

# OpenTheo

## August 13th: Hosea 11 & John 12:20-50

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Out of Egypt I called my son. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

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## Transcript

Hosea chapter 11. They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels.

My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, He shall not raise them up at all. How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admar? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart recoils within me. My compassion grows warm and tender.

I will not execute my burning anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. They shall go after the Lord.

He will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west. They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the Lord.

Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One. Hosea chapter 11 is one of the most poignant and well-known chapters in the book, not least because verse 1 is quoted in Matthew chapter 2 verse 15 in reference to Jesus' sojourn in Egypt with his parents as a child. The question of whether this section closely relates to the one preceding it will help us to determine whether we should render the first clause as temporal, when Israel was a child, or causal, for Israel was a child.

Although Joshua Moon argues for the latter casual understanding, most other commentators adopt the temporal understanding. Jericho hears both senses. Judgment will come because Israel is the Lord's son.

But the verse also recalls the specific time of the Exodus and the love of the Lord for Israel, his son, demonstrated within it. The story of the Exodus is a story of the Lord's dealing with Israel, his firstborn son. Exodus chapter 4 verse 22.

Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son. The Lord brought his son out of the womb of Egypt in the Passover and in the deliverance at the Red Sea. Israel was then swaddled, nursed, and led through the wilderness, being taught how to walk.

Verse 2 is variously understood. Hwang reads it as they, Israel, called to them, Egypt. Then they, Israel, went away from them, toward Assyria.

This reading would recall chapter 7 verse 11, where we see the same pair of verbs used. Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, calling to Egypt, going to Assyria. John Goldingay reads it similarly.

Hans Walter Wolff and Moon, however, read it as a reference to the call of the Lord to Israel that Israel rejects. However, although this is the reading of the Septuagint, it requires an argument for the corruption of the text at this point, as the pronouns are plural here, they and them, not he or I. Francis Anderson and David Noel Friedman argue that if Israel was in view here, given the personification of Israel as a son in the first verse, we might expect singular third-person pronouns, but they are plural. That said, both the subject and the object here are third-person plural.

Anderson and Friedman translate the line, they called to them, they departed from me, suggesting that it might be a more general reference to surrounding peoples tempting Israel to apostasy, as in places like Numbers 25 and the rebellion with Baal of Peor. This might fit more with the second half of the verse, as Israel gave himself to persistent idolatry with the Baals. The Lord taught Ephraim how to walk.

In loving care and condescension, he took them up in his arms, granting them protection, deliverance and healing. Perhaps we should think of some more specific events or actions that might be evoked by these images or metaphors. For instance, teaching Ephraim to walk might make us think of the way that the Lord taught Israel the law, so that they might walk in freedom.

The Lord saved Israel with his mighty arm and guided Israel in the wilderness. Elsewhere, in places like Jeremiah 2, Hosea 2, 14-15 and Ezekiel 16, the same early years of Israel's time in the wilderness are recalled, although in those places Israel is characterized as the bride, not the son as he is here. Verse 4 shifts to a different metaphor, of a farmer tending to his laboring animal, loosening the animal's yoke so that it could eat freely.

However, despite all of the kindness that the Lord showed to Israel his son, they had refused to return to him. Considering that Hosea elsewhere speaks of Israel returning to Egypt, reading verse 5 as a statement that Israel will not return to the land of Egypt, as the ESV does, for instance, raises questions of apparent contradiction. Moon reads it as a rhetorical question.

Shall they not return to the land of Egypt? Andrew Dierman raises the possibility that, where return to Egypt is mentioned elsewhere, it is not literally Egypt that is in view. Egypt rather stands for the state of bondage, which they will experience under the yoke of Assyria. Their return to Egypt is contrasted with their refusal to return to the Lord, and also probably looks back to the beginning of the chapter where the Lord first called them from Egypt.

