

Allured in the Wilderness by the Bridegroom God

INTRODUCTION

We just gave the briefest introduction to this very, very astounding, very surprising prophecy that God gave the prophet Hosea. It was the first time in history something of this magnitude had ever been uttered under the anointing recorded in the Word of God. This is a landmark prophecy, one which we all have to know. It's critical for our time in history.

I'm thinking of Hosea 2:14-16, and of course it goes on through verse 23, but we're going to lock into only a few key issues in the next couple of weeks. We won't by any means exhaust it tonight. I'm just going to introduce you to several thoughts. The good thing about these Friday nights is that we can linger around these subjects and develop them, and take our time and develop them more. What's happening is that Hosea, under the anointing, is describing the activity of the Holy Spirit at the end of the age. That's how you want to understand this. He's describing the activity of the Holy Spirit at the end of the age. If you understand what the Holy Spirit is doing, you can cooperate with confidence; you can cooperate without wondering what the Lord is doing. To have knowledge of what's in the Lord's heart and what He's doing, and to cooperate accordingly, creates tremendous focus and tremendous effectiveness in terms of the transformation of our own heart.

A WATERSHED BREAKTHROUGH REVELATION OF GOD'S PERSONALITY

Another thing that these three verses are describing is the personality of God. Of course it's really chapter 2:14-23, but we're just going to look at verses 14-16 tonight ever so briefly. When you say it's describing the activity of the Holy Spirit at the end of the age, you're saying the same thing: you're describing the Lord's personality. I'm using these two different ideas to give you a slightly different feel for what's happening here. This is not only what God is thinking and feeling in His eternal personality; it's what He's actually doing in this time of history.

We believe we're in the generation in which the Lord is going to return. Whether that's five years or fifty years away, I don't know, and I don't really have that great of an opinion. My opinion doesn't matter in heaven on these kinds of things. The Lord cares about our hearts, but He doesn't change His strategies according to the theologians on the earth. What happens here in Hosea 2:14-16 is shocking. It's shocking. It's stunning. It's a watershed breakthrough revelation of God's personality: not only how He feels in His personality, but what He's going to do in a particular time frame in natural history. Let's read it.

ISRAEL IN HER REBELLION HAD FORGOTTEN THE LORD

"Therefore behold, I will allure her" (Hos. 2:14). Here is God speaking about rebellious Israel. Verse 13 describes Israel's rebellion, and how they worshiped false Gods. He basically says, "I will punish her for the days in which she burned incense to Baal. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry." He's not talking about not wearing makeup; rather, they would deck themselves in costumes when they worshipped idols. It's a part of the garb that went along with worshipping idols. She went after all of her lovers, these false gods. It was sorcery and demonic worship; that's really what it was. Idol worship wasn't just someone idly worshipping a piece of wood; they were actually engaging with demons and receiving real power. There was true demonic activity taking place, with power and results. And the people of Israel liked this.

So the Lord says in verse 13, “They have forgotten Me” (Hos. 2:13, paraphrased). Israel in her rebellion had forgotten the Lord. This is what the Lord says, which makes it even more striking. Speaking to a rebellious people who forgot the Lord, He says, “Therefore I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and there speak comfort to her. I will give her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope. She shall sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt” (Hos. 2:14-15)—talking about Moses and the Exodus in Exodus 15.

Next he goes on to describe the Day of the Lord. It’s more than one moment in one afternoon; it’s a whole time frame called “the Day of the Lord,” a period of unusual activity at the end of the age. God is talking about rebellious Israel, who is coming under the saving power of the Holy Spirit in this supernatural time frame. It also speaks of all of those who are saying yes to the Lord and being born again and added to the Church. He says, “You will call Me, ‘My Husband’” (Hos. 2:16). They will call the Messiah, “My Husband.” That’s what’s so radical: it’s the first time in Scripture that this declaration was ever announced in the Word of God. There’s a lot of drama behind that. We looked at some of the drama last week as the Holy Spirit is telling this. She shall call the Messiah, “My Husband.” I was talking about the drama within the Godhead as the Holy Spirit anointed a prophet on the earth to speak this for the very first time under the anointing, that the Messiah is the husband.

