

JUSTICE IS NOT "JUST US" / Sunday, June 14, 2015

Unifying Topic: **GOD IS NOT FOOLED**

Lesson Text

I. Seek Good And Not Evil (Amos 5:14-15)

II. The Day Of The Lord (Amos 5:18-27)

The Main Thought: But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. (Amos 5:24, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Some people cover their evil ways with outward acts of goodness. Who will uncover their deceit and demand justice? The people learned through Amos that God will not be fooled by insincere offerings and will severely punish all sinners.

Lesson Aim: To identify unjust practices, to have God's people commit to stop participating in them, and to help others do the same.

Life Aim: To be able to identify how God establishes justice for the righteous and how He will punish deceivers.

HISTORY:

Chapter 5: ¹A Call to Repentance: Amos shocked his listeners by singing a funeral song for the northern kingdom of Israel (vv.1-3). The Israelites believed that their wealth and religious ritual made them secure but they were doomed for an untimely destruction. Furthermore, those who attempted to protect Israel from this doom that awaited them would themselves be destroyed regardless of their might (v.3).

The Lord's people could find life only by seeking Him (v.4). They could not find it by performing prescribed rituals at traditional religious sites such as Bethel and Gilgal, for these cities had become center for idolatry (vv.5-6). The courts of law should have been places of justice, but instead they had become places of greed and injustice (v.7). Pleiades and Orion are star constellations (Job 9:9). The stars were worshiped by many ancient peoples, but they are created objects, not gods (vv.8-9).

The elders and judges of the city officially met "*at the gate*" where legal transactions took place (vv.10-13). "*One who rebukes in the gate,*" refers to an honest judge. A society is in trouble when those who try to do right are hated for their commitment to justice. They would not benefit from any of their labors because they had denied justice to the poor, who could not pay the bribes.

LESSON:

Amos 5:14-15 Seek Good And Not Evil

5:14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. This constitutes another call to repentance. Israel had gone insane seeking evil in multitudinous forms. In true repentance they should seek the opposite, good, and the result will be life. The prophet recognizes, however, that in all probability Israel has gone too far, and her case is irreversible. A person does not need to seek God if He has already revealed Himself to Him. Thus, seek means "*to turn*" to Him in repentance, not necessarily "*to look for.*" "*Seek*" is a way of saying, "*Set aside your time and life for God.*" What ruins you, avoid it; and what helps you, cleave to it. Be good, flee evil, and live, and God would always be with them and ready to help them under any circumstances.

5:15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. If Israel swept away the corrupt system of false accusations, bribery, and corruption, and insisted that only just decisions be given, this would show their change of heart. The prescription for the avoidance of these terrible judgments is given here. Hate the evil, love the good, then work it out in the gate (openly and in the public square); justice in the place where "*causes*" are tried. God was gracious to Joseph, maybe He will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph who repents.

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/amos-51/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

NOT APART OF THE LESSON: VERSES 16-17

The prophet does not anticipate that Israel will take advantage of God's offer of life through their repentance, therefore in verses 16-17 he prophetically sets forth God's judgment—the sorrow that they will be theirs.² Failure to honor the dead was considered horrible in Israel. So loud wailing was common at funerals. Paid mourners, usually women cried and mourned loudly. Amos said there would be so many funerals that there would be a shortage of professional mourners, so farmers would be called from the fields to help (vv.16-17). It would be wailing even in the vineyards. The only one who will profit from this judgment will be the professional mourners who would have a great demand for their services. All this will happen because Jehovah Himself will pass through the land in judgment as He has promised.

BACK TO THE LESSON

Amos 5:18-27 The Day Of The Lord

5:18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. "Woe" means deep sorrow, grief, misery, and trouble. When God declares "Woe" through His prophets, it is impending judgment before any prosperity and blessings to come—tear down to build up. It is true that "*the Day of the Lord*" will result in Israel's exaltation, but they do not realize that it will involve repentance and a preparation in which all evil will be judged and evil doers destroyed. Amos proclaims "*Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord*" and deals with those who, perhaps with insincere *reverence for God*, long for that day to come. Amos had already told them in 4:12 "...*prepare to meet your God, O Israel.*" It seems the Israelites were desiring God to appear on their behalf in a great day of vindication, bringing justice to the world. The Israelites surely don't want to ask for that day to come. They do this because they do not understand the true nature of that day. Here, "*the Day of the Lord*" means the imminent destruction by the Assyrian army. For those seeking the "*Day of the Lord*", it will be darkness and doom—no light. This foreshadows the future Day of the Lord's Judgment. This future Judgment would be worse than the judgment coming by the hands of the Assyrians.

