



“Named and Shamed”

Hosea 1

Named and Shamed: This Is How MPs Spend Your Tax Money

Worst banks for complaint rejections named and shamed

Should bad architecture be named and shamed?

New Burma 'Dirty List' - Companies Named and Shamed

Celebrity polluters named and shamed

Drink-drivers named and shamed

Asbo youths named and shamed in police 'rogue's gallery' poster

Naming and shaming. It's the popular thing to do these days with people that do things wrong isn't it? No-one likes their name to become associated with something bad. For politicians, being named and shamed can be the end of a career, for companies named and shamed it can be bad for business, for offenders it adds an unwanted label – except for ASBO holders where sometimes having one is regarded as a badge of honour!

Worse than that, people don't want their name associated with something really bad – Rachmanism (John Rachman), the Profumo affair, Ponzi scheme (Charles Ponzi), Quisling (Vidkun Quisling), Molotov Cocktail. People can be associated with good things too – Hoover. Or sometimes places are associated with good or bad things – Watergate, Pearl Harbour, Dunkirk, Woodstock,

People and places usually help to define our history. In our society names are important in different ways and it was the same in Hosea's day. Names mean something and often don't quite match the person.

James – Greek version of Jacob – the grasper – I hope not!

Mark – a hammer

Reid - (Origin Scottish) Nickname for a person with red hair or a ruddy complexion, from Older Scots reid 'red' - I don't think so, not unless I dye it that colour.

What's in a name. Well as you know last week we looked at the bizarre command to Hosea to marry a woman who would be unfaithful to him and bear children who would be equally bad. We saw how that scandal associated with Hosea would have become well known. He would have been infamous for marrying Gomer, daughter of Diblaim and calling at least two of his children silly names. Was it stupidity, or did he love her?

But it was that very act of scandal that made people sit up and listen to Hosea as they realised that they were Gomer! Gomer has an interesting name – it means, failure. And wasn't she one. Apparently, the great French theologian John Calvin noticed that Gomer also meant something along the line of rotting. Her father's name Diblaim means a pile of figs. So Gomer was a rotting pile of figs! She was a rotten one. Hebrew names always came closer to reality than British ones. In other words, Hosea should have known he had a bad 'un f God hadn't already told him.

What about the children? It must have been particularly annoying for Hosea's younger two children to have been given daft names, although it was far more normal in those days (as it is indeed in some societies now) to call your children names with strong meanings. But a girl called Lo-Ruhamah “Not Loved” and a boy Lo-Ammi “Not my people” - not exactly pretty names. No-wonder they were wayward you may think!

Hosea's children like their wayward mother were pictures of what was to happen to Israel and why. Why all this? Because in a small society like Israel, the family of Hosea the prophecy would have been played out like a bad soap opera or reality TV program – and everyone likes a story with that sort of pain. But the sting

in the tail was that it was the nation that was Gomer and God was the jilted husband and hapless father – and they would pay dearly for their unfaithfulness. That was the message Hosea was acting out.

Let's unpack this story a little more. To illustrate the situation, Hosea was commanded to give his children three names.

Jezeel was the first and at least is a kind of sensible name as the first son was named after a town, Jezreel. It meant something - Jezreel means "God sows" which was quite significant as Jezreel was at the end of a valley, the valley of Jezreel that to the west opens as a large flat plain towards Megiddo and then to the Mediterranean. It is a large fertile area hence God sows. However Jezreel became synonymous with war and conquest as its plain was one of the few large flat areas in which to have battles. Gideon beat the Midianites here, Saul beat the Philistines here but it was at Gilboa adjacent that the Philistines beat Saul!

Jezeel was Ahab's home and it was here that Jezebel had Naboth murdered for his vineyard because Ahab wanted it for himself. It is the Ahab link that explains the verses we read: *4 the LORD said to Hosea, "Name him 'Jezeel,' because it will not be long before I punish the king of Israel for the murders that his ancestor Jehu committed at Jezreel. I am going to put an end to Jehu's dynasty. 5 And in Jezreel Valley I will at that time destroy Israel's military power."*

After Ahab's death, his son Joram ruled badly. Elisha was tasked with anointing Jehu to be king in his place. Rather than doing it himself he appointed a young prophet to go and do the anointing. Turn with me to 2 Kings 9:

9:1 Meanwhile the prophet Elisha called one of the young prophets and said to him, "Get ready and go to Ramoth in Gilead. Take this jar of olive oil with you, 2 and when you get there look for Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi. Take him to a private room away from his companions, 3 pour this olive oil on his head, and say, "The LORD proclaims that he anoints you king of Israel.' Then leave there as fast as you can." 4 So the young prophet went to Ramoth, 5 where he found the army officers in a conference. He said, "Sir, I have a message for you." Jehu asked, "Which one of us are you speaking to?" "To you, sir," he replied. 6 Then the two of them went indoors, and the young prophet poured the olive oil on Jehu's head and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, proclaims: "I anoint you king of my people Israel. 7 You are to kill your master the king, that son of Ahab, so that I may punish Jezebel for murdering my prophets and my other servants. 8 All of Ahab's family and descendants are to die; I will get rid of every male in his family, young and old alike. 9 I will treat his family as I did the families of King Jeroboam of Israel and of King Baasha of Israel. 10 Jezebel will not be buried; her body will be eaten by dogs in the territory of Jezreel .'" After saying this, the young prophet left the room and fled.

