

# **Dr. Robert Chisholm, Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear?**

## **Session 4 (B): Salvation History Comes Unravelling (Amos 3-6)**

This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on the book of Amos. Amos, the lion has roared, who will not fear? Session 4 (B), Salvation History Comes Unravelling. Amos 3-6.

We're going to pick up at chapter 4 of Amos, beginning in verse 4, and so chapter 4 verses 4 through 13, and I've entitled this section Prepare to Meet Your God, because it's a statement that is made within this section that I think summarizes what it's all about.

Sinful Israel is going to meet their God in judgment. So let's begin reading with 4.4, and this sounds very weird because earlier he has said Bethel is going to be judged, but this is what we call an ironic or even sarcastic imperative, command. Go to Bethel and sin, the Lord says.

So it sounds like he's instructing them to go to Bethel and sin. Go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years.

Verse 5, burn leavened bread as a thank-offering, and brag about your freewill offerings. Boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do, declares the Sovereign Lord. Interestingly, the Lord would command them to go to Bethel. We talked about the significance of Bethel; it's a very important worship site. Then, they went to Gilgal and sinned some more.

This is obviously sarcasm. The illustration that I like to use for this is, let's say there's a young boy and he loves to climb trees, and he insists upon climbing trees, and he just keeps going higher and higher every time he does this, and his mother has told him on numerous occasions, I do not want you climbing the tree. You can fall and break your arm or worse, and I don't want you to do this.

But he insists on climbing trees every day, and so the mother is just fed up, and she sees him doing it again, and so she runs out there and she says, Go ahead, climb the tree, fall and break your arm or your neck, I don't care. Obviously, the mother does care, but she has tried a more direct approach, but now she's getting into sarcasm. She's just trying to help him see, you know, you really have freedom, and I can't stop you from this, I can't hang out here all the time with you, I don't want to do that, I

want you to make the proper decision on your own, but the consequences are not going to be good if you fall.

And I think that's what the Lord is saying here. They insist on going to these worship sites. They think that by offering sacrifices, tithes, and freewill offerings, they're going to gain God's favor, and he will not judge them.

So they're substituting ritual for reality, moral justice, and that sort of thing, and so the Lord says, okay, you're insisting you love to do this, just go ahead, but realize that when you do, you're sinning. It's not accomplishing anything, it's not gaining my favor, and go to Gilgal, sin some more. So all of your religious ritual amounts to nothing, because I view it as sin.

How is it a sin? The Lord wants sacrifices. Well, it's sin because the Lord doesn't want sacrifices of hypocrites. You see a classic text on this in Isaiah chapter 1, where the Lord makes the point that he is not going to accept their offerings because their hands have blood on them and they're guilty of injustice, and so that's the point the Lord is making here.

Ritual, religious ritual, is not going to prevent my judgment. It's not going to cut it. As far as Gilgal, we'll have more to say about that subsequently, but like Bethel, it's a very important worship site.

He's not just randomly picking places. Bethel, as we said, is very important because of what happened with Jacob there, their forefather. Gilgal, if you read the Joshua accounts, it's their first campsite when they crossed the Jordan River.

So they come across the Jordan, and the Lord does a miracle there, a Red Sea type miracle, with the water to allow them to come across the Jordan and dry land, and they camp in Gilgal, and that's where they circumcised the new generation. And so Gilgal, in their cultural memory, in their history, is a site that's associated with possession of the promised land. So when they arrived at Gilgal, I'm sure they were saying, we're here, we're in it, our feet are standing in the promised land.

And so Gilgal was a very important worship center as well in their history, and so they were going there and offering sacrifices, and the Lord says, just realize when you go to these sites that mean so much, Bethel and Gilgal, you're sinning, and your association with these sites isn't going to insulate you from my judgment. Then we move into verse 6, really verses 6 through 11. The Lord is going to be talking about what he has done in the past, the immediate past as well as the more distant past, so give them a little review here to give them perspective.

