Israel's Hour of Decision pt. 1

By Charles Feinberg

This is a message by Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg, dean and professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary in La Mirada California. The subject to this message is Israel's Hour of Decision, Israel's hour of decision. I'd like to read as the basis for this message two very important passages. One in the first of the minor profits, the other in the first of the gospels of the New Testament. First passage then in Hosea chapter 5 verse 11 to 15 the end of that chapter and then in Matthew's Gospel chapter 23 verse 37 to verse 39. Hosea 5:11 "Ephraim, meaning the northern kingdom, is oppressed, crushed in judgment because he was determined to follow man's command. Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim and like rottenness to the house of Judah. When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his wound. Then if he went to Assyria and sent to king Jareb, but he is unable to heal you or to cure you of your wound for I will be like a lion to Ephraim like a young lion to the House of Judah. I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away. I will carry away and there will be none to deliver. I will go away and return to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face. In the affliction they will earnestly or early seek me."

In Matthew 23 verse 37 we read, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who were sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were unwilling. Behold your house is being left to you desolate. For I say to you from now on you shall not see me until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Read then from Matthew's Gospel chapter 23 verse 37 to 39. The previous passage was a Hosea 5:11 to 15. Now in the Hosea passage, and may I say that the name Hosea in the original Hebrew. Is the same as Isaiah, Joshua, Hosea and the equivalent
of the Greek New Testament Jesus, Yeshua or the Hebrew, Yeshua. So, in the prophecy of this
great Prophet Hosea, the first of the minor prophets somewhat of a misnomer to call them minor
profits. They are called such because they are supposed to be shorter encompass although Hosea
has 14 chapters and Zechariah has 14 chapters whereas Daniel has but 12. But nonetheless, they
have been called for convenience sake the Minor Prophets and we follow with that so people
may understand of what we are speaking and to what we are referring.

Now in the Hosea a passage the entire 15 verses of Hosea 5 are a judgment declaration of
God. Notice verse 1 to the priest, to the house of Israel that the people and or house of the king.
Priest, people and potentate for the judgment applies to you says the prophet. He says the revolts
have gone deep and depravity. He says I know Ephraim and Israel is not hidden from me, you
play the harlot. That deeds will not allow them to return to the Lord, to their God for a Spirit of
harlotry is within them. So he speaks of Israel's continued persistent sin. Verse11 he still
continues with the theme of the terrible consequences of Israel sin. In this passage in Hosea, the
speaker is the Lord God of Israel. God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of
Jacob. In the Matthew passage, it is God the son, the son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ who is
the speaker. Interestingly, both chapters are dealing with threat threatening judgment. The
prophet’s message in this chapter Hosea 5 is addressed to a wide spectrum of people because all
were involved in defection and apostasy inspired attention from the Lord. So this threatening
judgment then is because of their sin. Remember Matthew 23 our Lord Jesus was pronouncing
woe’s on the scribes and Pharisees because of that continued sin and opposition to him. They
would not have him as their promised Messiah and savior. But our God in the midst of judgment
loves to indicate mercy stored up for a future day. Our God does not willingly grieve or afflict
the children of men. Our God delights not in judgment, but in salvation. Isaiah's word is true that
judgment is God's strange work. The work in which he delights is salvation. Therefore he would have his son named Jesus. Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sin.

So judgment must come, but God will not leave the theme until he speaks of mercy. And here we have outlined in Chapter 5 Verse 15 Israel's wonderful hour of decision. The hour of a return. The hour of a restoration. Now this passage, as a blueprint has four sides to it and it indicates four clear elements. The first is the departure of the Lord. The Lord is going away. I will go away and return to my place. Well, this had actually been stated already in this fifth chapter of Hosea where the scripture tells us that Israel would go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, but they will not find him. He has withdrawn from them.

Why has he withdrawn himself from them? Why has he gone away and returned to his place? Here you have the departure of the Lord. Not been over nineteen hundred years ago that the Lord has departed. Yet that is the groundwork, that's the basis upon which the future hour of Israel's restoration and decision is based. Now, the people have already been threatened with several judgments and we shall not see the gravity of this portion of the judgment, the departure of the Lord, until we see and consider carefully with what they've been threatened thus far. They have been threatened, first of all, with a moth like judgment verse 12, "Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim." Moth is a very little creature, it seems so insignificant, it seems so harmless, it could do very little damage one may think, but my dear friends a moth may work quietly, stealthily, unobtrusively, without display, without glare of trumpet, but it works destructively and ruinously. You take a fur coat, if it is not properly cared for, if it is not carefully put away so that the moths cannot get out it, it will ruin the entire garment. How much of damage it can do. God says, "For your sin oh Ephraim I am going to be like a moth to you." By that time possibly, those
in the southern kingdom thought that Hosea was quite a preacher of righteousness and a preacher of ethics and they were willing to enter into the condemnation of Ephraim, but the prophet turns to them and says to you of the southern kingdom, house of Judah, I'm going to be like rottenness. Rottenest also decay works stealthily quietly without show or fanfare, but it works certainly marringly and destructively.