They would suffer the consequences of their own stubborn folly. Their own councils would lead them to destruction, to war coming upon them, and their cities being violently overthrown. As they had rejected and turned away from the Lord, if they were to turn back to him in the time of their distress, the Lord would not raise them up again.

At this point, however, the Lord breaks out in a statement of the greatest pathos. It will not mark the conclusion of his dealings with them. His voice will still call to them while they are in exile.

Admah and Zeboim were two of the less famous cities of the plain, along with Sodom and Gomorrah. While the nation of Israel would be overthrown, the Lord would not make a final destruction of them in the way that he did with the cities of the plain. He is bound to his people in deep compassion.

Even as they are stubbornly and egregiously rebelling against him, his heart still yearns in compassion for his wayward son. On various other occasions in scripture where we see the Lord asserting his deity, it is in reference to the certainty and the power of his judgement. Here, however, the deity of God is demonstrated in his mercy and grace for

his rebellious son.

Even the most loving human father would have given up on Israel long ago. Yet Israel's stubborn persistence in rebellion is only outmatched by the Lord's stubborn persistence in his mercy. Earlier in chapter 7 verse 11, Israel was described as like a silly dove going towards Egypt and Assyria.

Now, however, when the Lord roars like a lion, his children will return to him from Egypt and Assyria like trembling birds. The trembling suggests that those that return will have finally learned to fear the Lord. The Lord would once more give those who returned a home within his land.

Verse 12, the final verse of the chapter, should probably be read more with what follows. The second half of it does present problems. The term used is not usually used in a positive sense and in a few verses time Judah will be spoken of quite negatively.

The claim that Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One might be something of a stretch. Moons suggests that we understand it as follows. Judah still strives with God, with the Holy One, who is faithful.

The faithfulness here is not Judah's but the Lord's. A question to consider. Matthew quotes verse 1 of this chapter in chapter 2 verse 15 of his gospel.

There he claims that the word of the prophet is fulfilled in Jesus coming from Egypt. How might we connect Israel as God's son called from Egypt to the story of Christ as God's son in Matthew's gospel? John chapter 12 verses 20 to 50. Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

So these came to Philip who was from Bethsaida in Galilee and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

And Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also.

If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.

The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, An angel

has spoken to him. Jesus answered, This voice has come for your sake, not mine.

Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, We have heard from the Lord that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? So Jesus said to them, The light is among you for a little while longer.

Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him. So that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled, Lord, who has believed what he heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe.

For again Isaiah said, He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart, and turn and I would heal them. Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him.

But for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. And Jesus cried out and said, Whoever believes in me, believes not in me, but in him who sent me.

And whoever sees me, sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him.

For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge. The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say therefore, I say as the Father has told me.

John chapter 12 verse 20 tells us of some Greeks who had come to worship at the feast of Passover. The exact identity of these Greeks is not entirely clear. Perhaps they were part of the Diaspora, or perhaps they were actual Gentiles.

I think it's most likely that they were actual Gentiles. These men come to Philip from Bethsaida in Galilee and tell him that they want to see Jesus. Why did they come to Philip? Philip has a Greek name.

He comes from a region, Bethsaida in Galilee, where there is a lot more interaction between Jews and Gentiles. Someone who perhaps was more distant from the elites and as a result would be more approachable. Philip then goes and tells Andrew, and Andrew and Philip go and tell Jesus.

And this movement, when they're spreading news, going from one to another and moving towards Jesus, is reminiscent perhaps of what we see at the end of chapter 1, although working in a different direction. The movement here is towards Jesus rather than going out to tell others about him. Greeks are being drawn to Jesus.

And this is a sign that the hour has come that Jesus should be glorified. Jesus' death is presented in almost natural terms here, as a grain dying and rising to produce much fruit. The way that the death and resurrection of Christ are connected within the Gospel of John is often interesting and surprising.

It's presented as a sort of birth event following after pangs. It's presented as a grain of wheat falling into the ground and then coming up to new life with fruit. It's presented as Christ laying down his life as he has authority to take it back up again.

