

“In Their Affliction, They Will Earnestly Seek Me” (Hosea 5:15 - NKJV)

God's Complaints against His People

Hosea Chapter 5 is a litany of God's complaints about the Israelites for their needless slaughter, spirit of harlotry, unbelief, pride, and treachery, by having pagan children. In return, God promises that the people will not find Him because He has withdrawn from them and that He will pour out His wrath on them (vv 2-10). Despite their moral sickness and wounds, Ephraim sought comfort from king Jereb in Assyria.

God's Mercy and Comfort

Then comes that word of comfort from God, mercy in the midst of judgment: *“I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offence. Then they will seek my face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me”* (v 15). What God is looking for is a change of mind and heart – and a change of direction – true repentance; He is looking for broken and contrite hearts. God so longs for His people to acknowledge their offences, to confess their sins and repent, so that He is able to forgive them and once more walk with them. Scripture overflows with God's heartfelt love for His chosen people, the Jews. Listen to God, speaking through Jeremiah; I'm using the beautiful words of the New Living Translation of Jeremiah 31:20: *“Is not Israel still My son, My darling child?” says the LORD? “I often have to punish him, but I still love him. That's why*

I long for him and surely will have mercy on him.”

Lack of repentance leads to judgment and enforced sorrow through the people's situations and circumstances. God returns to 'His place' – He withdraws and waits. So important is repentance that God, in His grace and mercy, brings affliction upon His people in order to achieve this end. God wounds and God heals (Deuteronomy 32:39; Hosea 6:1).

Historical Context of Hosea Chapter 5

To put Hosea chapter 5 in historical context, Hosea prophesied around the middle of the 8th century BC, and he is thought to have written his book in Judah, after the fall of the northern capital, Samaria, between 722 and 721 BC. Although Judah returned from exile, Israel did not; it is likely, however, that some returned with Judah – remember, they weren't that far apart – Israel was exiled to Assyria (now northern Iraq) and Judah to Babylon (now southern Iraq). We know, with the advantage of hindsight, that the Jewish nation was scattered in the Diaspora following the Roman-Jewish war in 70 AD; we know, too, that although the Jewish people have been afflicted many times, they have not yet, as a nation, returned to God – so there is a future application of Hosea 5:15 yet to be fulfilled.

God Withdraws and Waits

God has still withdrawn from His Jewish people as Hosea makes clear: *“I will return again to My place until they acknowledge their offence”* (Hosea 5:15). God still waits for His people and has waited over 2,700 years since Hosea prophesied of God's withdrawing and waiting; when God waits –

He waits! One of God's principles in waiting is to have grace and mercy on His chosen people – this is a comfort, too, when we are waiting for answers to prayer. Isaiah 30:18 records this: *“Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him.”*

God Rescues His People

Now the initiative in rescuing the Jewish people from themselves is entirely God's. The plot is revealed in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, Zechariah chapter 12, and possibly Joel chapter 2: the Gog-Magog war:

Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, ‘Thus says the LORD God: behold I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords, Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomah and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops – many people are with you. Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them.’” (Ezekiel 38:1-7).

Notice first of all that this is a war brought into being by God (v 4) and also notice the alignment of the nations: Russia, Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia and Libya (v 5) all of which are geographically close to Israel; Russia has a large Muslim population, especially in Chechnya, and the other nations are mainly

Muslim – you can almost see it happening can't you? Notice that these nations have an evil plan: *Thus says the LORD God: “On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: you will say, ‘I will go up against a land of un-walled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates – to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land’” (vv 9-12).*

The war, when it comes, will be 'like a cloud' against defenceless villages. The reference to un-walled villages (v 11) is interesting. Today there is a separating wall in Israel so, many villages are, technically, 'walled.' However, if this is in place during the Gog-Magog war, the invasion may come from the north over the Golan Heights, where all the villages remain un-walled. When tribulation comes, it will be no good Israel repeating the error of 'going to Assyria and sending for king Jareb.' In the same way, it would be useless for Israel to go to the West, the President of America – or even the UN! Israel needs to return to God – only He can heal their deep spiritual wound.

God's Judgment and Victory over Gog-Magog

Now that Gog-Magog has invaded Israel, its forces come under the full judgment of God, for God is going to have the victory! *“And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, ‘Thus says the LORD God: “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal; and I will turn you around and lead you on,*

bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken, says the LORD God” (Ezekiel 39:1-5).

The Eternal Purposes of God

The war of Gog-Magog is one orchestrated by God – a momentous event that will have eternal consequences for the good of Israel - as we shall see. God is going to save the Jews both physically and spiritually. It is worth remembering, because it is clear from Scripture, that God does everything of eternal value through the Feasts of Israel. At Passover, He saved Israel; every believer in Jesus is saved through the blood of The Passover Lamb – Jesus; the Law and the Spirit were given at Pentecost, and Jesus was born at Tabernacles and will return at Tabernacles. Since God is going to achieve a physical as well as a spiritual salvation of Israel (as He did in Egypt) perhaps at the height of the Gog-Magog war, it seems possible that it will be during Passover.

The Captain of the Lord’s Army – and God’s Spirit Poured Out

The victory over Gog-Magog poses a question: “Who is the Captain of the LORD’s Army?” Just as in the days of Joshua, it will be Jesus – King of kings and Lord of lords! Could it be that, as Gog and Magog swarm over the mountains of Israel, and the Jews are about to perish, that they cry out to the One, True Living God? Is the point at which God brings victory also

the point at which He pours out His Spirit upon His people – and they look on Jesus the One whom they pierced? I believe so; listen to Ezekiel: *“And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” says the LORD God. (Ezekiel 39:29).*

Notice the tense – God’s Spirit will have been poured out – the same Spirit that will overcome Israel’s enemies is the same Spirit that will open the eyes and hearts of the Jews, and they will weep, grieve and mourn with Godly sorrow. The picture is completed by the prophecies of Zechariah and, perhaps a further fulfilment of Joel 2:28-29: *“And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only Son, and grieve for him as one grieves for a firstborn.” (Zechariah 12:10).*

Israel’s future looked rocky but is now ultimately secure, as is the true Church of God, for both will sit down together at the Wedding Feast of The Lamb. Let’s finish with a glimpse of heaven, for God’s desire is that He walks once more with man as He did with Adam and Eve: *“The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: “I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts” (Isaiah 57:15 – NLT).*

Rod Boggia