5:19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. In this illustration, a man might seem to conceivably be spared of judgment in the "*Day of the Lord.*" Amos graphically illustrates as he pictures a man who successfully escapes from a lion and while doing so, meets a bear from which he also successfully escapes to the supposed safety of his house, only to be bitten and mortally wounded by a snake as in exhaustion he leans against the wall to recover from his escapade. He compared the people of Israel to a fugitive who runs away from one threat only to find another. Can't you see us today, if we're doing evil, we're in one calamity and then right into another? God is the only One who has our plan of escape, when He gets our attention.

5:20 Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?—³The people of Israel perceived the "*the Day of the Lord*" as a day of victory for themselves and a day of judgment for their enemies. Amos corrected their thinking by pointing out that the Day of the Lord would be a day of judgment. Amos asks this question to drive the point home. "*The Day of the Lord*" will offer no hope for evildoers, only certain doom!

5:21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. The Israelites kept "*feast days,*" attended sacred assemblies. Here, God hates and despises Israel's religious feast days—their pretense—their hypocrisy of honoring God. They were unimportant and unnecessary in His sight. He won't even take part to receive to receive anything they presented, for it wasn't even a pleasing odor or flavor nor a sweet savor unto His nostrils in their solemn assemblies to Him.

² <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-day-of-the-lord/>

³ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-day-of-the-lord/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

5:22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. The Israelites offered *"burnt offerings"* but neglected justice and righteousness. God does not hate worship, but He hates false worship by people who do it out of pretense or for show. It reminds me of our past Sunday School Lesson in 1 Corinthians 13:1 *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."* That's what their burnt offerings and their meat offerings felt like to God.

5:23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. ⁴Songs which were sung to God were a sweet, sweet sound in His ear. Music, both instrumental and vocal, was used in the temple worship—another way of praising God. The "viol" they used was like a lyre or small harp. Songs that didn't come from the heart, no matter how lovely they sound, was noise to the Lord—a tinkling cymbal. Their psalms and hymns of praise were mere noise in God's ear, and wearied Him.

5:24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Instead, God wants justice and righteousness from His people. Therefore, let judgement roll down like waters regarding the poor and needy, as well as righteousness; what is right in the sight of the Lord like a mighty stream regarding true temple worship. God's judgement will always be right.

5:25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?— Israel's problem is not new; they haven't changed. They were infected with idol worship from the very beginning when God brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness. Going back forty years in the desert they made and sacrificed unto God, the golden calf.

5:26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. They *"have borne the tabernacle"* means made and carried these images along with them in the wilderness; making shrines and booths for them. Moloch and Chiun were false heathen image gods; the star of their god; in which they were really interested in; which they made to themselves. Throughout its history, Israel made the mistake of thinking that both idols and Jehovah could be worshiped.

5:27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts. This is what the Lord will do. He will cause them to go into captivity beyond Damascus. Beyond Damascus was complete exile from their homeland. It was their only remedy. Amos ends it with who sends this message—the Lord—The God of hosts.

SUMMARY:

Amos speaks to Israel on behalf of the Lord and gives the command to seek good and not evil, that they may live so the Lord will be with them. Secondly hate the evil, love the good, and establish judgment in the gate and maybe God will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph (**vv.14-15**).

⁵Woe unto those that desire the Day of the Lord's judgments, that wish for times of war and confusion; as some who long for changes, hoping to rise upon the ruins of their country! But this should be so great a desolation, that, nobody could gain by it. The Day of the Lord will be a dark, dismal, gloomy day to all impenitent sinners. When God makes a day dark, all the world cannot make it light. Those who are not reformed by the judgments of God, will be pursued by them; if they escape one, another stands ready to seize them. A pretense of piety is double iniquity, and so it will be found. The people of Israel copied the crimes of their forefathers. The law of worshipping the Lord our God, is, Him only we must serve (**vv.18-27**).

⁴ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/amos/05.html>

⁵ http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhcc.v_1.html?scrBook=Amos&scrCh=5&scrV=7#v_1-p9.1

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>