And so he says in verse 6, I gave you empty stomachs. The Hebrew actually has clean teeth, so you know, you didn't have anything to eat, so your teeth were not in need

of flossing or whatever, they didn't do that back then I'm sure, but I gave you empty stomachs in every city, and a lack of bread in every town, yet you have not returned to me. So we said before that even though the Lord is prophesying judgment through Amos, already he has been sending signals of his displeasure to the people, and so they have experienced, to some degree, drought and famine; they don't have enough food.

I also withheld rain from you. When the harvest was still three months away, I sent rain on one town, but it withheld it from another. One field had rain, another had none, and dried up.

So the Lord once again is sending signals of his displeasure and the coming judgment. People staggered from town to town for water, but did not get enough to drink, yet you have not returned to me, declares the Lord. And when he says, he uses this little refrain, Yet you have not returned to me, that suggests that all of this was designed to get them to come to their senses and realize something is wrong in our relationship with God.

He is not blessing us as he promised to do if we were obedient. Maybe we're not obedient, and that's why we're not experiencing his blessing. Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, destroying them with blight and mildew.

Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not returned to me, declares the Lord. If you get the opportunity sometime, go on Google, YouTube, or whatever, and ask it to show you a video of locusts in action. It's unbelievable.

They sweep in in huge swarms, and in relatively few minutes, everything's gone. The vegetation is all gone. And so the Lord had been allowing the locusts to devour fig and olive trees, so they've missed some harvests, and they've been a little short on food, but they haven't connected the dots.

The Lord is trying to get our attention, and we need to repent and return to him. In Hebrew, when it talks about repentance, it uses the verb shuv, to return. So, you have not returned to me.

You need to repent. I sent plagues among you, as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses.

I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you have not returned to me. We get that statement repeated and repeated and repeated. I overthrew some of you, as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

That must have been pretty severe. You were like a burning stick, snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me, declares the Lord. So, this had been a time of

prosperity, but as this time period began to develop and move closer to judgment, apparently the Lord is bringing these kinds of things into the nation to try to get their attention.

And so, once again, we see the Lord trying to get the attention of his people. He sends a prophet to proclaim coming judgment. He shows them, with very tangible object lessons, that they are disobeying and that the covenant curses are starting to be implemented.

So, all this stuff's mentioned in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26, but it's not having the desired result. And so, the Lord says in chapter 4, verse 12, Therefore, this is what I will do, Israel. And because I will do this to you, Israel, prepare to meet your God.

The odd thing about this is that we don't, he doesn't tell us in the next verse what he's going to do to them. I think the idea is what I have already been doing, I'm just going to continue to do and intensify. So, I don't see that as being as much of a problem as some do.

Because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God. I'm coming as your judge. I'm going to do what I just described.

I'm going to do more of that for you. And so, you need to prepare to meet your God. You're going to meet me up close and personal as I come in judgment.

And then, you get a section, verse 13, that sounds like something out of the Psalms. He who forms the mountains, who creates the world, he who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness and treads on the heights of the earth, the Lord God Almighty, the Lord God of hosts or armies, is his name. So, he just kind of stops and describes himself.

And some people have trouble with this. It doesn't seem to fit. But my response to critics who say that kind of thing and want to argue it wasn't part of the original text is always, well, it's in the text now.

Somebody, even if it's secondary or whatever, somebody thought that it fit. So, our job is not to question whether it fits here or is not part of the original text. Somebody thought it fits.

Now, why would they think that? And if you can answer that question, you won't need to propose that it's secondary anymore. You'll have your answer. But it frustrates me sometimes, the way source critics operate.

But he who forms the mountains. So, the Lord, prepare to meet your God. Now, here's who I am.

I form the mountains. I form the mountains, symbols of stability. I made everything from the things that are stable and solid and that last, like mountains.

But I also am the one who creates the wind, something that's not quite so stable. It's real. It can be destructive, but you can't grab it.

