

# OpenTheo

## August 4th: Hosea 2 & John 7:25-52

August 3, 2021



### Alastair Roberts

The restoration of the unfaithful wife. Where does Jesus come from?

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>). My reflections are searchable by Bible chapter here: <https://audio.alastairadversaria.com/explore/>.

If you have enjoyed my output, please tell your friends. If you are interested in supporting my videos and podcasts and my research more generally, please consider supporting my work on Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>), using my PayPal account (<https://bit.ly/2RLaUcB>), or by buying books for my research on Amazon ([https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X33O?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X33O?ref_=wl_share)).

The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

## Transcript

Hosea chapter 2. Say to your brothers, you are my people, and to your sisters, you have received mercy. Plead with your mother, plead, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband, that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts. Lest I strip her naked, and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and make her like a parched land, and kill her with thirst.

Upon her children also I will have no mercy, because they are children of whoredom. For their mother has played the whore, she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.

Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths. She shall pursue her lovers, but not overtake them, and she

shall seek them, but not find them. Then she shall say, I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.

And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for bail. Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness. Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.

And I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts. And I will lay waste her vines and her fig-trees, of which she said, These are my wages, which my lovers have given me. I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall devour them.

And I will punish her for the feast-days of the bales, when she burned offerings to them, and adorned herself with her ring and jewellery, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the Lord. Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards, and make the valley of Acre a door of hope.

And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me my husband, and no longer will you call me my bale. But I will remove the names of the bales from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.

And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land. And I will make you lie down in safety.

And I will betroth you to me for ever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.

And in that day I will answer, declares the Lord, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel. And I will sow her for myself in the land, and I will have mercy on no mercy. And I will say to not my people, you are my people, and he shall say, you are my God.

In Hosea chapter 1, as a prophetic sign, the Lord had instructed Hosea to take a wife of Horebem, a woman of shameful sexual reputation, and to have children by her. Hosea had married Gomer and fathered three children by her, which the Lord commanded him to name Jezreel, no mercy, and not my people. In this way Hosea symbolized the Lord's relationship with his unfaithful people, and the judgment that would come upon them.

At the end of the chapter however, there was a remarkable change of tone from judgment to mercy, as the Lord promised the regathering and restoration of his people. The prophecies of chapter 2 have the actions of chapter 1 as their background. The chapter opens with a statement that seems to be distinct from, yet related to the prophecy of grace with which chapter 1 concludes.

As with the concluding verses of chapter 1, it plays off the names of the children, reversing the judgments that they spoke of. The naming of the second son, not my people, is answered with the statement, you are my people, and the naming of the daughter, no mercy, is answered with the statement, you have received mercy. Paul refers back to Hosea chapter 1 verse 10 to 2 verse 1 in Romans chapter 9 verses 25 to 26.

There he also relates its statements to Gentiles, who were never formally God's people, yet who were made part of the people of God through the work of Christ. As Joshua Moon argues, the metaphors drawn from chapter 1 that chapter 2 explores should be treated as loose fitting metaphors exploited for rhetorical ends. For instance, in verse 2, the children are charged to plead with their mother to reject her whoring.

Of course, within the metaphor both the mother and the children are Israel. A similar metaphor is developed in places like Jeremiah chapter 3. Perhaps this use of the metaphor allows the more faithful Israelite to figure themselves into the picture. They are children of a disgraceful mother, now disowned by her former husband, on account of whom they suffer great shame and stigma.

However, as Andrew Dearman observes, it is possible that the mother is supposed to represent Samaria as the capital of Israel. While some of the children may not even be party to or supportive of their mother's whoring, they are ostracized on account of it. The best that they can do is to plead with their mother, with the nation more generally, to abandon its gross unfaithfulness to the Lord.

If the nation does not repent, it will be stripped naked. It will both lose all of the riches it gained from its divine husband and will suffer great public shame and indignity. The disgraced and disowned wife seems to relate to the land here, which will be made like a parched wilderness, unable to sustain life.