Here's a beautiful piece of fruit. It has been exhibited in a county fair. Someone suggests that now that the fair is over this beautiful piece of fruit might be cut open and shared around with those in the company. And when that beautiful piece of fruit, an apple, is cut into, you see it all Brown inside or wormy, rottenness has taken hold of it, it has marred the whole situation for anyone to be interested in eating it. But that's only one aspect of the quiet, stealthy, destructive forces in Ephraim and Juda, but the prophet goes on thundering the word of God for verse 14, "For I will be like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the House of Judah I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away I will carry away and there will be none to deliver." My dear friends a lion is an altogether different situation from a moth judgment or rottenness judgment. Amos says, "Will a lion roar and have caught nothing?" A lion is irresistible. When he terrors, he cannot be opposed easily. He is irresistible and God says, "I'm going to be as a lion to both Ephraim and to Judah." Nothing quiet about that judgment and by that time you may feel as many may feel. Well Israel, Juda have really had it. This is the end of the line. You might just as well right Finished. No, there is still the greatest threat of all. Not the moth judgment, or the rottenness judgment, or the lion judgment, but the withdrawal, the departure of the Lord judgment. I will go away and return to my place.

This is the greatest calamity that could befall Gods people, Israel. Now the presupposition is quite clear that the Lord himself has been here on Earth in the midst of his
people, and now he has determined to go away. He is determined to withdraw himself. He has determined to return to his original place and remember how in the Gospel of John our Lord Jesus repeated that I go away and where I go you can't come. The disciples couldn't understand that and especially it irked Peter. "Why can't I go?" He asks at the end of John 13, "Why can't I go if there's harm or personal injury involved. I'll be glad to lay down my life thy sake Oh Lord."

The lord said the rooster will not have crowed once, the day will not have gotten warm before you will have denied me three times Peter. Oh my dear friends, he was going to go away. It was an idea, it was a concept, hard for them. They said while the law says that messiah, when he comes abide forever. He was here, he laughed because they wouldn't have him. We will not have this man to reign over us they said. Israel's greatest loss, here it, was the withdrawal of Messiah from their midst.

Notice those last words of our Lord to his people is night 23:39. The verses we read, "Ye shall not see me henceforth." Another way of saying that he's going away, he's withdrawing himself, he's returning to his original place. And as a matter of historical fact Jesus of Nazareth the Lord Jesus Christ actually left Israel and did return to his place. Psalm 110:1 says, "The Lord said unto my lord sit thou art my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool." He's gone, he has left this earth. He's at the right hand of the father. In Acts 1:9 to 11. The two men in white said to the disciples staring at the receding ascending Savior who has been taken up out of their sight, "Why old men of Galilee do you stand gazing up into heaven. This same Jesus that you see going to heaven shall come, he’s going to return. In like manner as you've seen him go into heaven.

Now what could that possibly mean? It means that the Lord who was here, who sojourned, who rot, who taught, who bless them. That very wonderful personality the Lord Jesus
Christ has left, he has gone, he has withdrawn himself. So not only Psalm 110 indicates his leaving, not only does Acts 1:9 to 11 indicate that he is left, but here Ephesians 1 verse 20 to 23 when the apostle Paul is speaking of how God's wonderful power was shown and manifested when he raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule, authority, and power and dominion and every name that his name, not only in this age, but also in the one to come and he put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body. The fullness of him who feels all in all. You see, he has got away. He's seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above every earthly power or every earthly rank. And then in Hebrews 1 and in Hebrews 8 and Hebrews 10 and in Hebrews 12, we have the wonderful word that he's seated at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Now my dear friends that the Lord Jesus Christ is seated in Heaven is glorious for the believer, because he remembers this constantly in prayer. He intercedes for us that we might not sin. He ever liveth to make a decision for us and then if we do sin we have an advocate where the father he advocates for us that this sin should be reckoned under his wonderful finished work at Calvary. I repeat that Christ is seated in heaven is glorious for us believers, but mind you, for Israel, it means the Lord has withdrawn himself. Now that's the severity of God, but it has a future purpose and a program in view. Some time ago in the city of New York where someone has facetiously said, "You're either quick or dead in reality" some time ago in that great city a policeman looked up and almost froze to the spot because he saw a dear old lady standing in the middle of one of the busiest streets of that great city and there was a heavy truck rushing down on her. He knew to shout to her would only add to her confusion, would only befuddle her more, that would not solve the situation and with ingenuity, instantly, that officer, made his decision.
He leaped in the way of the oncoming truck, threw the old lady out of the way of that vehicle and he himself was thrown into unconsciousness.

