

Adult Sunday Bible Study Lesson

September 18, 2022

The Book of Amos

Repent or Lose It All

Situational Context: Amos takes up a lament concerning Israel, knowing God, Amos sees Israel as already judged and fallen, Amos 5:1-2 (ESV) ¹ Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel: ² “Fallen, no more to rise, is the virgin Israel; forsaken on her land, with none to raise her up.”

Lesson Theme: Amos 5:4-9 Amos, seeing Israel’s coming devastation, urges Israel to tun back to the Lord. They should not look back upon things of the past for comfort, they will not save them. They have become empty monuments to past glory. All of these monuments will pass away in her continued covenant violations.

1. A Reminder: Amos 5:4-9 (ESV) ⁴ For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: “Seek me and live; ⁵ but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing.” ⁶ Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel, ⁷ O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth! ⁸ He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name; ⁹ who makes destruction flash forth against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

Interpretation: The Lord had promised to meet those who would seek Him, even in exile. Tragically, the Lord’s people often did not seek Him. Beersheba was located 50 miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. People from the north evidently went there on pilgrimages. In the seventh century B.C., Josiah destroyed the high places "from Geba to Beersheba" during his reform.

[The house of Joseph.] Ephraim and Manasseh, the tribes descending from Joseph, whose tribal areas contained Bethel (Ephraim) and Gilgal (Manasseh). These

northern sanctuaries would be destroyed. Beersheba, in the south, would escape the fire of judgment that swept through the northern kingdom. The Lord's judgment fire cannot be extinguished. In classical mythology, the constellation Orion is "the Hunter." In Job also, the Pleiades and Orion are named together as evidence of God's incomparable power and wisdom.

Supporting Texts:

Lamentations 3:25 (ESV) ²⁵ The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

Isaiah 9:13 (ESV) ¹³ The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of the LORD of hosts.

Amos 8:14 (ESV) ¹⁴ Those who swear by the Guilt of Samaria, and say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,' and, 'As the Way of Beersheba lives,' they shall fall, and never rise again."

[Josiah] 2 Kings 23:8 (ESV) ⁸ And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had made offerings, from Geba to Beersheba. And he broke down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on one's left at the gate of the city.

Jeremiah 4:4 (ESV) ⁴ Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds."

Job 9:9 (ESV) ⁹ who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south;

Discussion Starters:

The Lord's Invitation to seek Him carried a condition, why?

How does Orion demonstrate God's power?

Why would God's people seek substitutes in lieu of the real thing?

2. Futility: Amos 5:10-13 (ESV) ¹⁰ They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth. ¹¹ **Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.** ¹² For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins— you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate. ¹³ Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time.

Interpretation: A reference to those who reprove falsehood in court and bear true witness there. Israel had come to hate such men, presumably because they threatened practices of corruption and dishonest gain. Much of a city's legal business was transacted in its gate, a large passageway with adjoining rooms. These houses were costly to build, in contrast to the mud brick houses in which most people lived (cf. Isa 9:10).

The curse of futility (failure to enjoy the fruit of one's labor) had fallen on the Canaanites as Israel dispossessed them from their cities. Now Israel will suffer the same fate. Israel must realize that the Lord knows what they perhaps imagine He does not know. The Hebrew term can refer to a common bribe or to a ransom for loss of life. An evil time, this phrase explains why the prudent will be silent: the times will be so bad that the truth will not be tolerated.

Supporting Texts:

Deuteronomy 28:30 (ESV) ³⁰ You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall ravish her. You shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not enjoy its fruit.

Ecclesiastes 3:7 (ESV) ⁷ a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

Discussion Starters:

How did God's justice work?

Is Verse 13 a time to keep silent good advice?

Why keep silent?

3. Repent: Amos 5:14-15 (ESV) ¹⁴ Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. ¹⁵ Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Interpretation: Obedience to the Lord would bring them security and prosperity but the verse points to a deeper truth, that to know God is life itself. [God . . . with you]. This is the deepest need of God's people, expressed prophetically in the name Immanuel, looking to the Messiah. Israel complacently claimed that the Lord was with them, despite their rebelliousness, simply because He had made a covenant with them. [Remnant of Joseph.] The northern kingdom of Israel was dominated by the tribe of Ephraim, descendants of one of Joseph's sons. Though Israel was relatively prosperous and strong, the phrase anticipates the future, after God's judgment, when He would graciously restore a remnant of the people.

Supporting Texts:

Isaiah 1:16-17 (ESV) ¹⁶ Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ¹⁷ learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

Discussion Starters: