

AMOS: GOD'S URGENT CALL TO REPENT

V: God's Critique Of Israel's False Worship

(Amos 4:4-5)

I. Introduction

- A. When God needed a messenger to the wicked Northern Kingdom of Israel as it was at the height of its spiritual rebellion against Him, the Lord sent a layman from Judah named Amos to travel north into Israel to pronounce sharp judgment as a great warning to that nation.
- B. Israel was heavily involved in false worship, a worship that focused on gratifying human lusts rather than honoring the Lord, what Amos critiqued in Amos 4:4-5. This passage offers a rich application for us, and we view it for our insight and application (as follows):

II. God's Critique Of Israel's False Worship, Amos 4:4-5.

- A. The summons in Amos 4:4a to come to Bethel and Gilgal to worship is a mockery of a priest's summons to pilgrims, for the "usual invitation was to 'come into the sanctuary' of the Lord's temple 'to worship'" (Pss. 95:6; 96:8-9; 100:2-4)." (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1436) The mockery is certainly fitting, for Bethel was the place of worshipping the false gold calf idol that king Jeroboam I had set up together with instituting unbiblical priests and feast days (1 Kings 12:25-33) and Gilgal was the place of worshipping a false fertility goddess with its shocking immoral rites. (Ibid., p. 1400; Hosea 4:14-15)
- B. The call included not only coming to these places of false, wicked worship, but to come and multiply transgressions of the Law, what would only incite God's wrath, Amos 4:4b with Deuteronomy 28:15-68.
- C. The people were urged with this mocking call to bring their sacrifices every morning and their tithes every third day after arriving at the sanctuary, Amos 4:4c ESV; Ibid., p. 1436. Yet, the items being sacrificed were obtained by violating the Law: "Some of the produce they tithed came from stolen land. Some animals they sacrificed had been fattened on unjustly seized fields. Their very worship was an offense to God as it hypocritically offered the fruits of their rebellion against His covenant (cf. Isa. 1:10-20; Micah 6:6-8)." (Ibid.)
- D. Amos added in this mocking call to worship that the people were to bring offerings of thanksgiving of that which was leavened in strict violation of the Mosaic Law, Amos 4:5a with Exodus 34:25. Apparently, the priests preferred the lighter-textured, better tasting bread with leaven-flavor rather than the less-tasty unleavened kind. (Matthew Henry's Com. of the Whole Bible, 1935, Vol. IV, Amos IV, 4-5) Thank offerings were meant to express "gratitude for blessings and answered prayers (Lev. 7:11-15)," but the purpose of thanking God had been lost in an indulgence with selfish lusts by the priests! (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T.)
- E. The mocking call to worship included the invocation to brag about their freewill offerings, to boast about them (Amos 4:5b NIV), a great violation of the Law that prescribed such offerings to be voluntary, spontaneous gifts to the Lord "born out of inner devotion to God (Lev. 7:16; 22:17-19)," Ibid. God had intended these offerings to give the godly the opportunity to honor the Lord for His goodness and grace, but it was being distorted into honoring and praising the worshiper in sinful pride!
- F. After giving this mocking call to worship, the prophet Amos explained that the people of Israel loved to do these things, sinning profusely in their worship, and enjoying every bit of it as they indulged their lust of the eyes, their lust of the flesh and their pride of this earthly life in worldliness, Amos 4:5c with 1 John 2:15-16.

Lesson: *In a mocking call to worship, Amos illustrated how the people of Israel sinfully loved to indulge their lusts in worldliness in their worship by worshipping false gods in spiritual and physical immorality, in bringing offerings gained by stealing from others, in bringing leaven in their thank offerings in violation of the Law and boasting of themselves instead of honoring the Lord in their freewill offerings.*

Application: *(1) When we worship the Lord, may we not sinfully seek to indulge our worldly lusts in how we worship, but focus on pleasing God in what we do and say, and how we do so. (2) If we worship some false god, some crutch in life other than the Lord, may we repent of it, confess it as sin and return to viewing the Lord alone as our God. (3) May we watch that we not cheat other people out of goods and services that we not give of the bounty we have obtained by sin to the Lord lest He repudiate our gifts! Rather, may we give what we have honestly earned by our own hard work. (4) When we thank God in worship, may we do so out of appreciation for His goodness and provisions for us with no thought as to gratifying our lusts in the process. (5) If we desire to honor the Lord by providing a gift to Him in doing so, may we not seek to have ourselves honored by how we provide such a gift, but focus on seeing the Lord alone honored, and give in private with no fanfare about it before others.*