

AMOS: GOD'S URGENT CALL TO REPENT
VIII: God's Judgment Of Israel's Religious Hypocrisy
(Amos 5:18-27)

I. Introduction

- A. When God needed a messenger to the Kingdom of Israel as it was at the height of its rebellion against Him, the Lord sent Amos, a layman from Judah, to go north to Israel to voice severe judgment against that nation.
- B. Hypocrisy in the religious realm is especially offensive to the Lord, and His punishment of this sin in Israel is predicted in Amos 5:18-27. We view the passage for our insight, application, and edification (as follows):

II. God's Judgment Of Israel's Religious Hypocrisy, Amos 5:18-27.

- A. The Lord announced that contrary to Israel's hope, the coming "day of the Lord" would not only be a day of God's taking vengeance of Israel's enemies, but of His taking vengeance against Israel herself, Amos 5:18-20:
 - 1. The word, "Woe" was "ordinarily the wail of grief over the dead," so when it was spoken "over the living" it "was a prediction of death," as it is here in Amos 5:18a. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1441)
 - 2. This "Woe" was addressed to those who were longing for the "day of the Lord" because it would produce not what Amos' audience expected it would produce, Amos 5:18b. Amos' hearers in Israel had heard other prophets predict that day as a time when God would take vengeance on behalf of His people against their enemies, so the people of Israel understandably looked forward to that day, Ibid. However, "Israel herself had become God's enemy" by way of "continual sins against His covenant," what had made her "one of the adversaries" of the Lord! (Ibid.)
 - 3. Accordingly, the "day of the Lord" even for Israel's people would be a day of the darkness of tragedies and not a day of the light of God's blessing, Amos 5:18c. It would be as if a man fled from a lion only to be confronted by a bear, as if he then fled from the bear into a house for protection and leaned his hand on the wall in exhaustion only to have a serpent there bite him, Amos 5:19. (Ibid.) It would indeed be a day of darkness and not light, even very dark with no brightness in it, Amos 5:20.
- B. God explained He would take such severe vengeance against Israel for her religious hypocrisy, Amos 5:21-27:
 - 1. The Lord explained how He hated and despised Israel's worship services, Amos 5:21-23:
 - a. He hated Israel's religious feasts, the "three pilgrimage festivals of Unleavened Bread, Harvest (Weeks), and Ingathering (Tabernacles) which were celebrated annually at the sanctuary," Ibid.; Amos 5:21a.
 - b. God took no delight in Israel's solemn assemblies, Amos 5:21b ESV.
 - c. Though Israel offered God her burnt and grain offerings, He would not accept them, and though she offered the peace offerings of her fattened animals, He would not even look on them in favor, Amos 5:22.
 - d. Indeed, the Lord urged the people to take away from Him the noise of her songs of worship, that He would not listen to the melody of her harps that were played in her religious gatherings, Amos 5:23.
 - 2. God's reason for his sense of revulsion toward Israel's efforts to please Him in worship was her hypocritical worship that contrasted so greatly with the wickedness in her daily life: He thus urged the nation to let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, Amos 5:24. "He wanted a passionate concern for the rights of the poor . . . God wanted a day-to-day life of surging integrity and goodness. Only this outer evidence of inner righteousness could offer the Israelites the possibility of survival in the day of the Lord," Ibid., p. 1442.
 - 3. Even as far back as the Exodus when God was salvaging Israel from Egyptian bondage, her people were involved in idolatry during their 40 years in the wilderness, Amos 5:25. (cf. Joshua 24:14-15)
 - 4. Since that time, Israel's worship had not improved, but it had "degenerated as they began to honor 'heavenly bodies' . . . in violation of their covenant Law." (Amos 5:26; Ibid.)
 - 5. Due to such hypocrisy and ongoing idolatry, God announced that He would send Israel into exile beyond Damascus, "toward the direction of Assyria (cf. 4:3)." (Ibid.) "Exile, in effect, was excommunication," but this was the fitting punishment of God whose covenant Israel had violated, Amos 5:27; Ibid.

Lesson: *Since Israel hypocritically worshiped God with rich offerings, singing and musical instruments while hypocritically worshiping false gods and callously violating the rights of the vulnerable, He hated and despised her religious services and would severely punish the nation by "excommunication" via an invasion and captivity.*

Application: *If we want God to accept our worship or even our fellowship with Him, may we live righteously in integrity with a deep commitment for justice on behalf of the vulnerable and free of false idols in our hearts.*