You can't chase the wind and grab hold of it. So, I think some scholars have suggested that the mountain stands for what's stable, the wind for what is a little less stable, difficult to see. In other words, I'm responsible.

I formed and created all of the world and all of nature. I am the one who controls all of that as the Creator, who reveals his thoughts to mankind. I think that's referring to revealing his plans through his prophets.

So, that's a theme that we've seen already in this section, in three and four, and he's driving it home here. Who turns dawn to darkness. Hmm.

Well, okay, I'm in charge of the daily cycle of things, but I can turn dawn into darkness. I can turn light into dark. This is a little ominous now, because where light can be a symbol of life and salvation, and darkness can be a symbol of death and destruction, and that's what he's going, and treads on the heights of the earth.

How does God tread on the heights of the earth? They come down and I walk on the mountains. Well, I think the idea is he comes in the storm clouds. He comes in the clouds, because elsewhere in the Old Testament, when you have these theophanies, when the Lord appears, you know, a theophany is an appearance of God.

When he does that, he often comes in the storm, in the dark clouds, thunders, hurls lightning, and so I'm the creator. I control everything. I communicate my intentions to human beings through my prophets.

I can turn day into darkness. I'm the one who can change things. I can bring judgment.

I can change your secure little world into something not so secure, and I'm the one who comes down and travels in the clouds, as it were, I walk on the mountains, as I prepare to unleash my judgment upon you. So when he says, prepare to meet your God, it's a statement that could really be paraphrased, prepare to meet God in the role of your judge, and so that is kind of a backdoor way of saying, You think maybe you want to return to me? Because he's just said, you haven't returned, you haven't

returned, you're going to meet up with me. I'm way more powerful than you can imagine.

I made everything from the mountains to the wind. I have been telling you, I've been revealing my intentions through you, and I'm going to bring the darkness of judgment. I'm going to come in the dark clouds, and you just need to prepare for that.

The best way to prepare is to return to me, I think, is the idea here. So that's chapter 4. The principle that I see here is that our patient God sometimes uses drastic measures in an effort to bring his people to repentance. The things that he mentioned there in verses 6 through 11, he's very patient, he's striving to get them to change their ways, and I'm going to unpack that a little bit more.

God's dealings with ancient Israel, even though they're contextualized, and we need to be careful about universalizing things, I think they are a microcosm of his dealings with the human race. Like ancient Israel, the whole human race has rebelled against God, and throughout human history, God has been trying to get rebellious humankind's attention by letting them experience the consequences of their rejection of God. Despite being constantly and vividly reminded of the effects of rebellion, humankind, for the most part, refuses to acknowledge its sin, rejects God's offer of forgiveness, and continues in its sinful ways.

Like Israel of old, many even turn to religious formalism, you know, offering sacrifices at Bethel and Gilgal, as it were, somehow deriving a sense of spiritual security from such activities. Religion, you know, religious ritual, religion. Eventually, having patiently tried and failed to get mankind's attention, God will say, Enough.

History will come to an end as the sovereign Creator executes final judgment, and we read about that, of course, in Revelation, the book of Revelation. So what God was doing in Israel's experience during this time period is really, as I say, a microcosm. It's really the history of humankind.

He has richly blessed his creation, but they just reject his efforts, and people do this every day. Jesus died on the cross for their sins, and they just reject that message, and somehow they think things are going to end up okay in the end. And so the human race is really a lot like ancient Israel, and so I think there are some good lessons there for us.

Well, let's move now into chapter 5, and in this particular session, we'll only get through part of chapter 5, verses 1 through 17, and I call this the 10th plague revisited. And we remember what the 10th plague is in Egypt, you know, the Passover, where the Lord passes through and the firstborn of all the Egyptians die, and the Israelites are spared. There's going to be a very important allusion to that at

the end of this section, and that's why I entitle it the way I do, because I think that sometimes literary units, you can learn a lot from how they begin and how they end, and so very often the key theme comes, the punchline as it were, comes at the end.