So the death is in order for the resurrection. And here the arrival of the Greeks seems to serve as a sign that Christ's hour has come. When the nations start to arrive, he must be lifted up.

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself. This is a fulfilment of prophecies typically related to the temple or to the mountain of God. For instance, in Isaiah chapter 2, verses 1 to 4, the word that Isaiah, the son of Amos, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be lifted up above the hills, and all the nations shall flow to it.

And many people shall come and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and he shall decide disputes for many peoples.

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. The Greeks are then in anticipation of what's to come, a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

There's no mention of a voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism or on the Mount of

Transfiguration in John, but there is a voice from heaven here. The voice declares that the Father will glorify his name and has already glorified it. The theme of glory, again, is an important one within this chapter.

Jesus speaks of his death and resurrection as his glorification, and there is a sort of double entendre in the statement that he is going to be lifted up. He's lifted up on the cross, but he's also lifted up in authority and rule. And that connection between the death of Christ and his exaltation is particularly distinct within the Gospel of John.

You do not see that to quite the same extent in the other Gospels, where there's a movement down and then up, whereas in John the lifting up occurs at the cross itself. Christ speaks about himself also as the light, a light that will be among them for just a little while longer, and they should walk while they have the light, rather than in darkness. Having Jesus with them at this point, it's important that they believe in response to him.

And Jesus goes on to speak about the failure of people to respond in reflecting upon the prophecy of Isaiah, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? This is a verse from the great chapter 53, a chapter which is often used to reflect upon Christ from the Old Testament. He then brings them back to perhaps one of the most classic texts within Jesus' ministry, within Isaiah, referring to Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 6, and the fact that people have their eyes blinded, hearts hardened, they cannot see with their eyes or understand with their heart. The Gospel of John tells us that Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

Now, whose glory? Spoke of whom? It's referring to Christ. What is the glory that he saw? Well, in chapter 6, it's the Lord high and lifted up. It's the Lord whose glory fills the temple.

Even in this chapter where the theme of glory is quite prominent, to connect the glory of Christ with that glorious theophany is a remarkable thing. What is being said here is that Jesus is the one that Isaiah saw high and lifted up. In some ways, in the Old Testament, we see Christ as a silhouette, a figure who is presented in these great theophanies.

We can see Ezekiel's vision in chapter 1, or the vision of Moses in chapter 33 and 34 of Exodus, or this event that John recalls in Isaiah chapter 6. What John and the other Gospel writers are saying then is that Jesus is this one, the one whom you did not necessarily know in the Old Testament, the one in whom the glory of God was seen, now has come in person. We know his name. We have interacted with him directly.

And this is the one whose glory is declared. But the authorities fail to believe in him. And even when they do believe, as some do here, they do not confess it because they're afraid of the Pharisees and being cast out of the synagogue.

And again, the theme of glory comes up. They love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. Perhaps there's some double entendre here as well.

The glory that comes from God is Jesus Christ. And it's also the honour that comes from God. Jesus challenges people at this point and shows them the way that he is the dividing line by which things will be judged.

He has come into the world as light so that people can be freed from the darkness and enter into the light. But yet, if people do not obey his word, he's not going to be the one that judges them. Rather, he occasions the judgment.

He is the one whose word will judge them on the last day. They have seen the light. They have been exposed to the truth.

And yet, if they have rejected that, they have no excuse left. The fact that some would prefer not being excluded from the synagogues by the Pharisees over being honoured by Christ on the last day is a terrifying and sobering exposure of just how misplaced our priorities often are. A question to reflect upon.

In chapter 12, John continues to explore key themes that pervade his gospel. Light, glory, judgment, authority, witness, commandment and other such themes that can be found throughout the book. Now would be a good time to reflect upon some of the ways in which these themes have been developed to this point.

To try and draw together some of the threads from the various chapters that we have read. And to think about some of the deeper thrust of these themes as they've been played out.