

Why Such Dramatic and Unexpected Good News?

Hosea 1:8-11

Hosea, Day 4

When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. And the LORD said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

Hosea 1:8-11, ESV

A sudden and dramatic turn of events for the good can catch you by surprise and turn a tragedy into victory in a flash. Great movies make the most of these sudden plot twists: The hero seems defeated, only to emerge from the smoke of the collapsed building, victorious over evil at last. We all love such moments, and if they're done well, they can cause us to shout for joy.

It's hard to find a more sudden, dramatic and unexpected turn of events than what happens between verses 9 and 10 in Hosea 1. We have just heard the very strange and depressing names of Hosea's second and third children – No Mercy and Not My People – when suddenly, the word "yet" changes everything.

The late R.C. Sproul famously said the most important word in the Bible was "but," because it's the word God uses to change the bad news of our sin and misery into the good news of His love and redemption. That's what the word "yet" is doing at the beginning of verse 10.

God had made precious promises to Abraham that the number of his offspring would be as countless as the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore. But here was God in Hosea 1 indicating His utter rejection of His people in a very dramatic and troubling way. He was not going to have mercy on His people. In fact, God went to far as to stunningly reverse the great covenant promise. Instead of "*You shall be my people, and I will be your God,*" He had said, "*for you are not my people, and I am not your God.*"

But just when the scene seems to be as black as it could be, the light begins to shine with that wonderful word "yet." God's judgment against His people for their sin would not cause Him to forget His covenant promises. While He would judge His people for their sin, He would not utterly forsake them. In judgment, the LORD would indeed remember mercy.

Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by our sin. We may find ourselves in a dark time, under the heavy hand of God's discipline. We may lose sight of our hope in these dark times, but God never loses sight of His promises. We may fail, but God never fails. That's our hope, no matter how dark the night and no matter how deep our sin. The LORD is merciful, and He will indeed have mercy!

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.