I ask you, should she blame or bless his roughness? I wonder, have we ever blamed God for his severity to Israel, to the nation of his choice? Remember, God means ultimate blessing in it. God's heart is eminently inclined to them. He is tenderly positioned and concerned about them, but this is the first part of their hour of decision. It must be Hosea 5:15, the departure of the Lord, and now the second part of the picture is in their affliction. Hosea 5:15, "In their affliction" immediately that God begins to deal again with Israel, it will be in affliction. Now we do it well to remember this in the midst of the progress and the strides that are being made in the state of Israel and they will be made along many lines, but we still need to remember that the next item on the docket when God begins to deal again with Israel, sadly enough, is going to be in affliction, the affliction of Israel. The time of trouble lies definitely ahead of them.

I think one of the clearest statements of it is in Jeremiah Chapter 30 versus 4 to 7. It is indicated the time bracket in which this takes place. We read in verse 3 for instance, "For behold days are coming declares the Lord." I'm reading from Jeremiah 30 verse 3. "Where we hold days are coming declares the Lord when I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel and Judah. The Lord says I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it first." Verse 4, now these are the words with the Lord spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. "For thus says the Lord, I've heard a sound of terror of dread and there is no peace. Ask now and see if a man can give birth?" You say well my I'm tremendously amazed at Jeremiah a man of his age and his understanding could even begin to think that such a thing could happen, that a man could travail in birth with a child. That's not happened in the history of the world, never will happen. And you can just hear Jeremiah answering if you are so
knowledgeable in this matter, why do I see every man with his hands on his loins just as a
woman in childbirth and why have all faces turned pale? Alas not [inaudible] let's read the
scripture correctly. This is a sad burden on the heart of Jeremiah, on the heart of God. “But a last,
for that day is great.” What day? None like it, and you did not say there is one like it, and you do
not know all of the past and the present and all of the future to be able to make a reckoning. So
you cannot say this has already taken place in the history of the world and from other notations
of time and prophetic scripture it's yet ahead. What time is it? It is the time of Jacob's trouble.
The time of Jacob's distress, but read the end of the verse friends, "But he will be saved from it."

Yes Israel's time yet will come. What time? The time a God will reckon with her, when
God will purge out all the dross, when he will make her ready to receive his blessing and to be
received into favor with him again. It's in the great prophecy of Zachariah, next to the last of the
minor profits, where we read in the thirteenth chapter of Zachariah verse 8. It will come about in
all the land declares the Lord the two parts in it will be cut off and perish. That's a terrible
decimation of a population. Two thirds gone, perishing, but the third will be left in it and knows
what's going to happen to the third and I will bring the third part through the fire. We find them
as Silver is refined and test them as gold is tested. What will be the upshot? What will be the
glorious result? They will call on my name and I will answer them. I will say they are my people
and they will say the Lord is my God. As a matter of fact my friend's, the book of the revelation
from Chapter 6 through 19 is telling how God will bring upon unbelieving Israel, as well as upon
unbelieving Gentiles and an only professing church, he is going to bring affliction and you notice
in the book of Revelation how often you have something reference to the Ark of the covenant.
You will have Michael and he's always there in relation to Israel. You have a mention of a
temple. You have a mention of a tabernacle of God. All these interesting little signs, these little
clues that you may detect who is prominently spoken of in the book. Yes. In the book of Revelation there is much truth concerning God's affliction of Israel in that coming day.

God's day of full reckoning with Israel will come in due time. It must come before they see Messiah's face yet once more. I suppose that the prophet Ezekiel has as clear and as full a picture of this affliction of Israel and the end time as any profit and we read any Ezekiel chapter 20 beginning to read this verse 33 and reading on to 38. Hear it, "As I live declares the Lord God surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out. I shall be king over you." Notice how God is going to bring them to this place and I shall bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered with a mighty hand with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out. And I shall bring you into the wilderness of the peoples and there I shall enter into judgment with you face to face just as in the olden days when God dealt with them in judgment after he brought them out of the land of Egypt and into the wilderness and he says so in Verse 36 of Ezekiel 20. "As I entered" an exact parallel as I entered into judgment with your followers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt. So I will enter into judgment with you declares the Lord God speaking prophetically of a future day that lies even beyond our hour. Notice what he's going to do yet. What's the purpose of it? And I shall make you pass under the rood as a shepherd does with sheep and I shall bring you into the bond of the Covenant and I shall purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against me. Shepherd will take out of the flock. Those that are afflicted or have something that is detrimental to them. He purges out so does the Lord Jesus and I shall purge from you from Israel and that coming day the rebels and those who transgress against me I shall bring them out of the land with a soldier, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the Lord.
I repeat they must yet come to this full reckoning before they see Messiah's face again. Thus we have seen so far in this important prophetic theme, Israel’s hour of decision, the departure of the Lord and the affliction of Israel remains for us to come to the two other parts of this wonderful verse, Hosea 5:15, along with Matthew 23:39 and the conclusion of the message will be on these latter two areas. These other aspects and phases of Israel's hour of decision.