The eternal God, second person of the Trinity, has the heart of a husband. He has burning desire for intimacy with weak people. That’s what His personality is like. There’s a lot of drama happening amongst the angelic host, for the angels are hearing this for the first time. There’s a lot of drama going on in the demonic kingdom. Satan’s rage is now set upon the people of God with fierceness after this. There’s a lot of drama going on in Israel. I believe in Hosea’s own soul, he had never heard of such a thing. Hosea’s contemporary, Amos, had a life message of God’s justice and wrath. Amos and Hosea were friends; they were contemporaries; they were ministering at the same time. There’s not a mention of this in Amos’ revelation. There’s a lot of drama going on in the nation of Israel. Anyway, it’s a very, very dramatic passage. We might be used to it; it’s been in Hosea for years now, and we say, “So what?” It was a very, very radical, dramatic idea that Jesus, in essence, by the Holy Spirit, was declaring Himself as having the personality of a bridegroom; as One who burns with desire for human beings. In the context of the fallen world, He burns for intimacy with weak human beings. He’s declaring Himself as having more than power and wisdom; He has fiery desire. He longs for intimacy with humans, and in this age those humans are weak. That’s what He’s declaring; that’s what He’s saying about Himself. It’s so radical.

The angels undoubtedly were shaken by this announcement. “How can those on the earth, who are worshipping demons, who have forgotten the Lord be invited into this kind of intimacy? Why does God want intimacy with humans like this?”

The Lord says, “I will cause those who have forgotten to call Me something entirely different than anything they could imagine in their experience right now.”

“I WILL BETROTH YOU TO ME FOREVER”

We’ll just sneak over to verses 19 and 20, although we won’t get there for a few weeks. He says, “I will betroth you to Me” (Hos. 2:19). In other words, “You will be engaged to Me; I will betroth you to Me forever.”

It’s not one of those times where the Lord says, “I will bless you for a generation,” and then they fall into sin. He says “No, no; when this reaches its pinnacle, it will be permanent forever. No one will ever backslide. You

will be with Me forever in eternity. It will never, ever be undone, ever.” There will never be a season of discipline after this is established in the fullness of how God has described it. “Yes, I will betroth you, not to another king, not to another god, not to the angels. I will betroth you to Me,” says God. “You will be betrothed to Me. I am the One who wants you. I have desires that you don’t understand. They burn within Me. They always have; that’s the reason for the human race. I desired eternal companionship with a people who would be equally yoked to Me in love.” He says, “I will betroth you to Me.”

He describes it in five ways: “in righteousness, in justice, in loving-kindness, in mercy, and in faithfulness” (Hos. 2:19-20, paraphrased). Then at the end of verse 20 He says, “You shall know the Lord” (v. 20b, NKJV). That’s the word *yada*, which is used to describe how Adam knew Eve. “You will have intimate knowledge of the Lord.” It’s not intellectual knowledge. It’s *yada* knowledge. It’s the Hebrew word, y-a-d-a, *yada*. It’s the word used for the deepest kind of intimacy. “You will know Me. You will have such deep experiences with the Godhead when this thing is established, forever. Forever you will know Me.” This intimacy reaches realms and dimensions in the eternal city for billions of years that we can’t even comprehend.

THE ESSENCE AND DEFINITION OF ETERNAL LIFE

Beloved, it starts now. It’s what Jesus said in John 17:3, He says: “This is eternal life, that you would know Me” (Jn. 17:3, paraphrased)—“that you would have ‘yada,’ intimate experience with Me.” Eternal life doesn’t mean existing forever, because people exist forever in hell. Existence isn’t what life is about. Existing forever isn’t eternal life. The demons will exist forever. Humans in hell will exist forever. It’s not existence. What makes life, life, isn’t existence; it’s the ability to experience intimacy with God’s heart. Jesus said this: “You will know Me. You will have deep encounters with Me.” This is the essence, and this is the definition of eternal life: an ongoing experience with the Godhead.

