

AMOS 5:18 – 9:15

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6. woe to the rebellious who trust in religious rituals (5:18-27)

a. fact of false security (5:18-20)

(1) These Israelites lived in rebellion to God and yet so deceived themselves about the matter that they actually longed for his coming in judgment. Despite practicing idolatry, abusing the poor and underprivileged, muzzling the prophets, and ignoring God's attempts to bring them to repentance, they've deceived themselves into thinking they are at peace with him and want him to come in judgment!

(2) God tells them in no uncertain terms (18c-20) that they've got no business hoping for that day. His coming in judgment will be a disaster for them; it will be a case of "out of the pan and into the fire." The judgment they long for will actually be their destruction. And that, of course, came to pass when God brought the Assyrians down on them.

(3) Many religious people today are in the same boat. They are living in rebellion to God, being oblivious and/or apathetic to his commands, and still think the Second Coming is going to be a time of celebration for them. Jesus made clear in Mat. 7:21-23 that lip service from a rebel will not cut it on the day of judgment. See also, Lk. 6:46-49.

b. basis of false security (5:21-24)

(1) Now you might be asking yourself, How can people who are living in rebellion deceive themselves into thinking they are right with God? How could they possibly have a false sense of security? The answer is here in vv. 21-24.

(2) The source of their false security with God was their religious ritual. They thought they could be justified before God by performing acts of worship without surrendering control of their lives to him. They offered God religious festivals, solemn assemblies, songs, and sacrifices, all proclaiming that he was worthy of being honored and obeyed, but then they ignored his will for their lives.

(3) God says he despises this type of hypocritical worship. He wants genuine worship, a worship that emanates from a faith that finds expression in one's life, a faith that produces a life of justice and righteousness.

(4) Our ability to deceive ourselves in this way is greater than we imagine. I'll never forget one Christmas Eve about eight years before brother John and I

became Christians. We were out drinking with a mutual friend named Dominic and were working hard to achieve the desired state of inebriation. All of a sudden, Dominic got up and started to leave the bar. John and I said, "Where are you going?" and he said "To midnight mass."

(5) Now that should strike you as absurd, but:

(a) What about the person who is presently carrying on an immoral sexual relationship but who attends church regularly?

(b) What about the person who is secretly abusing drugs or alcohol but who sings praise to God?

(c) What about the person who is devoted to pornography but who wouldn't think of missing the Lord's Supper?

(d) What about the person who is cheating his customers or business associates or stealing from his employer but who prays to God for blessings?

(6) You see, there are people who call themselves Christians who have never surrendered control of their lives to Jesus Christ. They go to church fairly often, always on Christmas and Easter, and if asked they will tell you they believe Jesus is the Son of God, but they live like they don't believe it. The truth is that this peripheral involvement with Christianity will not save them. They must have a biblical faith, a faith that is the "Yes" of the whole person, not simply his intellect. In other words, they must allow Jesus to be Lord of their lives. See, Lk. 13:22-28.

c. coming judgment (5:25-27)

(1) God is certainly not being hasty. Their disloyalty is of long standing. They defected to idolatry as early as the wilderness period (see, Ezek. 20:10-26) and thereafter continued to show their disloyalty in many forms (including their current disobedience).

(2) For such persistent disloyalty they will be punished, taken into exile.

7. woe to rebellious who trust in their own strength and wealth (6:1-7)

a. 6:1-3

(1) The leaders of Israel were giving false assurances to the people by pointing out Israel's greatness in comparison to some of its neighbors. They thought their nation was too powerful to be subdued, dismissing prophets of doom (like

Amos) as "Chicken Littles." All the while they were inflicting terror on their own people by injustice and oppression.

(2) Worldly measures of strength and success can deceive one into thinking that one is above judgment, but divine judgment is not based on worldly measures of strength and success and cannot be thwarted by them. God looks on the heart, and if the heart is not surrendered to him, the fact you are the richest, most famous, or most powerful person in the world will mean nothing. See, Rev. 3:14, 17-19.

b. 6:4-7

(1) Those wallowing in luxury, who couldn't care less about what their greed and exploiting has done to Israel, will not be saved by their wealth. Their bank account will not exempt them from God's judgment. They will be the first to go.

(2) It is so easy to trust in wealth for security because that's how the world operates. The rich man can always get what he needs and then some. But the amount of one's wealth will not count on judgment day, only how one used it. See, Jas. 5:1-6; 1 Tim. 6:17-19.

8. destruction promised with an oath (6:8-14) - God's judgment on the impenitent is sure.

a. 6:8

(1) The Almighty swears to deliver up the city.

(2) The judgment on the impenitent at the return of Christ is no less sure. See, 2 Thess. 1:6-10; see also, Mat. 25:31-46;

b. 6:9-11

(1) An illustration of the judgment: Households are decimated. The occupants who survived the first wave of judgment die in their own homes (perhaps by a plague or natural disaster). Family members who come to retrieve the bodies (may not mean one who burns them, but if it does, perhaps it's because of a plague or lack of people to dig graves) find a lone individual hiding there among the corpses, presumably someone who entered after the occupants had died in hope of hiding from God's judgment. So great has been his punishment that they are warned not to call on his name for fear it will bring another wave of wrath.

(2) The judgment on the wicked at the return of Christ is described even more fearful terms. See, Rev. 14:9-12; see also, Mat. 13:47-50.

c. 6:12-14 - They have done the unthinkable, turning justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood, and they boast in their victories as though they were by their own strength, but God's judgment is coming.