Stripping naked is elsewhere used to refer to the spoiling of the land and the capture of its people by their adversaries, for instance in Ezekiel 16, verses 36-39. Thus says the Lord God, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whorings with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated, I will gather them against you from every side, and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. And I will judge you as women who commit adultery and

shed blood are judged, and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy.

And I will give you into their hands, and they shall throw down your vaulted chamber and break down your lofty places. They shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful jewels and leave you naked and bare. The children of this mother will also be disowned.

The nation went after its lovers, its false gods, wrongly attributing to their generosity the manifold blessings that she enjoyed in the good land that she inhabited, when all of these really came from the Lord. The Lord, however, would frustrate this adulterous wife in all of her ways, hedging them up with thorns and dooming her pursuit of her lovers to futility. All she would succeed in would be bringing ruin upon herself.

Like the prodigal son in Luke, this shameful woman would seek to return to the one that she had dishonoured by her behaviour, recognising that her condition had been better formerly. According to the laws of divorce in places like Deuteronomy chapter 24 verses 1 to 4, a return to a former husband would be closed to her. Jeremiah the prophet makes a similar point in Jeremiah chapter 3 verse 1. However, perhaps we are supposed to regard the whoring wife here more as hopelessly estranged from a man who is still technically her husband than as one divorced.

Israel had ignorantly regarded the bales as the source of her blessings, and had also devoted her riches to the service of them. The Lord, as he stripped her of his gifts, and of all the things with which he had provided for and sustained her, would leave her naked and uncovered in the sight of her lovers. She had exposed herself to them in her idolatry, but now she would be exposed to them in shame.

The Lord would cut off the festal occasions that marked the regular seasons of the life of the nation. He would give her cultivated orchards and vineyards over to the wild forest, and make their fruits food for the beasts. In all of this, her actions in going after the bales and forgetting the Lord would come back upon her own head.

As in chapter 1, however, the dark message of judgment is followed by a surprising message of restoration. Despite all that Israel had done, all of the ways that she had betrayed the Lord as her husband, the covenant bond would be restored, and the Lord would deal with her tenderly in ways which recall the early years of the marriage, when he had first led her out into the wilderness in the Exodus. Earlier in the book, the wilderness was the result of judgment, yet here it represents the hope beyond hope of a return to the intimacy of the earliest period of the covenant, after all of the treachery and infidelity that had subsequently occurred.

While earlier the unfaithful wife had rather presumptuously sought to return to her husband, whom she had greatly dishonoured, now it is the husband who is pursuing the wife who betrayed him, not merely bringing her home in disgrace, but wooing her once more. The valley of Achor is presumably here presented as a door into the promised

land, first receiving its name in Joshua chapter 7, after the execution of Achan after his sin at Jericho. Israel would respond to the Lord as she once did.

Although she had formerly worshipped the Lord in a syncretistic manner, treating him as one of the Baals, now she would express a more fitting covenant intimacy, addressing the Lord as her husband. Baal, in the sense of master or lord, was a term occasionally used for husbands, but here it would be replaced by the mutual intimacy conveyed by the term husband. The names of the Baals, her former lovers, would be removed from her mouth, as she would no longer call upon them in worship.

The Lord would provide for and protect them, saving them from predatory animals and warring neighbours. He would secure the relationship once more, betrothing them to himself in covenant faithfulness. This restoration would demonstrate his character, faithfulness and sovereignty.

Knowing the Lord here also implies the intimacy appropriate to the marital relationship. As Israel calls upon the Lord once more, the Lord will answer, and the reciprocity between heavens and earth that sustains the fertility of the land would be established. The heavens would drop down rain, and the earth would answer with fruitfulness in grain, wine and oil.

The end of the chapter brings with it the reversal of all of the negative connotations of the names of Hosea's prophetically named children by Gomer. Jezreel is no longer associated with the bloody rise and fall of the dynasty of Jehu, but with its meaning, God sows. God will sow the people in the land, much as he speaks of doing in Jeremiah 31.27. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.

No mercy will receive mercy, and not my people will be told, You are my people, and will answer, You are my God. A question to consider. The prophetic sign act of taking the wife of Hordam and having children of Hordam, and the prophecies associated with it, would have played out over several years.