Again, the angels are saying, “This can’t be. It can’t be!” We’re invited even in this age, but for billions and billions of years, forever, into a realm of nearness into God’s heart that’s staggering to the mind. Of course, that says volumes about God, that He wants this. It’s a staggering concept. It’s one thing to talk about our privilege of being able to experience it, but let’s go beyond that to the very core of it; the fact that God desires this is a very powerful statement about the personality of God. This isn’t the God that most people are aware of. For most people, in fact, the God that they worship is mostly mad or mostly sad when He thinks about them. This is a God who burns with desire; He longs for them.

As a matter of fact, the institution of marriage isn’t just an illustration that God uses. It’s not like people have been married for years and Jesus says, “Hey, Father, I would like something like that.” No, the plan burned in His heart before there were ever human beings. The plan burned in His heart for intimacy with humans, and then He made humans and gave them a very, very dim picture, a very dim token of what it is He’s after, and He called that token *marriage*. God says, “I want something so profound.” That’s why He created marriage, to give a token, an ever-so-small token. Marriage in its full bliss and maturity on earth is barely a whisper of the trumpet blast of what God wants with the human heart forever.

Beloved, this is what defines us. The fact that He wants this with you and me makes our lives radically different than ever they used to be. This is what Paul the apostle was talking about in 1 Corinthians 3:3, when he said, “Why are you living in strife and ambition? You’re acting like mere men” (1 Cor. 3:3, paraphrased).

At first that’s an odd statement. “What do you mean, acting like mere men?”

He says, “You’re acting like people without a spiritual identity rooted in intimacy with the Godhead.” He says “You’re striving for more things and more honor, as though you don’t have an identity as the cherished one of God’s heart.” He says “Why do you want a little more stuff right now?” He says “What’s that going to get you in the long run? Why do you want a few more humans saying, ‘Oh, you’re awesome, you’re awesome?’” He says, “What does that have to do with life and who you are forever and forever?” He says “You’re acting like people with no spiritual identity rooted in the Bridegroom God. You’re arguing and fighting; you’re acting like mere humans. You’re acting like people outside of the invitation and the reality of intimacy with God. What are you doing?” He says, “We don’t receive our greatest rewards by getting more stuff and getting more honor. That’s not the essence of who we are. That’s what mere men do. Beloved, we’re called of God.”

Paul goes on in 1 Corinthians 3:21 and says, “Everything that exists belongs to you, and you belong to God. Everything that He made in the Heavens belongs to you.” He says, “Life, death, the heavens, the things to come, everything belongs to you. What are you arguing with your friend to get a little more stuff right now?” He says “What are you doing?” He says, “Connect with reality: everything belongs to you.” In verses 21 and 22, he says “You belong to God.” He says, “You don’t have to live in that. You don’t have to live in the rat race; you don’t have to do that.”

Now here in Hosea 2:19, God says, “I will betroth you to Me” (Hos. 2:19). In the ancient world, this was the equivalent of being engaged. The only difference is, in our world when you’re engaged you don’t know for certain what’s going to happen. In those days when you were engaged, it was a legal agreement; and if you broke the agreement, it was a legal divorce. A couple was engaged, and then typically a year later they would consummate the marriage and live with each other. For a whole year they were married legally, although the marriage relationship wasn’t consummated.

The Lord says, “You’re legally married to Me, and our relationship will be consummated when we’re face to face in eternity, and when you see the full glory of who I am,” says the Lord, “you will see the full glory of who you’re.” It’s not just that He’s going to give us a city filled with diamonds; it’s something far better. He says, “You’re going to see that you’re the very object of my burning desire. You will see who you are for the first time, on that day, in fullness. You will see all My power and wealth, but you will see something more. You will see that I burned with desire for you! You! You’re what I want!”