II. Prophetic Visions (7:1 - 9:15)

A. Locusts, Fire, and Plumb Line (7:1-9)

1. locusts and fire (7:1-6)

a. God reveals to Amos the judgment he is bringing on Israel, symbolized first as a locust plague and then as a fire, and both times Amos appeals to God's compassion in urging him to spare Israel. God relents and withholds the judgment.

b. As 7:8 suggests ("I will spare them no longer"), this sparing of Israel from the revealed judgments demonstrates the Lord's great patience. As Peter says in 2 Pet. 3:9, the Lord is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.

2. plumb line (7:7-9)

a. Amos sees the Lord standing with a plumb line in his hand. He tells Amos that he is setting a plumb line among his people Israel and will spare them no longer.

b. God is patient, but there is a day of judgment. Israel is going to be judged for their deviation from truth, their rejection of Yahweh. They chose to live contrary to the truth that Yahweh alone is God and contrary to their covenant obligations.

c. We need to remember that, while the Lord is patient, judgment day is coming. See, 2 Pet. 3:3-13. On that day when Jesus returns, all who have chosen to live contrary to the truth of God's work in Christ will receive their punishment. 2 Thess. 1:6-10 (see above). As Jesus said in Jn. 12:48, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him in the last day." The gospel, the truth that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, will be God's plumb line.

B. Historical interlude (7:10-17)

1. Amaziah the priest of Bethel reports to King Jeroboam that Amos is raising a conspiracy against him and then commands Amos to go back to Judah. This was an attempt to intimidate Amos, to silence the word of the Lord.

2. Amos says that he preaches by the command of God, and rather than be intimidated, he tells Amaziah that in addition to Israel going into exile, Amaziah's wife is going to become a prostitute, his children are going to be killed, his land is going to be taken, and he himself is going to die!

3. The church needs to recover some of this holy boldness. We need to stop being afraid to tell the truth, to tell God's side of the story. People are living in rebellion to God, mocking the precious gift of his Son, and they are going to go to hell. We do no one any favors by twisting the truth into what they want to hear just so we can be comfortable.

C. Basket of Ripe Fruit (8:1-14)

1. vision and meaning (8:1-2) - Amos is shown a basket of ripe fruit which means the people of Israel are ripe for judgment. God will spare them no longer.

2. elaboration on the coming judgment (8:3-14) - It will be a calamity in which they will be punished for every act of rebellion and hypocrisy.

3. Nothing will go unaccounted for on that day. As Paul states in Rom. 2:16, on the judgment day God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ.

D. Lord by the altar (9:1-15)

1. judgment (9:1-10)

a. ferocity of the judgment (9:1-4)

b. the Lord of the judgment (9:5-6)

c. certainty of the judgment and promise to preserve a remnant (9:7-10) - God is going to preserve descendants of the exiled tribes. The line of Israel, the northern kingdom, will not be obliterated.

2. restoration (9:11-15)

a. In the age of Israel's scattering, i.e., after the exile, God promises to raise up the fallen booth of David.

(1) A booth was a crude form of shelter. Here it is used as a metaphor for the kingdom of David. It looks back to the security Israel once enjoyed under David's rule. It is a promise that peace and security will again be established by the revival of the Davidic kingdom, by a descendant of David returning to the throne.

(2) At this point, descendants of David were still on the throne in Judah. They continued to rule in Judah until the Babylonian exile in 587 B.C. Thus, it appears that Amos is speaking of a time after the Judean exile, after the collapse of Davidic rule.

b. Characteristics of this restored Davidic kingdom

(1) It will include other nations; other nations will bear God's name under the rule of his king (v.12).

(2) It will be a kingdom of unimaginable divine blessing.

(a) This blessedness is depicted or symbolized by the land's tremendous productivity (v.13). The wheat and barley will be so abundant that, though they ripen in April-May, harvesting will not be finished by the time of plowing in October-November. The grapes will grow so fast that the one planting them cannot stay ahead of the one gathering and pressing them! Grapes will be so abundant that new wine drips from the mountains and flows from all the hills.

(b) This blessedness is depicted or symbolized by being allowed to enjoy the fruit of one's labor (v.14). This represents divine protection and security (see, Zeph. 1:13; Isa. 65:21-22; and the futility curses in Dt. 28:30-40).

(3) It will be a permanent kingdom (v.15).

c. The fulfillment of this promise

(1) This was not fulfilled when Israel returned from Babylonian captivity in 538 B.C. (Zerubbabel), 458 B.C. (Ezra), and 444 B.C. (Nehemiah). They had no Davidic king; rather, they were under the control of the Persians and then the Greeks. Also, the condition of the Jews in post-exilic Palestine does not square with Amos's description.

(2) According to James in Acts 15:12-19, Amos was referring to Jesus. Jesus is the descendant of David who was placed by God on David's throne (see, Lk. 1:29-33; Acts 2:29-36, 5:31). This was announced early in Jesus' life by Simeon and Anna (Lk. 2:25-38). As James argues his case for the inclusion of Gentiles: Jesus is the Davidic king promised by Amos; the restored Davidic kingdom to which Amos referred included Gentiles; therefore, they must permit Gentiles to become Christians, to become participants in that kingdom.

(3) Jesus *now* is ruling on David's throne (Mat. 28:18; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 1:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 1:5, 3:21). When the kingdom Jesus inaugurated is consummated or finalized at his second coming, the Amos text will be fully realized (Acts 3:19-21). Resurrected Christians, both the Jewish root and grafted in Gentiles, will live forever in a land (a radically rejuvenated and transformed earth) that is unimaginably blessed. It will be the divine utopia in which there is no death, mourning, crying, or pain. See, Rev. 21:1-4.