

This is Part Eleven of the Serial Publication in PDF and Video,
including the second half of Chapter Seven.

The
PRODIGAL SON
PROPHECY

God's Amazing Plan for the Restoration of the Two
Hebrew Houses and the Salvation of the Gentiles

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THE TWO HOUSES AS “WIVES” AND “SONS” OF GOD

God’s relationship with Judah and Israel is always described in familial terms in the Old Testament, with the two houses addressed alternately as wives and sons of God depending on the aspects of the relationship being emphasized in the passage. Importantly, the New Testament also addresses Christians alternately as sons and “Bride of Christ.”

Ezekiel Chapter 23 is entirely devoted to the portrayal of Judah and Israel as wives of God:

“The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother: And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. **And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names; Samaria [Israel] is Aholah, and Jerusalem [Judah] is Aholibah.** And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours....And when her sister Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in her whoredoms....And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them’...” (Ezekiel 23:1-17).

The remainder of Ezekiel 23 continues with a heavy emphasis on the adulterous behavior of Aholah and Aholibah (Israel and Judah respectively). We must remember how closely idolatry and sexual perversion are linked in the perspective of God -- Leviticus 18.

We are also reminded that the roots of the two houses are in Leah and Rachel respectively (Ruth 4:11).

In the Book of Hosea (written in the generation preceding the Assyrian conquest of Israel) the two houses are also portrayed as wives, in part to emphasize the sexual nature of the idolatrous conduct that separates them from God. But even more importantly, the story of Hosea highlights the Hebrew marriage laws and customs as a framework for interpreting the prophecies related to the two houses. These interpretations would include the way in which marriage is addressed in Jeremiah 3 and Ephesians 5, for example:

“If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? (Jeremiah 3:1).

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church [the House of Israel], and gave himself for it [God Himself dying on the cross to free the her from the law of divorce]; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church [the “Bride of

Christ”], not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish....For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:25-32).

The prophecy of Hosea relates almost entirely to Israel, though Judah’s conduct and God’s response to it is presented in contrast to that regarding Israel.

The prophecy is set as an allegorical skit in which Hosea represents God, Gomer represents Israel, and the grandchildren -- Jezreel (boy), Loruhamah (girl) and Loammi (boy) -- represent prophetic events and seasons in the life of the Israelites.

*“And the LORD said to Hosea, ‘Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son. And the LORD said unto him, **Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.’ ”***

*“And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, ‘**Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.’ ”***

*“Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, **Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.**’*

*‘**Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.**’*

‘Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel’ ” (Hosea 1:2-11).

This opening chapter of the Book of Hosea is a simple summary of the future history of Israel, with both immediate and long-term iterations. The immediate future involved King Jehu’s reward and punishment related to the slaughter of the 70 sons of King Ahab. Though God had assigned him this task, Jehu’s heart was both tainted by self-interest, and faithless regarding the continuing worship of the golden calves. His reward was to head a four-generation royal dynasty, but his punishment was to bear responsibility for failure to redeem Israel in the aftermath of Ahab’s far greater (Baal-worshipping) defilement of the land (2 Kings 10). In this iteration Jezreel represents the Assyrian conquest of Israel.

The long-term iteration of Hosea's prophecy has far greater significance to our study. The Valley of Jezreel is also known alternately as the Plain of Megiddo and the Valley of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16), the last days battlefield on which Christ will conquer His enemies. Jezreel is placed in the summary like a pair of bookends with the first iteration of the Jezreel theme representing the Assyrian conquest and second iteration representing the restoration of Israel to the land in the Millennial Kingdom.

In between these bookends, the Israelites are first rejected and banished from the Holy Land:

"Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away."

And then, while scattered and multiplied throughout the pagan world, the rejection is reaffirmed:

"Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered..."

However, while sojourning in the pagan world, they will be redeemed:

"and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people [after Lorumahah, during Loammi], there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." [Note that this verse is quoted by Paul in Romans 9, the entire chapter of which is devoted to showing that Israelite identity under the new covenant is defined by faith in Christ, not by bloodline. He makes that point even more clearly and succinctly in Galatians 3:26: "*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*"].

Finally, Israel will be reunited with Judah under Christ in the Holy Land following the Battle of Armageddon:

"Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel ."

DIVORCED ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

The second and third chapters of Hosea address divorced Israel's experience among the pagans.

She will be lost in the wilderness, and abandon the pseudo-Judaic rituals invented by Jeroboam:

"Say to your brothers, 'Ammi,' and to your sisters, 'Ruhamah.' 'Contend with your mother, contend, For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband...behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths...I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths And all her festal assemblies" (Hosea 2:1-11).