So let's dive into chapter 5, and as we work through chapter 5, I'll help draw attention to this, the author is going to use a very interesting structural pattern, and it seems weird to us. It doesn't seem like it's the way you would want to communicate. There's a lot of repetition, it seems a little disorganized at first, but as you go through, you realize, whoa, there is a very significant structure, there's a very important thematic statement that's made at the end, but also in the middle we see a very important, it's almost like there's going to be a pivot in the middle, and the Bible is oral literature.

It was when the prophets, when I think the prophets wrote down their messages, but when they delivered them in a context, it was oral. They went out and preached. They didn't go out with scrolls and hand out scrolls to everybody and say, okay, read the scroll and then we'll talk about it.

No, they were preachers. It was oral delivery, just like when your pastor preaches, it's oral delivery. The rules of the game are a little bit different between oral presentation and writing.

If I'm writing a paper for a professor and I repeat myself too much and it's not organized really well, he'll call me on that. He or she will call me on that, but in oral literature or in oral presentation, and preachers know this from their professors who taught them preaching, you're supposed to repeat important ideas. A repetition is important.

It's the mother of learning, especially when you're hearing something. It's a little bit different than reading the words on the page, where they might sink in a little quicker. So the prophet's going out and he is preaching this, and what we're going to see is he's going to introduce an idea, and then he's going to build on that.

We'll call that A, and then he's going to build on that, and we'll call that B, and then he's going to build further on that, and we'll call that C, and then he's going to come to an idea that's a little bit, it seems like it's a central idea, and then he's going to start back in the opposite direction thematically. He's going to come back C, B, A, so it kind of ends up where you started, and along the way you move in 1, 2, 3, 4, 3, 2, 1. That's called a chiasm, because it's in its basic form, A, B, B, A, and that's like the Greek letter key, and I call it a mirror structure. The second half mirrors the first.

Some people call it a concentric structure, and I remember when I was doing my doctoral work in Old Testament, and I was working in texts, writing papers on passages, I would see this structure a lot, and my wife, who was a executive typist,

you know, she was really a good secretary and typist, she could go really fast. She typed my papers. I would write them out, and she would type them, and so she read everything that I was studying, and she said to me one time, she said, Bob, you see a lot of this chiasmus stuff.

Is that really there? Are you making this up? Are you just trying to be creative and novel, or is it really there? And I said, Deb, my wife's name is Deb, and I said, I really think it's there. I'm not just trying to be creative. I'm really trying to reflect what I see going on in the text, and I think it's there.

Well, shortly after that, I read some articles by a scholar named Van Paranak, and he was a DTS grad, and he got going for a PhD at the University of Michigan, and he published some things on biblical literature, and he was into a field called psycholinguistics, and he was making the point that the Bible is oral literature, and he said in oral literature you can expect certain structural patterns, because they work in an oral context, and so you've got basically two types of patterns that you can use. Basic form, ABAB, which is paneled. So you see this in the prophets all the time.

They'll talk about judgment, and then they'll switch to salvation. The Lord is going to bring judgment, but he's ultimately going to restore his people from exile, and then they'll go right back to judgment, and then they'll go right back to salvation, and it's ABAB. It's like paneling on a wall, maybe bicolored, you know, white and black, white and black, or something like that.

Paneled is what they call it. The other way is to flip it, so that it's concentric in the second half mirrors the first. ABBA.

That's what we call a chiasmus, and you can extend these, you can extend these panels. You could have like ABCD, ABCD, and you can do the same thing with the reverse idea. ABCD, DCBA.

I hope this makes sense. I don't have a visual for you today. It's a lot easier to illustrate with color coding and all of that, and I've got a outline in front of me that does just that, but let's be alert for this as we work through the text, and as I read it, and I'll develop the structure for you as I go, and we'll, I think we'll get the Lord's point here.

5.1 begins with, Hear this word, Israel, this lament I take up concerning you. That doesn't sound promising. He's going to take up a lament.

