

Dr. Robert Chisholm, Amos, Session 5, Amos 5:18-6:14 Obedience not Sacrifice... 6-min. Video Overview

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Today, we're diving into the world of an ancient prophet named Amos. Now, he lived in what seemed like a golden age for his country, a time of peace, prosperity, you name it. But he saw something else, a deep crack in the foundation that was about to bring the whole house down.

So what was it? So imagine this: your whole country is just buzzing, eagerly waiting for this big event they call the Day of the Lord. For them, this is it, the day God finally crushes their enemies and gives them this ultimate, lasting victory. And then, out of nowhere, their own prophet, Amos, stands up and flips the entire script.

He tells them that day they're so excited about, well, it's not going to be their victory; it's going to be their doom. How could that possibly be? Okay, so the first part of this whole mystery is how Amos completely turns their greatest hope upside down. He calls it a Day of Darkness.

Yeah, you heard that right. The people were expecting light, salvation, total victory. But Amos tells them to brace for the exact opposite: darkness, judgment, and doom.

He literally says, why do you long for the Day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. I mean, can you imagine? This was a complete shattering of their national identity. And he uses this incredible imagery to show them just how unavoidable this judgment will be.

He paints this absolutely terrifying picture. It goes like this. You're running for your life; you just barely escape from a lion, only to run smack into a bear.

But somehow, you get away, you make it home, you slam the door shut, and you lean back against the wall trying to catch your breath. And then a venomous snake hidden in the wall sinks its fangs into you. The point is crystal clear.

There is absolutely no escape. To really drive this home, Amos kicks off his warning with one powerful word: woe. In the original Hebrew, it's hoy.

And you have to understand this isn't just like saying, oh no. In that culture, hoy was a funeral cry. It's the sound you would wail over the body of someone you loved.

So when Amos shouts, "Woe to you, he's not just warning them. He's basically performing a funeral service for a nation that's still walking and talking, completely clueless that in God's eyes, it's already dead. So why? Why such a grim future? I mean, what could this nation, a nation that thought of itself as super religious, be doing that was so wrong? Well, that

brings us to the absolute core of Amos' message: a shocking takedown of their worship itself.

Just listen to the raw emotion in this statement coming from God's perspective. I hate, I despise your religious festivals. Your assemblies are a stench to me.

A stench. And then he says, "Away with the noise of your songs. Think about that for a second.

The very things they were doing to honor God, their sacred festivals, their solemn meetings, their worship music. God says he can't even stand them. And he gets really specific about it.

It's a whole rejection list. He doesn't want their burnt offerings, their grain offerings, not even their best prime-cut fellowship offerings. He won't even listen to the music of their harps.

Now, the crazy thing is, these rituals weren't wrong. They were actually what God had asked for. So what gives? What made them so offensive? And here's the answer.

Their worship was totally hollow. It was all vertical, right? Pointed up toward God, but it was completely disconnected from the horizontal- how they actually lived their lives and treated other people. They were singing praises on the Sabbath while cheating their neighbors on Monday.

And for God, that kind of religion is actually worse than no religion at all. It's pure hypocrisy. Okay, so this brings us to a really important question.

If God is rejecting all their fancy rituals and their sacrifices, what is it that he actually wants from them? This is the question just hanging in the air, you know? Amos has just torn down their entire religious framework. So now what? What's the alternative? And this is the answer. It's one of the most famous and powerful lines in the entire book, a verse that has echoed through history.

Instead of all their songs and sacrifices, God says this: let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream. Now, to really get the power of this image, you have to know a little about the local geography. They had these things called wadis, which are basically seasonal streams.

After a big rain, they'd be a raging torrent of water. But in the dry season, they were just empty, rocky riverbeds. And that's what their justice was like.

It showed up once in a while, but it was totally unreliable. God says, "Nope, I don't want that." He wants justice to be like a perennial river, a constant, powerful, life-giving force that never, ever runs dry.

So who is most responsible for this huge disconnect? Well, Amos turns his attention directly to the nation's elite, the rich and powerful who were living in this bubble of luxury, totally convinced the party would just never end. I mean, just look at this lifestyle. They're lounging on these expensive beds inlaid with ivory, eating the best lamb and calves, drinking wine not by the glass, but by the bowlful.

They're slathering on the finest lotions and making up lazy, self-indulgent songs. But it's that last line that reveals the real sickness in their hearts. They do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.

In other words, they couldn't care less about the moral and social collapse happening all around them. To show them just how twisted and out of touch their reality has become, Amos hits them with a couple of absurd questions. He asks, "Hey, does anyone plow the sea with oxen or race horses on rocky cliffs?" And the answer is obvious.

Of course not. That would be insane. It goes against the natural order of things.

And that's exactly his point. Amos says that what they've done, taking something good like justice and turning it into poison, is just as bizarre and self-destructive. It's a total perversion of how the world is supposed to work.

In God's eyes, it's nothing less than moral insanity. And this moral insanity leads to a punishment that is direct and, well, deeply ironic. So let's set this up.

These leaders, they saw themselves as the first people of the nation. You know, the A-listers, the VIPs, the most important people around. In their own minds, they were at the front of the line for everything.

And then comes the punchline from God. He says, "You want to be first?" Okay. Therefore, you will be among the first to go into exile.

It's perfect poetic justice. Their pride in being first in luxury leads to them being first in the line for judgment. And that judgment was going to be total.

God declares that he's going to raise up a foreign superpower, the brutal Assyrian empire. And that nation is going to sweep through and crush them from their northernmost border all the way to their southernmost valley. Everything they thought made them safe and secure was about to be completely unraveled.

And that leaves us with this final piercing question that Amos' message forces us to confront. What happens when our religion becomes a way to feel good about ourselves while avoiding our real-world responsibilities? What happens when our worship becomes a substitute for justice instead of the very thing that fuels it? It's a warning that is just as relevant and just as challenging for us today.