How do you imagine this would have affected the way that Hosea's message was received? Why do you think that the Lord appointed such a sign act? John chapter 7 verses 25-52. Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is speaking openly, and they say nothing to him. Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.

So Jesus proclaimed as he taught in the temple, You know me, and you know where I come from, but I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.

So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done? The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

Jesus then said, I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me, and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.

The Jews said to one another, Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, You will seek me, and you will not find me, and where I am you cannot come? On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.

For as yet the spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. When they heard these words, some of the people said, This really is the prophet. Others said, This is the Christ.

But some said, Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was? So there was a division among the people over him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, Why did you not bring him? The officers answered, No one ever spoke like this man.

The Pharisees answered them, Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed. Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does? They replied, Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee. In the second half of John chapter 7 the question of Jesus' origins reappears.

Jesus has been teaching in the temple, and the crowd are surprised because they think that Jesus is a wanted man. The authorities had wanted to get their hands on Jesus after his healing of the infirm man on the Sabbath in chapter 5. After that healing he had connected his own work with that of the Father in a way that made him equal with God and turned their desire to lay hands on him into a desire to put him to death. Confused by the fact that Jesus is teaching in public, the people start to speculate that Jesus may in fact be the Messiah, and the authorities know it.

Yet there is a prevalent belief, the source of which is unclear, that the person who is the Christ will be of unknown origins. The crowd however knows where Jesus is from, he is a Galilean. Perhaps surprisingly, though he easily might do so, Jesus does not dispute this.

On one level they do know his origin, and the fact that he is from Nazareth is not inconsistent with the fact that he is also the Messiah. In Matthew chapter 1 verse 23, the fact that Jesus is a Nazarene is seen as a fulfilment of prophetic statements. Of course there were other prophetic statements saying that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem.

Unbeknownst to the crowd this was also true of Christ. Ironically this made what they thought was evidence against the claim that Jesus was the Christ, evidence for that claim. Of course neither Nazareth nor Bethlehem were the ultimate origin of Christ.

His ultimate origin truly was a place they did not and could not know. Without disputing the fact that they knew Jesus' geographical origin, he challenges their sense of his origin by speaking about his personal origin, about the one who had sent him. While they may on one level know his geographic origin, what they do not know is the far more important personal origin, the father who had sent him into the world.

In John 6 people had failed to recognise Jesus' ultimate origin, focusing rather upon his earthly connections and his family relations. Verse 30 might perhaps be seen as a heading for what follows, the attempts to arrest him and their failure. Throughout John's gospel there are several references to the coming hour of Christ and the fact that at certain points his hour had not yet come.

Until that hour came, none of the attempts to bring Jesus down would be successful. While there were differences among the crowd, many in the crowd, at least on some level, believed in Christ, reckoning that Jesus had performed enough signs to mark him out to be the Messiah. The chief priests and the Pharisees, concerned by such reports, sought to lay hands upon him.

In verse 33 following, Jesus seemed to address them in front of the crowd. The presence of the crowd presumably protected Christ from being captured. As we see elsewhere in the gospels and in the book of Acts, the religious leaders were afraid of the crowds.

Ideally they wanted to separate Jesus from the crowd and take him when he was alone. Jesus speaks to them in a cryptic way concerning his coming departure. They think that maybe he is going to be going to the dispersion among the Gentiles, the Jews that were scattered within the various nations around the Mediterranean.

Although the hero of the gospel knows that Jesus is referring to his death and resurrection and ascension, the religious leaders were puzzled by Jesus' statement, not knowing what he could be referring to. They aren't able to recognise that he will be

returning to his father in the ascension, an event that will serve to confirm his true origin. Jesus is provoking divisions among the general population and among their leaders.

Some believe that he is the prophet, or the Christ, and others that he has a demon. There is a pattern that plays out twice in this chapter, first in verses 14 to 36 and then again in verses 37 to 52, beginning with Jesus teaching in the temple, people speculating about his identity and then a failed attempt to arrest him. In the first instance it is the middle of the Feast of Booths and in the second it is the last great day of the feast.