But God will seek her out in the wilderness and give her a path to redemption:

*“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Bring her into the wilderness, and speak kindly to her. Then I will give her vineyards from there, And **the valley of Achor as a door of hope**. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt”* (Hosea 2:14-15). [Just as the Valley of Achor -- just north of Jericho -- was the doorway to the promised land for the Hebrews under Joshua, so Christ is the doorway of hope for lost Israel.]

That path of redemption is betrothal to God. Israel will be the Bride of Christ:

*“It will come about in that day,” declares the LORD, That you will call Me Ishi [my husband] And will no longer call Me Baali [my master]. For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, So that they will be mentioned by their names no more...I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, **I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD**”* (Hosea 2:16-20).

In the end, God will restore Israel to the land:

“I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they will say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hosea 2:23) [Again, see Romans 9:25-26 for the direct association of this prophecy with Christianity].

ISRAEL IN THE AGE OF THE GENTILES

Hosea chapter 3 addresses the time of Israel’s betrothal to God. Importantly, she is the same “woman” (Israel), but enters into an entirely new relationship with God as a Bride and not a Wife.

*“Then the LORD said to me, ‘Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods....You shall not play the harlot, **nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you**’ ”* Hosea 3:1-3). [Note the dual identity of Israel, both wife and betrothed woman, with emphasis on premarital celibacy to clearly establish the distinction from a marriage.]

The long length of the betrothal is emphasized as well as the complete disassociation of Israel from both Judaism and “household idols.”

“For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols’ ” (Hosea 3:4).

And finally, to remove any doubt as to the long-term prophetic nature of the passage it ends as follows:

*“Afterward [after the “many days”] 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 to His goodness **in the last days’**” (Hosea 3:5).*

To summarize, Hosea 1-3 describe Israel as one of two Wives of God (along with Judah), who is divorced by Him for adultery (while Judah is not). Israel is sent as a divorced woman into the wilderness to live among the pagans, but while there is allured by God into a new relationship as a betrothed bride. After a very long engagement, she is brought back into the land in the last days.

This is the story of Christianity!

Hosea 4-13 address the sins of Israel that caused the divorce, ending with a reiteration of the promise of future restoration in chapter 14.

Before we explore how God orchestrates the betrothal and remarriage of Israel to Himself -- and how that illuminates the story of salvation -- let’s jump ahead to the New Testament for confirmation of the Two House thesis in the teachings of Jesus.

THE TWO HOUSE TEACHING OF JESUS IN THREE PARABLES

In Luke Chapter 15, Jesus gives three parables relating to His mission to restore Israel. The Parable of the Lost Sheep, the Parable of the Lost Coin, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Each of these addresses a separate aspect of the thesis. As we proceed, we must keep in mind that the Bible, approached as one unified document, usually provides the clues for determining the meaning of the symbols that it employs, and where it doesn’t, the best place to look is the historic cultural context of the story being told.

- **THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP**

This parable emphasizes that the first focus of Christ’s mission is Israel, not Judah or Non-Hebrews. “Lost sheep” is a Biblical metaphor associated almost exclusively with the House of Israel, and indeed Jesus made clear that His mission was limited (at first) to that house:

“But He answered and said, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’” (Matthew 15:24), and, when sending out the 12 Disciples on their first evangelistic crusade, told them “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:5-6).

Notice further, that when Jesus later addresses the House of Judah, He uses an entirely different metaphor: a mother hen and chicks, not a shepherd and sheep (Matthew 23:37).

Now let’s look at the “lost sheep” symbolism in Luke 15:

*“What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after **the one which is lost** until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance”* (Luke 15:4-7).

And compare it to the “lost sheep” prophecy of Ezekiel, who lived on the Euphrates in formerly Assyrian territory (now Babylonian at the time of the prophecy), among the exiles of the House of Israel (Ezekiel 1:1).

*“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: **I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.** As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. **I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land.** I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land...I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down...**I will search for the lost and bring back the strays...**(Ezekiel 34:11-16).*

Compare it also to the “lost sheep” prophecy of Jeremiah:

“Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture...they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing, declares the LORD...Therefore behold, the days are coming...when they will no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt’, but ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them” (Jeremiah 23:3-8).

- **THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN**

“Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:8-10).

This parable is a bit more cryptic, because there is not as clear a Biblical source for the symbolism of the coin. However, Bible scholars believe that the ten silver coins refer to a bridal necklace or headband worn by betrothed women in those days,¹ which would imply a far more ennobling motive for the woman in this story than materialism. She is instead a bride desperate to present herself whole and pure to her husband, “...as a glorious church, without stain or wrinkle or any such

blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:27). The woman in this case is the Bride of Christ, Israel.

This bridal jewelry reference is supported by Jeremiah 2:31-32:

*“O generation, heed the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness to **Israel**, Or a land of thick darkness? Why do My people say, ‘We are free to roam; We will no longer come to You’? **Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire?** Yet My people have forgotten Me Days without number.”*

It seems significant, as well, that the woman has ten coins, in that the House of Israel has ten tribes.

- **THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON**

This is the most direct Two House parable of the three. The parable is found in Luke 15:11-32:

Jesus said, *“**A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.** Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! **I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.’** So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ **But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’** And they began to celebrate.*

*“Now **his older son** was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’ But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. But he answered and said to his father, ‘**Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who***

has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’

The father in the story represents God, the older son represents Judah (who is indeed among the sons of Jacob the elder brother to Joseph), and the younger son, the prodigal, represents Israel. Remember, that Joseph = Ephraim = Israel:

*“Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, And I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth ... I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, On a straight path in which they will not stumble; **For I am a father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn**” (Jeremiah 31:8-9).*

[Don’t get confused by this “firstborn” reference, because it is used here essentially as a legal title. Ephraim (second in birth order of Joseph’s sons) is Joseph’s heir, the (actual) firstborn of Jacob/Israel’s favored wife Rachel and thus owns the firstborn birthright, while Joseph’s elder brother Judah (fourth son of Jacob by Leah whose older brothers were disqualified by sin) is firstborn son of the less-favored wife Leah, and owns the scepter birthright -- the bloodline of Hebrew royalty, including Jesus Christ, the King of Kings.]

The prodigal son, having squandered his inheritance and finding himself destitute among the pigs (unclean Gentiles), comes to his senses and decides to repent and return to his father.

What is the inheritance that he squandered? Specifically, his inheritance included political power and authority among the twelve tribes equivalent to that of Judah, and ownership of much more land in the territory of Israel than Judah owned: two-twelfths of the land being the “double portion” for Joseph as first-born son, which was in turn a part of the ten-twelfths of the land which was the collective wealth of the ten tribes of the House of Israel.

But his inheritance also included the broader birthright promise given by God to Abraham: the promise of many nations and vast numbers of descendants. He squandered that first by committing idolotry/adultery against God – earning the consequence of divorce – then, while in “the wilderness,” by intermarrying with the pagan Gentiles so that the seed of the House of Israel was dispersed throughout the entire world, both geographically and genetically.

Upon his return he begs forgiveness and the father restores him:

*“And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly **bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost***

and has been found' ” (Luke 15:21-24).

The robe, ring and sandals are clear Biblical emblems of restoration, and an unmistakable reference to the House of Israel (Joseph).

While Joseph is clearly associated with perhaps the most famous “robe” or “outer garment” in the Bible -- the Coat of Many Colors -- the robe and ring are probably a more direct reference to Joseph’s restoration from the Egyptian dungeons by Pharaoh after Joseph has interpreted the king’s dreams in Genesis 41:41-42:

“Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Behold, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.’ **Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in robes of fine linen,** and put a gold chain about his neck.”

The sandals are a reference to the transfer of property and represent the restoration of land and property to the son (Israel).

“Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel” (Ruth 4:7).

[Interestingly, this verse in Ruth is part of the same paragraph in which the two houses are identified -- uniquely in all of Scripture -- by association with Rachel and Leah. Remember that the story of Ruth centers on her redemption by Boaz, perhaps the best model of the “Kinsman Redeemer” (a type of Christ) in all the Bible. Upon his redemption of her *“All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, ‘We are witnesses. **May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel’ ”** (Ruth 4:11). Boaz and Ruth begat Obed, progenitor of Jesus.]*

Famously, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the older son was not happy with his brother’s restoration. This reflects the “sibling rivalry“ that exists between Judah and Israel during the Age of the Gentiles but ends in the Millennial Kingdom.

“There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam,” the Scripture reports in 2 Chronicles 12:15 beginning immediately after the division of the Davidic Kingdom, setting the tone of Judah and Ephraim’s rivalry that would wax and wane over the centuries, yet continue until the second coming of Christ to restore David’s throne on the far superior foundation of His authority as King of Kings.

*"Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. **Then the jealousy of***

Ephraim will depart, And those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, And Judah will not harass Ephraim" (Isaiah 11:11-13).

Note the “banished” status of Israel v. the “dispersed” status of Judah in the passage above, a reminder that the “marriage” relationship of Judah and God was never broken.

Thus in the parable the elder son Judah appeals to the fact of his longstanding (relative) loyalty compared to the prodigal son as a justification for his anger toward Israel.

That raises a final point for us to consider in this section: that the setting of this parable is the Holy Land, where the House of Judah has been formally gathering at least since the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and moreso since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. And where as many people from the House of Israel (Christians) have settled as the Jews reluctantly allow.

Our study will now take us to the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel for the more specific explanation of God’s plan for the restoration of Israel to Himself, and to the New Testament to see its fulfillment.

¹ For information on Hebrew marriage rituals and symbolism see http://www.bible-history.com/links.php?cat=39&sub=400&cat_name=Manners+%26+Customs&subcat_name=Marriage+Customs

