah, as David, is promised in Jer 30:9 (note); Eze 24:23 (note); Eze 37:22-25 (note), and in this place of Hosea. Some think that the family of David is intended; but if we go to the rigour of the letter, the house of Israel was scarcely ever perfectly submissive to David. And we know that after the death of Solomon they never acknowledged the house of David till they were all carried away captive; and certainly never since. And to say that Zerubbabel is here meant, is not supportable, as the very short and imperfect obedience of the Jews to Zerubbabel can never comport with the high terms of this and similar prophecies. We are obliged, therefore, from the evidence of these prophecies, from the evidence of the above facts, from the evidence of the rabbins themselves, and from the evidence of the New Testament, to consider these texts as applying solely to Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who has been a light to lighten the Gentiles, and will yet be the glory of his people Israel. There is a strange propensity in some men to deny these evidences of Christianity, while they profess to believe its doctrines.