The last great day of the feast may be the seventh or the eighth day. The Feast of Booths was a seven day celebration followed by an eighth day with a holy convocation. Ramsey Michaels argues that it must be the eighth day, whereas many commentators connecting what Jesus says here with the water drawing ceremony from the Pool of Siloam believe that it must be on the seventh day.

Within these verses we see another instance of the continuing water symbolism within the Gospel of John. We've seen it in chapter 1 with the baptism of John the Baptist, in chapter 2 with the water turned into wine at the wedding feast, in chapter 3 with the conversation with Nicodemus and the baptism of John again, in chapter 4 with the conversation with the woman at the well, and then in chapter 5 with the healing of the man by the sheep pool. Here once again there is mention of living water, water flowing out of the heart.

As I've noted, many have connected this with the water drawing ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles. Water would be drawn from the Pool of Siloam and then brought to the temple and poured out. This ceremony was associated with the expected rains.

It was also a time of great rejoicing. One of the Jewish leaders only a few decades after this was said to have done a headstand and to have juggled eight lighted torches as part of this celebration. On this occasion, Jesus makes a great promise of water to those who are thirsty, recalling his conversation with the woman at the well in chapter 4. We might also think of invitations such as Isaiah chapter 55 verse 1. We might also see something of a development here.

In chapter 4 verse 14 there's a fountain of water springing up and now in verse 38 of chapter 7 rivers of living water are flowing out. The rivers of living water, depending on how we translate this, proceed either from the heart of the believer or from the heart of Christ. I believe ultimately it's referring to Christ, but these things also apply to the believer who has Christ within them and his spirit.

Later blood mixed with water will come forth from Christ's pure side. Christ is akin to the Garden of Eden which has a river that divides into four rivers in Genesis chapter 2 verse 10. We might also recall the water flowing out of Ezekiel's temple in chapter 47 of his



prophecy.

Water also comes from the rock in Exodus chapter 17 in the story of the Exodus. In Zechariah chapter 14 verses 8 and 9, the passage associated with the Feast of Booths, we are told that living waters will flow from Jerusalem. The people do not truly understand what Jesus is speaking about.

The hearer of the Gospel is informed that he's referring to the Spirit. Those who believed in him would receive the Spirit, but the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus was not yet glorified. Throughout the Gospel Jesus is presented as the man of the Spirit.

People do not know where the Spirit comes from or where it goes, nor do they know where Jesus comes from and where he will go. He has received the Spirit without measure. He will later baptize with the Holy Spirit.

While we see the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, the ascension and glorification of Christ would bring about an epochal change in the mode of the Spirit's operations. Moses had given the people water from the rock in the wilderness, and some of the people respond to Jesus' statement by speculating that he is the prophet, the prophet like Moses that Moses himself foretold in the book of Deuteronomy. However, once again the question of Jesus' origins causes problems.

The fact that Jesus is from Galilee does not fit with the claims that he is the Messiah. The Messiah should come from the city of David. And so the people are divided on the question of Jesus' identity.

The officers who had been charged by the chief priests and Pharisees to lay hands on Christ came back empty handed. Questioned by the Jewish authorities, they end up bearing witness to Christ's uniqueness. No one ever spoke like this man.

Annoyed by this response, the Pharisees ask the officers whether they themselves have been deceived by Jesus, and they start to wonder whether there are dissenters even in their own ranks. Of course, the ignorant and untrained crowd can't be trusted to judge rightly on these matters. Nicodemus, who had privately spoken to Jesus earlier in John chapter 3, questions whether they are following proper procedure.

If they are to be just judges, they need to hear the man out before they judge concerning him. However, the minds of the body of the Pharisees have already been settled on the matter. Jesus is neither the Messiah nor any prophet.

Neither would come from Galilee. Even for raising such a mild question, Nicodemus' own sympathies are cast under suspicion. A question to consider.

Jesus' seemingly known yet unknown origins are an important theme in this chapter. How does this relate to the character of Jesus' mission more generally?