The Hebrew word is a kinah, a lament. Somebody's going to die. This is a mourning song.



It's, it's lamentation. It's mourning. It's the language of death.

So hear this word, Israel, this lament I take up concerning you. Death is imminent for you. And then he develops this a little bit in verse 2. He says, Fallen is virgin Israel, never to rise again, deserted in her own land with no one to lift her up.

This is what the Lord says to Israel. Your city that marches out a thousand will only have a hundred left. Your town that marches out a hundred strong will have only ten left.

Sounds like we're going to have 90% casualties when the invader comes through. The army is going to be decimated. The city that marches out, that suggests a military action, and they're going to be devastated by the invader.

In the verse before, he speaks metaphorically of Israel, and he calls her a virgin or a young woman, fallen, never to rise again. And so it's a picture of a young woman, not yet married. She's a virgin.

She is going to fall, and no one is going to be able to help her. She's vulnerable in the first place, and when the enemy comes through, she's just going to collapse and fall. And you can only imagine what might happen to her.

But there's going to be no defense. In other words, the young ladies who are expecting to be protected by the men, the army, that's not going to happen. She's going to fall, because when the army marches out, they're going to be devastated, and the enemy's going to sweep in and do whatever they want.

This is cause for lament. So that first theme is lament, which suggests death. He's going to shift gears a little bit in verse 4. I think the idea is that this doesn't have to happen, and we've been seeing this along the way.

This doesn't have to happen. In verse 4, this is what the Lord says to Israel, Seek me, seek me, and live. So you need to seek me, whatever that means.

He's going to unpack that for us in the second B section later. But he just says, Seek me, and if you do, you can live. There won't need to be a lament.

There's life available. Then in verse 5, well, we got Bethel again. Earlier, he said, Go to Bethel and sin.

Go to Gilgal and sin some more. No, that was just metaphorical, poetic, and sarcastic. This is the real deal.

Do not seek Bethel. You need to seek me, and if you do, you will live, but you won't find me in Bethel. And that's very ironic, because Bethel means house of God.

Why wouldn't I go to the house of God to seek him? And so the Lord is saying, I'm not talking about what you do when you go there, with all the sacrifices and offerings and all that hypocritical stuff. No, don't go to Bethel and do that. Don't do it.

That's not what I'm talking about. Do not go to Gilgal. Don't go there.

And then he throws in, Do not journey to Beersheba. That's way down south. And once again, you'd think you'd find God in Bethel.

Jacob did. You'd think you'd find God in Gilgal, because that was the first campsite when the Israelites came across the Jordan, and the Lord was definitely with them. Beersheba has a long history.

Abraham met the Lord there, and the Lord made promises to Isaac and Jacob there. But he's saying, don't think you've got to go way down there, just because that's where the patriarchs met me. I'm not talking about that.

And then he says, because the reality is, Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will be reduced to nothing. Now, notice right here in this verse, he's using this structure that I was talking about. Bethel, we'll call that A. Gilgal, we'll call that B. Beersheba, we'll call that C. Gilgal, well, that's B. We're going, and then Bethel again.

So he reverses the Bethel and Gilgal in the second verse. See how they do this? They do it at the smaller level in a verse sometimes, and they can do it in a larger speech, which is what he's going to do here. I find this fascinating, I hope you do.

I see it as the literary artistry of the Bible, and there's so much of it, and I see more in the Bible than I do in the literature that's outside the Bible, and from the same culture. They use some of this, they use some of these devices, but not in as artistic a way as the Bible does, and to me it's just indirect evidence that the Bible isn't just a human book. God himself is working in these biblical writers to not just say it, but say it in a very artistic, mind-grabbing way.

So Gilgal will go into exile. Now that's what it says in our English translations, but in Hebrew it really grabs your attention. Here's what it says in Hebrew.

Ha Gilgal, Galo Yigle. Okay, let's do that again. Ha Gilgal, Galo Yigle.