He gives five different qualifiers of being betrothed. No matter what the Devil comes and says, the Lord has covered every single base, every accusation. We’ll look at this later; I’m getting ahead of myself. Let’s go back up to Hosea 2:14-16. Here is this historic declaration in verse 16. The Lord says there’s a generation, a time frame, a specific time frame, a specific generation; when you put all the scriptures together, it’s very, very clear that it’s the generation in which that the Lord returns. It’s the end-of-the-age generation. There’s one time frame called, “in that day”; it’s the Day of the Lord. The theologians argue about the Day of the Lord; is it really narrow, or is it more broad? In the most general definition of The Day of the Lord, it’s when that unique activity of the Holy Spirit begins to crescendo, in the time just preceding His coming. It goes on after His coming—the second coming of the Lord. There’s a small amount of fragrance that breaks into the natural realm just before His appearing in the sky. But when the Lord comes, you can smell that fragrance, that power, a mile away. It’s not like when you see Him in the clouds, it’s the first time there’s any hint of it in the natural realm. As He’s preparing to come there are repercussions; there’s this heightened acceleration of divine activity just moments before He appears. I don’t mean moments in the literal sense, but those years right before He appears in the sky, and there’s mystery to it. It goes on for some time afterwards.

All the theologians debate how long. It's that sense of, "Here He comes!" It's that initial wave of activity before He appears in the sky, and that wave of activity after He bursts through the sky. That whole time frame is the Day of The Lord. That's a down-to-earth definition of The Day of the Lord. It's a specific time frame at the end of the age where the activity of the Lord crescendos. It's heightened in an intensity of power and revelation beyond anything in history. It's at the very end of natural history, in the moments immediately preceding His coming—just moments before. That could be some years away, but the Lord is describing what He's going to do to Israel and to the redeemed. This principle reaches beyond those whom He's really going after in the nation of Israel. He's talking to them directly, but the principle reaches on to all who will call upon the name of the Lord.

He says in verse 16, "In that day you will call the Messiah, 'My Husband'" (Hos. 2:16, paraphrased). This was written around 750 BC; so about 2,750 years ago, this was written. It has been documented in the Word of God for over 2,700 years, but it has never been emphasized. The Holy Spirit has never universally emphasized the doctrine of the Messiah as the Bridegroom, as a God with burning desire for intimacy with weak human beings. There's always been a little group over on the side that focused on this, but there's coming a time when the people of God across the earth will call the Messiah "My Husband." The worship songs will have, not only the titles, but the reality of the Bridegroom God. The prayers, the sermons, the writings, the whole paradigm of the kingdom will flow out of the reality of the people calling Him, in truth, a Bridegroom God. It's not just that in their hearts they'll say, "Oh, that's kind of neat." The very language of their hearts will be formed around this reality. They will call the Messiah, "My Husband."

The implications. This has implications for His beauty, it has implications for His desire towards them, and it has implications about His invitation for us to have intimacy with Him. The implications of this one sentence are staggering. To call Him "My Husband" in truth, to call Him this as it resounds within our being by the Holy Spirit, oh, it changes everything about our emotional chemistry! To believe this, to call Him this in truth—I don't just mean by faith at a distance that says, "He is, He is." I'm talking about when we call Him that and there's a witness in our spirit in truth. We'll look at time, money, strength, and martyrdom; we'll look at evangelism, we'll look at ministry; everything will be different in this paradigm, when we call Him, "My Husband." It literally changes everything. It changes the way we view God; it changes the way we view ourselves. It changes the way we view the work of the kingdom. It changes the way we view martyrdom. It changes the way we view the lost. It changes the way we view prayer and fasting. Everything is changed when this confession is lodged in our spirit with revelation. We call the Messiah, "My Husband." Wow! It's powerful. The implications are profound. I've only touched the beginning of the beginning.

EVERYTHING CHANGES WITH ONE SENTENCE FROM HEAVEN

It was back in July 1988, when I couldn't even imagine this would happen, that the Lord spoke to me by His audible voice. I'll tell the story many, many times, and I've told it many times already. The Lord spoke to me in a very, very clear way by the audible voice of the Lord. The essence of it was that He called me to the message of the Song of Solomon. I thought, "Song of Solomon?" I had never read the Song of Solomon, in my whole life, ever. This was a wild idea to me: "Song of Solomon?" It was such a stunning idea to have an audible voice encounter with God. I've had two audible voice encounters with God in thirty years, where He spoke something directive, and it changes everything. Everything in your life changes with one sentence from heaven. I thought, "Man, I know my destiny. What an incredible concept. This is massive!"

So I read the Song of Solomon. I was so excited, so hyper; I was weeping and sobbing. I read Song of Solomon for the first time in my life, and I said, “Yuck!” I had no idea. I said, “Yuck, this isn’t good.” I thought, “Oh, man! Eight chapters of flowers and figs and perfume!”

Some of you know my background. My father was a world champion boxer, and I was raised in a boxing home. I was raised in the gym, and his good buddies were professional boxers. He hung out with Mafia people, and people got killed around him, and crazy things happened in my world. I grew up every weekend, from ages five, six, seven, eight, nine and ten, in bars every Friday and Saturday night. I wasn’t doing Bridegroom Prayer Watch. I wasn’t doing Encounter God Weekends. Every Friday when I was six, seven, and eight years old, I was in bars having a ball. I was doing pushups for peanuts. I really did! I would do pushups down there when I was six, seven, eight years old. I could do a hundred pushup; so these old drunks would give me a buck for a hundred pushups. I could get the same guy every week and buy peanuts. I had a ball. I loved it.

I said, “Lord, I don’t think I’m made for this thing.” I said, “What about the book of Romans, or the life of David, or the book of Revelation? Something with some teeth in it. Something that has some strength in it.” I had no idea. That was in July 1988, and I was truly dismayed. I said, “Lord, one last thing: I know that You’re God, and You’re awesome, but give it to the women’s ministry or something.” I said, “They love this stuff. It’s win/win/win! They’re happy, I’m happy, You’re happy, everyone is happy.”

I didn’t hear anything audibly, but the Lord said, “Do it,” and all my arguments went to nothing. He knew; He said, “No, I’m absolutely going to rearrange your whole emotional chemistry. I will change you so radically on the inside when you encounter who I am as a God who is lovesick over you in your weakness.”

I understand that it’s a doctrine that’s not limited to men or women. It transcends gender; it’s about a God who is lovesick. He burns with desire for humans for billions of years. Even in this brief moment of our weakness, He wants us; He longs for us. The Devil comes and tells us that we’re disqualified. The Lord says, “No, you’re not.” There will be one time frame in history, the very final hours of natural history, where the people of God universally, all over the earth, will be under the anointing of the revelation of the God of desire for weak people. We’ll see it like at no other time. It will equip us to stand before the onslaught of Satan’s rage and escalating sin, as sin explodes to degrees never known in history, beyond Sodom and Gomorrah. Sin is exploding worldwide. It will reach heights in perversion and the occult that we’ve never, ever imagined. The Lord is going to have a people steady, strong, unmoved, their hearts fascinated, lovesick in the bridal paradigm of the kingdom. They’ll be unmoved because God has satisfied the deepest part of their being already. There’s not an empty spot that Satan takes advantage of and exploits. The empty spots in our life are where he exploits those profound pockets of emptiness and pain. He exploits them and whispers, “I have a comfort for that empty spot. I have a comfort for that pain. Come do it my way, and the price won’t be that big; I promise you it won’t.” With these empty pockets of pain and emptiness in our being, Satan exploits us in instant gratification, in instant relief. He says, “The price isn’t that great.” He says, “You may pay a little if you get caught, but you probably won’t get caught. The price won’t be that big if you do get caught.” He exploits us; we’re vulnerable because this big empty hole in our being of an unsatisfied heart, or pain, or longing for any kind of comfort.

