

SEEK THE LORD

TEXT: AMOS 5:1-15

Introduction:

1. There is a note of finality at the conclusion of Amos chapter 4, which would cause one to believe that it was all over for the nation Israel.
2. But over and over again in the Bible we see that in the midst of warnings and pronouncements of inevitable judgment, God, in His mercy and grace, holds out the promise of hope – if His people will repent and seek His face (cf. Amos 5:4).
3. Amos 5 begins with a lamentation over the ruin of Israel. Amos (like the other prophets) views the northern kingdom as though the stroke of judgment from the Lord had already fallen.
4. The stroke was the Assyrian captivity, which was still more than 40 years away.
5. Chapter 5 begins like chapters 3 and 4 – “Hear ye...” It is a sad and mournful “lamentation,” like a funeral dirge.
6. Cf. Jeremiah 7:29, “Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.”
7. “The virgin of Israel is fallen...” (Amos 5:2) – with no prospect of recovery. There is no one to whom Israel can look to raise her up in her present backslidden condition (except God).
8. It was customary for prophets to personify countries by calling them “virgins” (Amos 5:2).
9. “Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon” (Isa. 47:1).
10. “The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee (referring to Israel’s opposition to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria)” (II Kings 19:21; Isa. 37:22).
11. Referring to Tyre, Isaiah says, “O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon” (Isa. 23:12).
12. “Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise...” This Scripture does not contradict the future restoration of Israel (cf. Amos 9:11-15).
13. This prophecy emphasizes Israel’s judgment, exile, and dispersion.
14. “Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise...” (Amos 5:2). Israel as a separate nation (Samaria) never arose to be a nation after she fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. The Israelites never returned.
15. Israel will be reunited with Judah in the millennial kingdom (cf. Ezek. 37:15-22).
16. “There is none to raise her up” (Amos 5:2b). When God puts down a nation no one is able to raise them up. Only ten percent of the people stayed (5:3).

I. SEEK THE LORD AND LIVE (5:4, 6, 8).

1. This is the message of the Bible. “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:6, 7).
2. The apostle Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill in the city of Athens, and preached that sinners “should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27).

II. SEEK NOT BETHEL (5:5).

1. These places, Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba, held sacred memories but now they were to be avoided because of their idolatry.
 - Bethel was where Jacob saw the vision of the ladder reaching up into heaven (Gen. 28:19). But later on it was where King Jeroboam placed one of the two golden calves (I Kings 12:29).
 - At Gilgal Joshua had reinstated the covenant seal of circumcision. But Gilgal had also become a shrine for idols.
 - Abraham had dug his well at Beersheba. Backslidden Israelites were traveling all the way from Dan to Beersheba to worship idols.
2. These sacred places had become polluted centers of idolatry, so God told them, “But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought” (Amos 5:5).
3. If Israel did not repent and seek the LORD, He would “break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel” (5:6).
4. Joseph (5:6, 15) and Ephraim (Joseph’s second son) are often used to represent the northern kingdom. Ephraim was the most dominant of the tribes in the northern kingdom, and eventually became a synonym for the entire northern kingdom of Israel.
5. Amos 5:7 refers to the corrupt judges of Israel (cf. 5:11-13). Honest men knew they could not expect justice and so it seemed the better part of prudence to just keep quiet (5:13).
6. These crooked judges had turned “judgment to wormwood (a bitter tasting and poisonous root).”
7. Jeremiah 9:15 says, “Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.”
8. Revelation 8:10, 11 says, “And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third

- part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.”
9. As a herdman in Tekoa, Amos had plenty of time to study the stars (5:8). “The seven stars” (5:8) refers to a familiar constellation used by travelers. “Orion” is a large, prominent, and conspicuous constellation (cf. Job 9:9; 38:31).
 10. Amos urged Israel to seek after the true God of heaven who created the universe and hurled the stars out into space. He can put out the sun and He can call the waters of the sea and order them to cover the earth in tidal waves and floods (Amos 5:8).
 11. “The LORD (Jehovah) is his name” (5:8b). Amos wanted them to consider who it was that they had rejected in favor of their idols and demons – the true LORD.
 12. “The LORD (Jehovah) is his name” (5:8b). The JW’s have a point that the LORD’s name is Jehovah, but they are wrong when they insist it is His only name. There are many names for God in the Bible.
 13. Our Lord told us to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven...” (Matt. 6:9).
 14. The biggest error of the JW’s is denying the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

III. SEEK GOOD AND NOT EVIL (5:14).

1. Again the LORD repeats, “that ye may live” (5:14; cf. 5:4, 6).
2. The LORD told the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 33:11. “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”
3. We must seek good and not evil (5:14, 15).
4. Psalm 97:10 says, “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil.”
5. Isaiah 1:16, 17 says, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”
6. Romans 12:9 says, “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”
7. Today most people have it backwards. They love evil, and they hate that which is good.

CONCLUSION:

Spurgeon said, “I beseech thee, hate sin, for sin can debilitate and weaken thee so much that thou shalt drag along a miserable existence, the very skeleton of a soul instead of flourishing in the ways of thy God.”

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