Do you hear all the G's and L's coming at you? It just so happens that the verb for going into exile is Galah. It's got a G and an L, just like Gilgal's name. See, it's a sound play thing, and prophets love to do this, and so that will grab your attention.

And in an oral delivery context, this kind of what we call sound play or word play is a very effective device when you hear that. And then Bethel, the house of God, will become Abba, and it will become nothing. Not as much word play there, but Gilgal and Bethel are going to go up in smoke.

They're going to be objects of my judgment, even though they're special places and they mean so much to you, they're not going to escape the judgment. The judgment is going to be very, very thorough, because the religious hypocrisy and syncretism that's taking place there, I'm not going to tolerate that. You've corrupted it.

You've made these sites a place that needs to be judged because of your corruption. And then in verse 6, he says again, Seek the Lord and live. So at this point, if I'm hearing this speech, I'm thinking, okay, the Lord keeps telling me, seek me, seek the Lord.

I would think I'd go to Bethel to do that or Gilgal or Beersheba, but he's saying, no, don't go there. So what does he mean by seek me, seek the Lord? Well, he's going to tell us, but not yet. Seek the Lord and live, or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire.

And remember, Joseph's children were Ephraim and Manasseh, and Joseph was the most important and biggest tribe in the northern kingdom, and they were even divided into Ephraim and Manasseh. And so lots of times, Joseph means the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel. So he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire.

It will devour them, and Bethel, the house of God, will have no one to quench it. Fire is coming, and it's even going to envelop the house of God, as it were, because I really don't live in these places. You know, I'm bigger than that.

And going back to what he just said at the end of chapter 4, I created everything, and I'm bigger than these shrines and these worship centers that you love to go to. And so that's an important theme there. So we've seen Israel's demise deserves a lament, verses 1 through 3. The people must repent, for judgment is imminent.

And then verse 7, he's going to, this is going to be accusatory. If you're asking the question, well, why are you going to bring judgment against us? Why are we going to die? Why is this lament to be sung? Why is this all going to happen? Okay, I'll tell you. Verse 7, there are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground.

And he has referred to this before, what they are doing to their fellow Israelites, taking advantage of them, cheating them, using their power to deprive them of what

they need. They turn justice into bitterness. Justice should be something that is valued.

When you see genuine justice being enacted, there's something, there's something in our heart, our minds, it just resonates. I love Westerns. I love old Westerns.

I think some of the newer ones are too bloody for me. But old Westerns, like *Shane* or *High Noon*, for two hours, you're just waiting for the bad guys to get what they deserve, the Riker brothers, and then they bring in Jack Wilson, and he guns down poor Torrey. And *Shane* is going to have to do something.

Lesson about the real world, yeah, we all want justice, but sometimes in the fallen world, somebody, some courageous person has to stand up and make sure that justice is achieved. And so *Shane* faces down Jack Wilson. Spoiler alert, if you haven't watched it yet, the movie's been around for over 70 years, so I don't think you're gonna watch it if you haven't.

*Shane* guns down Jack Wilson, and he also kills the Riker brothers. And then he tells the little boy who loves him so much, and he's got to leave, he says, tell your mother and your father that there are no more guns in the valley, and there's going to be peace. So justice has been served, and it's such a relief when it happens.

It's so violent when *Shane* takes them out, but there's a relief to it. We love justice. Same thing in *High Noon*, you know, the bad guys, the Miller gang or whatever, they're going to show up, and poor Gary Cooper's all by himself, and well, Grace Kelly comes and helps him a little bit before it's all over, but he manages to defeat the bad guys.

And that's the typical Western scenario, you know, John Wayne always brings justice in the end. I just love, love it, because it reminds me that God is a God of justice, and ultimately, in the end he will, justice will be served. Everyone is going to have to stand before him, and often in history, he brings his justice to bear.

But when these people are doing what they're doing, they're turning justice into bitterness. It's something that tastes terrible, maybe even poisonous. And so, they take like righteousness, and they have no use for it, and they just throw it, they just hurl it onto the ground.