WE WILL BECOME COURAGEOUS LOVERS EVEN IN THE FACE OF MARTYRDOM

It’s a preemptive strike at the end of the age. God is fascinating the end-time church with His own beauty and, by the revelation of His desire, rearranging the emotional chemistry of His people. We will stand before the onslaught of Satan’s escalating sin and we’ll say, “We’re already satisfied; we don’t need that. We’re already

satisfied.” It’s more than just standing steady under sin. It’s more than standing steady. It’s being courageous even before martyrdom. We’ll find our life in Him, not in spending another ten years on earth. Our life will be found in Him. We’ll be courageous before martyrdom. Martyrdom is going to increase powerfully at the end of the age. The bridal paradigm, the understanding of the kingdom of God through the lens of a God who burns with desire like a bridegroom for us: this is the Holy Spirit’s preemptive strike to prepare the Church before these things escalate to the level to which they’re heading. It’s absolutely essential that the end-time church calls the Messiah, “My Husband.” Again, it’s not like there’s something magical about those words, “My Husband.” That’s not the point, but they flow into the realm of revelation of a God of beauty who has burning desire for intimacy with them filling the deepest part of our being, giving us a totally new definition of life and success. We define success totally differently in the bridal paradigm than when we define success without the bridal paradigm.

There’s nothing more powerful, in the natural, than a woman in love. There’s nothing more powerful than a woman who feels loved, and she is in love. She will take on anything. There’s no mountain too high that she won’t climb when she feels loved, and when she has awakened love in her heart. There’s absolutely no obstacle too great. That’s how the end-time church is going to be. The Lord will cause that to happen.

THE CHURCH AND THE LOST WILL BE LURED TO THE LORD

Look at verse 14. I could just go on and on about this one phrase. What I really want you to do is to let this capture your holy imagination. “Therefore I will allure her”—*allure!* Wow! God’s strategy is to allure. What an incredible concept. Remember, the *her* is the rebellious Israel of verse 13, the idolatrous Israel who forgot God. He says “OK, I know that she has forgotten Me, but there’s a remnant in the midst. There’s a people in the midst of that rebellion who, if they see My heart, will come all the way through.”

We would look at the verse 13 crowd and say, “Forget it, it’s over.” The Lord looks at the verse 13 crowd, a crowd that is absolutely steeped in sin, and He says, “No, there’s a group of people in there that’s so profoundly rebellious that they won’t turn to Me. But there’s another group that’s so steeped in sin for all kinds of reasons, and if they see who I am they’ll come to Me.” Here is what He says: “I will allure that group.”

Beloved, the lost will be allured. They’re going to be wowed. God is going to wow them; He’s going to woo them and wow them with the beauty of His Son. And not only the lost, but the Church as well. The Church is going to be brought to a place of profound dedication through this alluring ministry of the Holy Spirit. We’re going to be allured by the beauty of Jesus.

“IN THAT DAY THE BRANCH OF THE LORD WILL BE BEAUTIFUL AND GLORIOUS”

Isaiah 4:2 describes the exact same time frame, at the end of the age. “In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious” (Isa. 4:2). “The Branch of the Lord” is a description of the Messiah. It’s used six times in the prophets. “The Branch of the Lord” is a very meaningful image of the Messiah. It’s talking about God in His humanity. We know that He’s fully God and fully Man, but “the Branch of the Lord” speaks of His humanity. In other words, the Branch of the Lord will be seen across the earth in His beauty. In the last days the Holy Spirit will reveal the beauty of the Branch of the Lord, the beauty of the Messiah. Isaiah 4:2 calls it the beauty of the Messiah. The Holy Spirit is going to set forth the beauty of the Branch of the Lord, the beauty of Jesus. Here it’s the human response to that beauty. We’ll be allured, we’ll be wowed, we’ll be wooed, and we’ll be won. Another word that you could put is *fascinated*.

The beauty of Jesus has many dimensions. There are many dimensions to the beauty of Jesus that we'll look at on these Friday nights, but my focus tonight is on the beauty of Jesus as expressed through His burning desire for us. He will look at us with this outrageous desire and say, "I want you. As high as the heavens are above the earth, no one thinks or feels the way I feel towards you" (cf. Isaiah 55:7-8).

We think, "Oh man, I was made for this. This is working. I loved to be loved."

The beauty of His heart will strike a chord in us. It's so opposite of anything else that exists. We will be allured. You could say *fascinated*, or *marveling*, or *awestruck*, or "filled with wonder." We'll be walking around saying, "This is amazing! He loves me!" And not just that He loves me, but who the *He* is. "I have a small idea of who He is, and He wants me. Hey, it's settled, it's over, I'm in! Where do I sign up? I don't care; I'm in all the way. I don't care if I lose my life, I'm in!"

You could use the word *romanced*. I would use the word *romanced* carefully, because it could be used in a wrong way. Stunned by the Holy Spirit's revelation of Jesus; that's what I mean by *romanced*. We are stunned, fascinated by the beauty of Jesus. Oh, that wow awakened in our hearts!

ENCOUNTER WITH GOD IS IN THE WILDERNESS

The Lord looks at this rebellious nation and says, "I will make a harvest from the remnant."

"How are You going to do that?"

It's the paradox of the wilderness, and we'll look at that in the weeks ahead. It's in the wilderness and the pain of the wilderness that He allures us. It's the paradox of the wilderness. There's what I call a "wilderness theology" at the end of the age. There are about ten verses that are very, very clear about the final hours of natural history, and how the wilderness and the alluring of God are joined together. I call it "the paradox of the wilderness." There's a wilderness theology, where God will bring part of Israel into the literal wilderness. For some of them there's a literal wilderness dimension. There's a spiritual principle far beyond the natural where, in the wilderness, He will call us and woo us, and He will stun us with His beauty in the wilderness. We'll look at that more later.

Why the wilderness? Because it's the wilderness where He kicks all the props out. It's the wilderness where He removes all the false allurements, and He shows us the negative truth of our heart, and then He shows us the truth of His heart. He meets us face to face in the wilderness, and He allures us, and He speaks comfort to us in the wilderness, and that's how He wins us. Because when we're in the wilderness, He's revealing the worst of the worst, and we're thinking, "I had no idea that it was this bad. I knew I could do bad things, but I had no idea it could get this bad." The Lord is going to speak comfort to us in the wilderness.

"AS IN THE DAYS OF YOUR YOUTH, ONCE AGAIN YOU WILL SING"

We'll develop each one of these over the course of the next few weeks. But each line here is a part of the alluring of God's beauty that the people might sing (Hos. 2:16). They'll sing, they'll respond with lovesick worship. These four or five things in verses 14 and 15 produced the singing heart of worship at the end. He's going to give her vineyards there in the wilderness. There are no vineyards in the wilderness around Judea; there are rocks and sand and scorpions. He's going to have supernatural provision that will shock and surprise

them. You don't have flourishing vineyards out there growing in the sand, out in the deserts. He says, "I will give you surprises of provision. I will surprise you out there."

He surprised the 5,000 when He took the loaves and the fishes, and boom! All of them were fed. They were saying, "Where did that come from?"

The Lord says, "I have all kinds of surprises for you."

WATER SPRINGS FROM THE ROCK IN THE WILDERNESS

The children of Israel were out in the wilderness in the book of Exodus, and all of a sudden Moses hit the rock, and water came out. Water gushed out. They said, "Where did that come from?"

The Lord says, "I will give you vineyards in the wilderness. I will surprise you. I will give you things contrary to nature that will surprise you when you least expect it in the wilderness."

THE VALLEY OF TROUBLE WILL BE A DOOR OF HOPE

Here they are in the wilderness. They're in the wilderness because they've said no (Hos. 2:13). Some people say no in a really bad way: ten on a scale of one to ten. Others give only a small no, a one. But God says, "I will get rid of all the no in your spirit." He says in verse 14, "I will allure you. I will speak comfort. I will surprise you with supernatural provision. I will give you surprises that you couldn't imagine. I will cause the Valley of Achor to be a door of hope." You can read about the Valley of Achor in Joshua 7. The word *Achor* means *trouble*. It's the Valley of Trouble. Achor was a place where a man named Achin sinned and caused judgment to fall. The prophet Hosea is using this image because it was a well-known story. It's the place where disaster fell because of sin. God says, "In the place where disaster hit your life because of sin, there will be opportunity for hope. I will so cause this thing to turn around that the trouble you deserve will springboard back into an opportunity for hope. It's going to make your heart alive." He says, "You're going to see My beauty, I'm alluring you. Here's the paradox: I have you out in the wilderness and all the props are getting kicked out. I will comfort you."

Beloved, there are volumes to say on this line, "I will speak comfort." The Lord is going to speak through dreams, visions, angels, and the Word of God; through the prophetic anointing He's going to speak comfort in profound ways. Our hearts will be so comforted in the wilderness that we'll say, "Oh, I love You God! I love You! Who can have such comfort?" Then He's going to surprise us with supernatural provision, with vineyards. He's going to cause all the past troubles to become an opportunity, a springboard for a new beginning. It's going to be a doorway to a new beginning, a doorway of hope. All the lessons the Lord is going to turn back on the Devil, and He will equip us in wisdom and in love with those lessons. He says, "When it's all over, you will be singing" (Hos. 2:15).

No one sings in the wilderness. In a wilderness you complain, "How many more miles until we're through this desert?" No one sings in the wilderness, no one. No one is in the middle of a desert, with temperatures at 120 degrees, thinking, "I love to be here." No one sings in the wilderness by nature. He says, "I will do something in the paradox of the wilderness so radical that you will sing as a lovesick worshiper. You'll say, 'Oh God I see it! I love it! I love it! I love it! I love where You have me.'"

Look, it says, “You will sing there.” Not get a few new songs, write them down, get over to the Hilton hotel, and then sing. He says “You will sing there.”

Then in verse 16, He tells us the very pinnacle. He says, “Here’s how it’s all happening. I will unfold to you the great revelation of time and eternity that I’m a lovesick God, the God who desires you. I am your husband. Then it will all make sense. You will know how secure your eternity is; your life will make totally new sense. You will understand why it is that I’m kicking all the props away to make you grow in love.” He says, “Everything will make sense for the first time when you say, ‘Oh, the God of burning desire wants intimacy with me. Oh! I love it! That’s what this is all about! Lord, this is brilliant! The whole thing is brilliant!’”

Amen. We’ll end tonight with that.

MINISTRY TIME

We’ll pick up where we left off in Hosea. There are a lot of these lines, and there are so many levels in each of these lines that it hurts to go over them so quickly.

Oh Lord, we love You. Father, we’re Yours.

The Lord has some of you in the wilderness even right now. The wilderness comes in degrees. Some of you are in the wilderness. Some of you are in the wilderness right now and it hurts; the wilderness hurts. It’s hot. There’s no comfort in the wilderness except for God. The Lord says, “I want to bring you to a place where there is no comfort but for Me.”

No one goes into the wilderness by choice; no one does. We imagine that we have, and then we say, “Yuck, this is hot! I’m getting back to the hotel room. Yikes!”

Some of us are in the wilderness. The wilderness is the place where we can only receive comfort from God. The Lord says, “I will take the valley of Achor, the trouble you deserved, and I will turn it into hope. I will so equip you and meet you where you deserved judgment. I will take the Valley of Achor and I will make it a door of hope. I will make you sing forever of My love. You will sing of My love forever and ever when you see what I’m doing.”

I want to invite people up who say, “I’m in the wilderness.” Now every one has a bit of a wilderness going on. You say, “No I’m in a pretty intense wilderness right now; at least it feels that way to me.” If you would like prayer tonight I want you to come on up here.

He is the Bridegroom God. He’s the God of desire. Lord, I ask You to awaken the songs of love in the human heart, even now, Lord, as we wait before You. Awaken the songs of love, even here in the wilderness.