Just a minute – the young prophet added a bit. It is true that years previously Elijah had prophesied to Ahab that his line would be destroyed and Jezebel's body would be eaten by dogs, but all Elisha commanded him to do was to anoint him and run, not add anything.

Jehu marched on Jezreel where Joram was recovering from a battle and had his coup and killed al Joram and Ahab's kin with ruthless efficiency. His purge even extended to Ahaziah king of Judah and some of his kin. That's not what was commanded. He exceeded himself with some vicious murders at Jezreel and although he got rid of the Baals he still committed the sin of Jeroboam son of Nebat. This is what God is talking about in Hosea 1:5. Jehu and his line were a big disappointment. They saved Israel from Baal worship but continued with worship at Bethel and Dan against the command of God.

Jezeel was there to remind them of the consequences of disobedience before God. Hosea's message was along the lines of *Ahab didn't get away with disobeying God – you're not going to either!* And it of course came to pass – in 733 BC about 15 years afterwards, the Assyrians invaded Israel and defeated them at Jezreel.

What is the significance of Jezreel to us?:

- with God, we can never think we can "get away with it". Our sin always catches up with us unless in Christ we deal with it.
- It reminds us that the consequences of our sin affect others and can be trans-generational. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the third and fourth generation. This is too big a subject to cover at this point. The most important thing we need to do with sin is to ensure that both the sin and it's consequences are dealt with in Christ.

But the line of Hosea didn't finish there. Hosea and Gomer had a hapless daughter he named Lo-Ruhamah

which means Not Loved. What a horrible name to call a child! Not loved. Israel was to be no longer loved or forgiven. It was to be destroyed. The defeat at Jezreel by Assyria was followed by 10 years of tyranny until Assyria finally wiped the nation out – only Judah was to remain. Jezreel was about defeat, Lo-Ruhamah was about their destruction to follow. Even worse comes Lo-Ammi the second son of Hosea and Gomer – they were to be “not my people”. And so this became so as well as the people were carried off en masse to Assyria, to be replaced by foreigners who took the land over and eventually intermarried with the rump of people which gave rise to the Samaritans. They would cease to become a people as such.

This story is not so hopeless though. This nation that was so wiped out will eventually become reunited with Judah. Here it is: *10 (C) The people of Israel will become like the sand of the sea, more than can be counted or measured. Now God says to them, "You are not my people," but the day is coming when he will say to them, "You are the children of the living God!" 11 (C) The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be reunited. They will choose for themselves a single leader, and once again they will grow and prosper in their land. Yes, the day of Jezreel will be a great day! 2:1 (C) So call your fellow Israelites "God's People" and "Loved-by-the-Lord."*

How can this be when the nation of Israel was diluted out of existence? The Jews (descendants of Judah) have stayed distinct. But the Israelites – gone – or have they? Yet we see in this passage that God will be gathering them up. How can that happen? They are now just part of the nations. Perhaps what we have here is a picture of the nations being united with Judah which we get in other OT prophecies. That has happened in Christ because the church is drawn from the nations.

But Hosea prophecies to a point in the future where all the people of God will be re-united together. It is called the day of Jezreel. How significant!

We know from the NT that Jesus is going to return to earth and is going to destroy His enemies and establish His rule here. We read in Revelation that the final battle in human history before Christ establishes His kingdom will be at Armageddon. As you know it's a real place. It's in the valley of Jezreel. That is the culmination of history where Christ's kingdom in all aspects will be complete.

Apart from showing us how God's prophetic word in scripture all links up, this passage is significant for us too. We are the people of God drawn from the nations. One day that will be complete as prophesied. Until then like the nation of Israel in Hosea's time, God is patient and persevering because it allows a continuing opportunity for people to repent and turn to Jesus. *2 Peter 3:8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

There's more, because this fact should determine the sort of people we should be in Christ:

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

This reminds us of the fact that Jesus will return, there will be an Armageddon and God will judge the world. And we don't know when that will be. So there's an urgency because those without Christ will be lost. They will come under judgement. They need Jesus! We need to live godly and holy lives. Let's be circumspect about our lives and seek to be the people God wants us to be.