And so that's why judgment is coming, because their behavior demands justice, and that's what judgment is. It's the implementation of God's just nature and demands. And so that's the third thing.

Now, we go into Psalms mode again. It's like there's going to be a description of God, kind of like a hymn. He who made the Pleiades and Orion.

So they're aware of constellations back in the day. You know, the Babylonians are really into that, you know, with their astrology and all that kind of thing. So yeah, they looked at the stars in the sky back then.

They actually thought that the stars were deities and heavenly bodies. So he who made the Pleiades and Orion. The Lord is the one who made all of those stars.

And in their worldview, they would associate those stars with members of God's heavenly assembly. Not gods, but members of God's heavenly assembly. Maybe we could say angels who do his bidding.

He turns midnight into dawn, and darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land. The Lord is his name. I think the point of verse 8 is sovereignty.

The Lord is sovereign. And with a blinding flash, he destroys the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin. The great creator who controls all of nature and can change things that fast.

He's going to change things for you. You're going to be judged. That's right in the center.

That's right in the center of this piece. They're guilty of injustice, and they're going to encounter the divine judge. That's the pivot.

It doesn't get repeated. Now we're going to start back through with the other themes, and we're going to continue the accusation. So if we've had A, B, C, D, now we've got C. He's going to flesh out how unjust they are.

There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth. They hate truth-tellers in the courts. You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain.

Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them. Though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine, for I know how many are your offenses, and how great your sins.

There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes, and deprive the poor of justice in the courts. Therefore, the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil. If you know what's good for you, you just shut your mouth when you see this kind of injustice happening.

You don't cry out. I don't think that he's advocating that, because Proverbs tells us we should intervene on behalf of needy people, but he's just approaching it from more of the standpoint of somebody who just wants to survive. You just keep your mouth shut when there's injustice of this nature.

So now he's expanded the accusation and made it very clear that they are guilty, and that's why judgment is coming. Now he's going to tell us how we seek the Lord. Seek good, not evil, that you may live.

You seek the Lord by seeking what's righteous, good, and just. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. You don't go to Bethel and offer more sacrifices.

Don't. You seek good. You repent, and you do what's right, and you stop doing what's wrong.

Hate evil. Love good. Maintain justice in the courts.

Perhaps there's a little, you know, the Lord is sovereign. You know, you've gone a long way, and you may have crossed the line, but perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph. Almost makes it sound like judgment is coming, but I'm willing to preserve a remnant if they repent.

That seems to be what he's saying. So you seek God by seeking good, and therefore this is what the Lord God Almighty says. There will be wailing and cries of anguish in every public square.

The farmers will be summoned to weep, and the mourners to wail. There will be wailing in all the vineyards, for I will pass through your midst, says the Lord. So we're back to lamentation, right where we started.

Wailing. Death has come. We're lamenting.

And then it ends with this statement, and this is the tenth plague thing. I will pass through your midst. And he uses the same language that he used back in Exodus when he says, I'm going to pass through.

And when I see the blood on the door, I won't kill anyone in your home. So the Israelites escape the judgment, but he's passing through Egypt, and he's going to kill. The killer angel is going to take the lives of the firstborn son.

And so it's almost like it's Egypt repeated. Egypt repeated. So hopefully you saw that chaotic structure there.

Just to review it, Israel's demise deserves a lament. The people must repent, for judgment is imminent. B. They are guilty of injustice. C. They will encounter the divine judge. D. Now we're going to come back through. The people are guilty of injustice.

C. again. So the people must repent. B. Divine judgment will bring lamentation. A.

And that rounds it out, because the Lord is passing through. I think we'll stop there. And when we pick up again, we will talk about the principles that we might see here.

But we still have to finish chapter 5, and we'll do that in our next session and get on into chapter 6 as well.

This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on the book of Amos. Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear? Session 4 (B), Salvation History Comes Unravelling, Amos 3-6.